

Message Date: 10-25-20

Special Communion Service

Message Title: A source of unity when everyone disagrees

– **PART 1: Communion and intro**

- **Special message today. Break from Acts... Observing communion at end..**
 - **Bread, cup. I have matza and grape juice... Really any bread, beverage- point today is what they point to, which of course is Jesus and what He did through his DBR.**
 - **Have these prepared...**
- **If not your habit, get your bible. Very important scripture, something you should read, see in your own bible, highlight.**
- **The context of today's message is the pending election, this season we are in, but the underlying principles, and central concept, relates to almost every area of life in which we find ourselves relating to other people.**
- **Today's message draws from one of the most fundamental truths of who we are In Christ, is intensely practical, and yet can be challenging to discuss because it addresses a part of life that is sensitive... where it's easy to get defensive, uncomfortable... even fearful... this is the area of our deeply held convictions and opinions, and how we relate to people whose deeply held convictions and opinions are DIFFERENT from our own.**
- **More basic, today's topic addresses an undeniable calling of God upon our lives, but a calling where the church, if we are honest, doesn't do so well.**
- **SO, I ask you to pray that while I am the one speaking, t is GOD'S WORD today, by the Holy Spirit, that speaks to us,. ALSO- I'm preaching to myself here!!**
- **THAT SAID, today is SUNDAY OCTOBER 25th, I'm Pastor Ethan... TRINITY ONLINE**

PRAYER

PART 2: Message

- **On March 3rd, 1991, Rodney King was filmed being beaten by four Los Angeles Police officers during an arrest. These officers were charged with assault and using excessive force. On April 29th 1992, after seven days of deliberation by a predominately white jury, all four officers were acquitted of assault and three of using excessive force. Within hours or the acquittals, riots erupted in Los Angeles, and later other cities. By the time the days of rioting ended in LA, there were 63 deaths, almost 2400 injuries, over 7000 fires, damage to 3100 businesses, and nearly 1 Billion in damage.**
- **During the riots, on May 1st, King uttered what would become one of the iconic quotes of the 1990's "Can we all get along?"... often misquoted, 'just'**
- **It's an essential question, but often quoted with a sense of fatalism. In a society with so much animosity and division, such a question can seem hopelessly naïve.**
- **Even so, King's question remains extremely relevant. Right now in America, we seem to be a people who deeply disagree about almost everything.**
 - **Politics. Make your list.**
 - **Covid. What it is, the response, masks, you name it.**
 - **Social issues, which of course become political issues. BLM. Abortion. Social justice. Immigration... again, you name it, we're divided on it.**
- **The question I want explore today is given these great divides, 'HOW do we navigate these? How do we live in unity, specifically as followers of Christ?'**

- **IS THERE A hope, a SOURCE OF UNITY AMONG PEOPLE WHO PROFOUNDLY DISAGREE ABOUT SO MUCH?**
- **Scripture declares that there is. Not just a potential for unity, but a undeniable CALLING to be people of unity. But HOW, when we disagree about so many things, even within the community of believers?**
- **A NOTE. We're going to see several principles that are relevant to anyone, Christian or not. BUT THE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH on which these principles rest is inseparable from faith in Christ, and speaks directly to us as followers of Christ.**
- **WHAT ARE our strategies for unity in the midst of great disagreement?**
- **ONE is what I'll call the BEATLES strategy. "1965- We can work it out"**
 - **Life's too short for fussing and fighting... we can work it out.. basically, we know that I'm right, your wrong, so... try to see it my way.**
 - **Strategy of arrogance.**
- **OR, my favorite... AVOIDANCE. Avoid discussions at all cost. "avoidance is better part of valor".. oh, wait... (wisdom). NOW, times when this probably IS wisdom, but if this is our plan, it means we only have in depth discussion with people who think like we do, AND real issues never get addressed. THIS HAPPENS in every area where we have conflict!**
- **IS THIS THE ONLY WAY? No.. of course not.**
- **EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY PEOPLE who are secure in their convictions... learned ability to LISTEN and consider another persons point of view, with a countenance of respect... desire to UNDERSTAND that is at least as big as desire to be right... SUCH PEOPLE should be able to navigate conflict and disagreement most of the time, whether they are a believer or not.**
- **ALL of what I just described should increasingly be part of how believers relate to other people, especially to each other!**
- **You see, IN CHRIST, the HOLY SPIRIT isn't just working to make us SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY. He is also working to make us EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY. Put another way, if we are increasingly SPIRITUALLY MATURE, we will also be increasingly EMOTIONALLY MATURE. These are not separate issues, they are two sides of same coin.**
- **WHEN WE LOOK TO SCRIPTURE, we see that as believers, TRUE UNITY in the presence of disagreement is possible because of the greater reality of our shared IDENTITY and ONENESS IN CHRIST.**
- **FIRST... A FEW MYTHS ABOUT UNITY AND DISAGREEMENTS**
 - **Sincere believers all think the same. NOT! If you think that if people are sincere followers of Christ and love the lord, that they must agree with you on all these big hot button issues... honestly, that's prideful.**
 - **THAT SAID... another myth.. seeking UNITY with people I disagree with requires me to either set aside my conviction or endorse their position. It doesn't, and the greatest example of this is the life of Christ himself.**

