

"BEING OF ONE MIND"

Philippians 2:1-11

There is a Peanuts cartoon where Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Then, turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

It's all about unity. As a kid I used to love to watch the old reruns of *The Lone Ranger*. There is one episode where, for those of you who don't know anything about this TV show, Tonto, the American Indian, and the Lone Ranger, the white guy, were riding through a canyon together when all of a sudden both sides were filled with Native American warriors on horses, dressed for battle.

The Lone Ranger turned to Tonto and asked, "What are we going to do?"

Whereupon Tonto replied, "What you mean 'we,' Whiteman?" Edward

Dobson, *In Search of Unity*, p. 20-27. It's all about unity.

But what does it mean to be united? Does it always mean agreeing?

No. But being united means being together for a purpose. So for the

Christian, and in particular, the church, it doesn't mean all the members

agreeing on every decision, every detail, every color of paint used to paint

the church kitchen, or the color of carpet in the hallway, but what it does

mean is getting behind a purpose. **And the purpose for the church is to:**

1) Worship God; 2) build up the saints; and 3) spread the Good

News. And the Church, any church, must be united in these three areas.

Will there be differences about the way we worship and style of worship and

the music of worship? Yes. Will there be people with different gifts and

abilities that, given their giftedness, might need special training in that

particular area that someone in another area would not need to be trained?

Yes. And so we could all also agree that building up and training is important? Yes. Is spreading the Good News important? Yes. And will there be different ways to spread the Good News- I might present it differently to a teenager as I would to a person 60 years old, but is spreading the Good News important? Yes. You see the issue for all of us, the believers in Christ, is getting behind the 3-fold purpose and working together to do what? Accomplish the purpose or purposes.

Last Sunday, we read from Psalm 124 where it makes the powerful statement in verse 1, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side..." And yet the other side of this "side thing" is this question: are we on the Lord's side?

The Apostle Paul, who wrote Philippians, saw the church at Philippi as his "joy and crown," for he writes in Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown..."

I mean, of all the churches that he was associated with, the Philippian church gave him the least trouble, and maybe no trouble at all, and they gave him the most satisfaction. So Philippians is a letter of joy and he is gushing over with thankfulness, fondness and love. But there **was one danger that threatened this church that Paul loved so much.** That danger was **disunity**. When you think about it, this is a danger that can threaten any church. It is when people have strong feelings, it is when people are really intense and their beliefs really matter to them that they can get up against one another. Think of it this way- the greater their enthusiasm, the greater the chance that they may come up against someone who has as strong of feelings that are 180 degrees opposite from them. If there is one thing Satan relishes its disunity and dissension in the church.

I read of a Father who was in his study one day reading, and he heard a commotion outside his window. It was his daughter who was playing with her friends.

And it got louder and it got louder and more heated and more argumentative, until finally he could restrain himself no longer. And he pushed the window open and said, "Stop it. Honey, what's wrong?" And after the reprimand she responded quickly, "But, Daddy, we were just playing church." -- Leslie Flynn, *Great Church Fights*

I wonder what the secular world thinks when they hear about a church that is in turmoil, a church where there is infighting, a church where there is disunity, a church where there is excessive and out of control conflict? I am so glad that has never been the case of any of the churches I have served as pastor. Now let me just say I truly believe that conflict can be positive, if, if it is handled the right way, if people who disagree do so in a Christ-like manner and not a destructive manner. Because, Friends, if there is no conflict, nothing is happening and there is stagnation and eventual death. The kind of conflict I am talking about is the destructive conflict where there is dirty fighting and people trying to "get" one another.

The Apostle Paul, who was first and foremost a pastor, is writing to the Philippian Christians in order to protect his friends because he loves them and wants the best for them. I mean, what pastor doesn't want to protect his or her sheep from pain? And so he gives 4 points to the church, 4 admonitions that are necessary to achieve unity. Let's see what they are.

First, **in verse 3- do not be selfish**. The society, in which we live today, up until recently, has been very self-oriented. Maybe we will see people come back to their senses and begin to think of others during these anxious times in which we live. But let's be honest, for a long time now it has been all about me, what's in it for me, how will I get ahead or benefit from whatever it is. The world asks, "How can I advance myself?" But on the other hand, you have the church which should be the antithesis of the society. And so instead of asking, "What about me?" the Christian should be asking, "How can this benefit the Kingdom of God?"

