

“The Blessedness of Unity”
Psalm 133
(Preached at Trinity, September 29, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. If you could choose a single word to describe the consequence of sin upon the earth you might use the word “division.”
 - A. Before he sinned Adam experienced unity with God. He knew God, walked with God.
 1. In the Covenant of Works God threatened,
Genesis 2:17 KJV - "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
 2. It is true that Adam became mortal on the day he sinned, but far worse he became separated from God. He was alienated from God. All of us are now born in this condition.
 3. Salvation involves reconciliation. We become united with Christ. God has turned His wrath away from us.
 - B. Sin also caused a terrible division between men.
 1. God created man to enjoy union. He said it wasn’t good for man to be alone and then created woman as his helper.
Genesis 2:23-24 KJV - "And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."
 2. But sin affected this sweet unity of oneness. Adam immediately turned against the woman God ordained him to protect
Genesis 3:12 KJV - "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."
 3. Their children were at enmity with one another. Cain killed his brother.
 4. The history of human beings has been a history of war.
Today we live a world of warfare, murders, divorce. Siblings turn against one another. Friends betray one another.
 5. Our nation was built upon a principle of union. We consist of states united together. Our motto is *E. Pluribus Unum* – “Of the many, one.”
We recite the Pledge of Allegiance – “One nation, under God, indivisible.”
But it is all wishful thinking. We are terribly divided over issues of great importance – abortion, same-sex marriage and gay rights among others.
 6. Even churches become filled with discord and division.
2. The Bible speaks clearly of God’s hatred of discord.
 - A. It is listed among those sins God calls an abomination.
Proverbs 6:16-19 KJV - "These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and

hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ A false witness *that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*"

- B. Over and over the Bible equates those who spread strife with great wickedness. **Proverbs 6:12-14 NAU** - "A worthless person, a wicked man, Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth, ¹³ Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, Who points with his fingers; ¹⁴ Who *with* perversity in his heart continually devises evil, Who spreads strife."
- C. In the church it is a reason for excommunication
Titus 3:10 ESV - "As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,"
3. While the Bible speaks harshly regarding those who sow strife and discord and it also describes the sweet savor of unity among brethren. **Psalm 133** describes the blessedness of unity.
Psalm 133:1 KJV - "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!"
4. Tonight I want us to ponder this subject of unity.
- I. First, what is this unity that David describes as good and pleasant?
- A. Unity describes oneness – the absence of division
1. In the context of the psalm the pilgrims were traveling to Jerusalem with singleness of heart and purpose.
 - a. They had an eye upon the temple worship, of entering into the house of God.
 - b. They also enjoyed unity in covenant. They were the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 2. In the New Covenant context of the the local church we are the body of Christ. It is a loving community where we enjoy true unity created by God.
Psalm 133 describes this unity.
- B. We see this unity lived out practically in the early church of Acts 2
Acts 2:41-47 KJV - "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. ⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. ⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
- II. Our unity is always being threatened
- A. A churches unity the focus of Satan's constant attack
1. Unity brings God glory. It reflects our union with Christ. Because of this Satan often attacks churches bringing strife and division

2. This was one of the problems with the church of Corinth
1 Corinthians 1:10-11 KJV - "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."
 3. The word for "contentions" in **Verse 11** carries the idea of wrangling or tactical maneuvering – brothers and sisters struggling for position
 - a. Satan turns our attention upon ourselves
 - b. Each member begins to feel he deserves more recognition.
 - c. Each member begins to feel that his ideas are more worthy of consideration
 4. We need to be mindful of our enemy
Ephesians 6:11 – "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*."
- B. When we lose our focus of purpose distractions begin to divide us
1. We should continually ask ourselves – What is our purpose?
 2. In everything we do we should ask ourselves – What is the purpose?
Every aspect of our worship. Every area of our work
- C. The world today needs to see churches that are unified and confident
 Confident in what we believe, confident in what we are doing
 They do not need to see ambiguity and uncertainty – We must be a clear, united voice of truth.

III. What are the sources of true unity?

- A. The chief source of our unity is the Lord Jesus Christ
1. We share in a glorious union with Christ
 - a. We enjoy sweet communion with Christ and with one another.
 - b. Paul describes our unity
Ephesians 4:1-6 KJV - "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; ³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;* ⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all."
 - c. There is no true unity apart from Christ – this should be a serious matter for young people considering courtship.
 2. Jesus has united us together as His body – the church is the Body of Christ
Romans 12:5 – "So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

3. We are people from all kinds of different backgrounds – but one body in Christ
4. Paul says we are “fitted and held together” - There is cohesion
Ephesians 4:16 NAU - "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
5. As the body of Christ, the entire body is affected by each individual part
1 Corinthians 12:25-26 NAU - "so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."
6. This union is so intense that even one person’s sin can affect the entire body – there is a corporate solidarity in sin
Joshua 7:1 – “But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.”

B. A second key source of true unity is humility

Philippians 2:3-4 – “*Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

1. Strife and contention find their root in pride
Proverbs 13:10 – “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom.”
Proverbs 28:25 – “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.”
2. This has been a part of us from birth – children are quick to express their displeasure with screams and tantrums
3. This carries into adulthood – we fight in business, husbands & wives fight, even nations fight – and the root cause of these divisions is depraved pride
4. The Christian is not given to constant hostility – instead we strive for peace
Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”
Romans 12:17-18 – “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

5. In other words, strife and division is out of character for the Christian
Galatians 5:19-21 NAU - "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Compare with the fruit of the Spirit

- C. A third source of unity is Love

Colossians 3:12-14 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

1. The very nature of love is the sacrifice of ourselves
Ephesians 5:25 – "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"
John 15:13 – "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."
2. Love strives to do the best for others – this seldom leads to strife
3. True love will lead to peace with the brethren
Ephesians 4:1-3 – "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

- D. A fourth key source of unity is Doctrine

1. The early church was united upon a common doctrine
Acts 2:41-42 – "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
2. The Apostles' Doctrine was God's revelation of truth
 This was their source of unity – they were united upon Biblical truth
3. Christianity cannot be separated from Doctrine
 Doctrine defines God, it defines man, it defines redemption, it establishes God's standard for living
4. False doctrine is the chief cause of denominational division
 True doctrine builds and edifies the body of Christ
 We must guard against petty differences that are nothing more than the doctrines of men.
5. Any gospel that doesn't point men to Christ is a false gospel
Ephesians 4:13 – "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

Conclusion:

1. Unity is a thing of beauty, a wonderful blessing from God.
 - a. The word for “pleasant” in **Verse 1** means “delightful, sweet, and lovely.”
 - b. It is like the sweet fragrance of perfumed anointing oil. It is like the refreshing dew that fell upon both Mount Hermon, the tallest mountain peak, as well as Zion, the lowest.
2. It must be treasured and protected. Even as David wrote of the beauty of unity Israel was not a kingdom that enjoyed the unity he dreamed of.
3. Churches can also suffer under the curse of division. We must always be on guard against those things that divide and remember those things upon which true unity is built. We must avoid the non-essential things that can divide us. These things are almost always idols that must be cast aside.
4. And we must long for and pray for the ultimate fullness of our Lord’s Kingdom. “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
There is coming an ultimate restoration, a new heavens and new earth.
Psalms 133:3 KJV - "for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore."
2 Peter 3:11-14 NAU - "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,"