- **Turn with me to Galatians 3:26-28. Paul has just made the point that our LIFE, our salvation, but even more, how we live NOW, is no longer by the law- by our own strength and wisdom, but by the Spirit, who is at work in us through FAITH. Then Paul says...**

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- **Note the distinctions here! In Pauls time, these represented some of the greatest barriers in society.**
 - **Jew and Gentile. In the parallel passage in Colossians 3, ‘circumcised and uncircum’**
 - **Jews and gentiles didn’t associate! Jesus was looked down upon because he ate with Gentiles. Seen by jews as heathen, immoral, outside of God’s grace**
 - **Barriers- religious, ethnic, worldview**
 - **Slave and free**
 - **Barriers- economic (have, have nots), social, cultural, injustice, oppression**
 - **Male and female- huge barriers**
 - **Barriers- Gender, sexuality, social, cultural, and religious barriers**
 - **Again from Colossians, ‘barbarian and Scythian’**
 - **Barbarians- ‘uncultured, ignorant’, Scythian- heathen, wild, immoral, dangerous**
 - **Basically, these were the people you viewed as a threat, always a potential enemy, people you kept as far away as possible, not even worth engaging**
- **PAUL PROCLAIMS... ALL OF THESE BARRIERS... these issues, realities, worldviews.... They are overcome through the GREATER TRUTH THAT IN CHRIST WE ARE ONE. And so, to diminish a person for any of these differences is to diminish myself.**
- **NOTE THE PHRASE.. “we have CLOTHED ourselves with Christ”... in Colossians 3, Paul expands this idea, and he starts to get really practical. SURE, WE ARE ONE IN CHRIST, this is greater than our disagreements, but what does this LOOK LIKE?**
- **Paul has just said the old person we used to be has died, and we have been raised with a new life- and that new LIFE IS CHRIST HIMSELF... Christ is our life... pick up in v 5..**

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

- **Friends, THAT IS A CHOICE. The choice to recognize that we are no longer characterized by fallen human nature. That is NOT WHO WE ARE ANYMORE... temptation, old habits and struggles with ingrained behavior patterns are very real, BUT IN CHRIST, we have a NEW SOURCE OF LIFE that is no longer hostage to our FLESH, as we CHOOSE, DAILY, IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS, IN OUR CONVERSATIONS, IN OUR DISAGREEMENTS, to be LED BY THE SPIRIT, as people who are becoming spiritually and emotionally mature!**
- **WHEN WE DO THAT...**

¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

- **Then Paul turns from the negative to the positive. Again, consider this passage in the light of dealing with relationships where there is conflict and disagreement.**

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

- **Church... that is a picture of an emotionally healthy person.. Secure in God's love for us, and relating to people – BEARING WITH EACH OTHER- with the love and characteristics of Christ.**
- **KEY!!! THE RESULT IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF DISAGREEMENT, BUT THE PRESENCE OF UNITY in the midst of disagreement because we engage our disagreements through the VIRTUES – the maturity and health- OF CHRIST.**
- **Lets get really practical here. Think of an issue where you have deep disagreement with another person. REAL hot button topic.**
 - **Who should be president. Democratic vs republican. Capitalism vs. socialism. Fox news vs NPR or CNN**
 - **Abortion. Gay marriage, issues of sexual identity. Gun control. Immigration. MASKS.**
- **OK... now imagine a person who holds the opposite position of yours, just as deeply and passionately as you do. Maybe it's a coworker, some acquaintance... or maybe it's a family member... a CHILD, grandchild. CAN YOU IMAGINE HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH THEM ABOUT THIS ISSUE... and if you did, how did it go?**
- **NOW, what if that person also told you they also are a follower of Christ. Maybe they are part of your church, a Bible study group. HOW DOES YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, THE PRESENCE and work of the HOLY SPIRIT IN YOU... equip you, and CALL YOU, to have that conversation from a place of spiritual and emotional maturity?**
- **PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES: Unity in the presence of disagreement. Or, "how to have a Spirit led argument"**
- **LISTEN.**
 - **Ask yourself, do I have a willingness and desire to really hear and understand what this person thinks, why they think this way, what's going on... OR, do I just want to win the argument?**
 - **If I want THEM to listen and understand what I'm saying, do I think there's a hope of that if I'm unwilling to really listen, consider, and try to understand what THEY are saying?**
 - **Do I think it is possible that if I really do listen and consider where another person is coming from, that – SHOCK AND AWE- I might come to see something I hadn't, I might be a better person for it?**
 - **Do I value being RIGHT more than I value being in relationship? Am I afraid that validating a persons right to their position by sincerely listening and being a friend, somehow means I'm endorsing or morally validating their position? HEAR ME! There are boundaries! There are relationships that are NOT healthy! But too often in the church we are slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to judge, quick to anger. IN CONTRAST...**