Self is all about me, about the individual and **the Kingdom of God is all about us**, it's a "we" thing, it's about **the body**. A sports team analogy is a perfect fit when we are talking about the church because it is a team concept where people come together to work for a common purpose, for God's purpose because that is the way it is to happen in the church. I just love the way Paul puts it in verse 3 when he says, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves." Now, that is the way it should be, and especially in the church.

Second, **in verse 3- Paul admonishes us not to seek to make a good impression on others**. In other words, don't be conceited. I know it is tempting, it is easy to get sucked into puffing ourselves up so that others will take notice and step back and be impressed. In our success-oriented society people want to make sure you sit up and take notice of their accomplishments, what they have done, what they have accumulated.

You see, there is this thing called PRIDE that can always, I mean always gets in the way. I've been told that prestige is for many, an even greater temptation than the all-mighty dollar, otherwise known as wealth. To be admired, respected, and the center of attention is very important to some people. But that is the world talking. For the Christian it is all about giving Christ the glory and taking a back seat. Again, there is no "I" in church because it is a "We."

And if we need someone to bring us back to reality, back to earth; if we need an example to follow, all we need do is read again what it says in verse 7 of our chapter when Paul writes this about Jesus Christ, "but [He-Jesus Christ] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." Another translation, the New International Version puts it in a more stark way for it reads, "He made himself nothing." And if He made Himself nothing, if He emptied Himself of his reputation, if He emptied Himself of His glory who, in heaven's name do we think we are to puff

ourselves up with pride and strut our stuff in front of others? Jesus certainly could have taken advantage of all the opportunities to impress the religious leaders, the crowds, the women, the rich and the poor. But He didn't, He voluntarily set it aside. So how much more, we, who do not deserve it, should set aside trying to impress others.

Which brings me to point #3- **in verse 3 Paul tells us to be humble**. He writes, "but in humility...." I recently heard about a pastor who was voted the most humble pastor in America. And the congregation gave him a medal that said, "To the most humble pastor in America." Then they took it away from him on Sunday because he wore it.

This third point really goes along with admonition #2 about seeking to make a good impression. And yet the second admonition focuses in on a person being proud of their deeds. Humility speaks against a person being proud of him or herself. It's the person who thinks they are better than anyone else. The superiority complex.

And Jesus wasn't shy about confronting the pride of those religious leaders known as the Pharisees. IF you have your Bibles please turn with me to Luke 18:9-14 and read along with me. "He [Jesus] told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

John Wooden, the most famous basketball coach in America who led the UCLA Bruins to a national championship 10 out of 12 years one day

called an acquaintance and said, "Hello. My name is John Wooden. I understand your little school needs a coach, and I have a man in mind I would like to recommend." He went onto say, "I've had a couple of years coaching basketball and I thought you might like to take a recommendation I have." A couple of years of coaching basketball! John Wooden wrote the book on coaching basketball. Isn't it refreshing that John Wooden didn't assume the person he was speaking with knew his voice or was impressed with his name? Being humble....

And the fourth and final admonition- **in verse 4 Paul tells us to be interested in others**. If the church was a one-person show would it, would we be in trouble. If we are truly being faithful and focused on the purpose of the church then the Kingdom of God isn't about what you are doing, or you are doing or what I am doing. The Kingdom of God is about what we are doing for Christ together. Does each person have a part? Yes, but we work as a team, in concert with each other.

Paul tells us to not look at our own interest but to the interests of others.

And when we are working together as a team, the world notices and we notice the effective results and this promotes unity in the body of Christ.

What should keep us united? The fact that we are all in Christ should unite us; Christ's love should unite us; the fact that we share the Holy Spirit should unite us.

Jesus said it best in John 17 in what is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer. He said it best when He said in John 17:21, my prayer is, "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Amen and Amen.

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What does it mean to be united?

The purpose for the Church is to: 1) _____ God; 2) _____ the saints; and 3) _____ the Good News

The Apostle Paul and his letter to the Philippians

There was one danger that threatened the church that Paul loved so much- _____

Paul gives four admonitions that are necessary to achieve unity

First, **in vs. 3- do not be _____**

Instead of asking, "What about me?" the Christian should be asking, "How can this benefit the Kingdom of God?"

Self is all about ____; the Kingdom of God is all about the _____

Second, **in vs. 3- Paul admonishes us not to seek to make a good _____ on others**

Vs. 7- the NIV translation: "He made himself nothing"

Third, **in vs. 3 Paul tells us to be _____**

Fourth, **in vs. 4 Paul tells us to be _____ in others**

Conclusion: Jesus said in John 17:21, "that they may all be one...."