James 1:19:20... My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Proverbs 18:13... to answer before listening—that is folly and shame. (To try and convince without first listening)

– **LOVE**

1 Peter 4:8. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

- *This isn't sentiment, it is the power of seeing a person as Christ sees them. As a person who has inherent worth and value, who needs to know the hope and love of Christ. This means that while we may disagree deeply, we NEVER DISPARAGE. We never indulge in self-elevation by diminishing another person.*
- *This is mark of deep maturity, because a hallmark of our flesh is to build ourselves up by tearing other people down. I do it. (had to leave debate...). But this is not Christ.*
- *And friends, one of the greatest expressions of love is LISTENING. It's been said that they often are confused, because they are so alike.*

– **Get over being OFFENDED.**

- *Jesus dealt with people who were against him, who lied to him, who betrayed him, who failed him, who abandoned him.. but he never was offended. He never waived in God's Truth, God's righteousness, but also never waived in love, patience, and forgiveness. If we turn our back on a person because they offend us, we're not protecting God or protecting 'truth', we're protecting ourselves.*

– **Armor up, but don't misidentify the ENEMY.**

Ephesians 6:11-12 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

- *That person you disagree with, deeply... they may be wrong. They may be part of the devil's schemes! (news flash, we can be as well!). Their stances, point of view may be directly counter to Biblical worldview... but THEY ARE NOT THE ENEMY. They are a creation of God, an immortal soul, and they need you to be Christ to them.*

– **Before we move into our time of communion, let me end with this.**

– **WHEN THIS IS HOW WE CHOOSE TO LIVE... Clothing ourselves with Christ, allowing the Spirit to take God's truth and transform us increasingly into spiritually AND emotionally mature people... then AS FOR US, we will be able to live in UNITY and peace with others.**

– **And regardless of who wins this election, whatever happens with Covid, whatever develops with these issues that we care about, and disagree about SO MUCH...**

– **As followers of Christ we will be people who live in UNITY with each other.... Whose lives are WINSOME, and God will work to reveal his truth and goodness through us!**

– **And not only that... in the midst of a divided and uncertain world, we WILL- on balance- experience the emotional health and security of people whose sense of worth, whose identity, peace, and JOY comes from the LORD.**

– **NO ELECTION OUTCOME can change that.**

– **PRAY**

– **COMMUNION**

- *When we observe communion, we are remembering the sacrifice of Christ... what God accomplished IN CHRIST through his death, burial, and resurrection.*
- *With the bread, we remember how Christ's body was broken for us.*
- *With the cup, we remember- and are taught- that Christ's blood is the sacrifice that opened the way for God's NEW COVENANT of salvation- NEW LIFE, by faith in Christ.*
- *This is the essential meaning and purpose of the communion, but it's not all. In 1st Cor 11, we are told to examine ourselves before receiving communion- to come to this observance with a heart completely open and surrendered to Christ, willing to be convicted if necessary, to hear how God would teach us. This too is a gift...*
- *But there's another aspect of communion we sometimes miss. We see this in 1 Corinthians 10, in challenging passage where Paul is sternly warning the church against idolatry, temptation, and disobedience. In the middle of this call for the church to live surrendered to Christ, he makes an interesting statement, using the example of communion...*

1 Corinthians 10:14-17 (ESV) ¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

- *Did you see that. Central to the truth we celebrate in communion is the truth that all believers- with our different stories, backgrounds, and our disagreements... we are ONE BODY... we are in UNION with each other... because we all have the same source of life, Christ himself.*
- *So, with an open and surrendered heart before God, considering how he has spoken through his word today, I invite you to take the bread as I read from 1 Corinthians 11...*

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

– **TAKE THE BREAD**

²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

– **TAKE THE CUP...**

– **CLOSE IN PRAYER**