

UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY

(The HS will bless us to bring us - He will bring us to blend & build us with others)

(He does this so eventually we can do battle with Him)

I. A couple of years ago, I was in a meeting with some leaders, and we were talking about how we could improve the ministry that we were doing among the people.

A. I was amazed at the diversity of thoughts that came forth.

1. Some said we should pray more, others said we should praise more, and still others said we should preach more.

a. Each who spoke were very passionate about their particular idea.

b. As I was sitting there wondering which idea we should use, I heard the Holy Spirit say “use them all.”

c. I began to understand that productive powerful ministry is a result of the Holy Spirit blending our diversity in such a way as to unite us in His purpose.

2. It reminds me of a commercial I saw involving Dion Sanders & Jerry Jones.

B. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 - “Men have different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives them. There are different ways of serving God, but it is the same Lord who is served. God works through different men in different ways, but it is the same God who achieves His purposes through them all.” (JBP)

1. In this passage there is Unity of source, the Spirit.

2. But there is diversity in the way the Spirit manifests itself through the different gifts and there is diversity in the way the Spirit operates through each of our service.

a. Unity = The state of being one or oneness.

b. Diversity = Difference, unlikeness, variety.

3. We are to be the same but different

II. In light of this scripture I want to talk to you about two things:

1) Unity of purpose

2) Diversity of gifts and ministries

A. Psalm 133:1 - Unity is pleasing to God which then releases His power.

1. Let’s take a closer look at some of the words that the psalmist uses in describing how God feels about unity.

a. The word translated “Good” in English is the Hebrew word “Towb” which means two things: “1) something beautiful and 2) something useful or at it’s best.”

1) In other words unity is attractive to God.

- **Attract means to draw to, to move towards and unite with.**

- Ecc 4:9 = Average workhorse

- Our unity attracts God and causes Him to unite with us. - **Matt 18:19 = 2 or 3**

- Phil 4:13 = I can do all things

2) Also it's through our uniting with Him and each other that we can then be at our best.

- Our best is brought out with each other and by each other. John 17:23, states, "*I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.*"

- **The word translated "perfected" in English is the Greek word "teleioo" which means "to add what is yet wanting."**

- In our unity we make up for each others lack.

- **Where one is weak another is strong, where one is slow another is fast, where one is ignorant another is knowledgeable, where one is hard another is soft, etc.**

- This makes us mutually dependent on one another - The Message renders 1 Cor 12:25 this way, "*every part dependent on every other part.*"

- **Knox translation - "all the different parts are to make each others welfare their common goal."**

b. The word translated "Pleasant" in English is the Hebrew word "na-yim" which means "*something so delightful and agreeable that it often becomes musical.*"

1) In other words unity is like a good song to the Lord.

2) A good song will stay with you, the melody and the words will get stuck in your head and your heart.

3) Our unity causes God to sing. It's what causes our lives to get stuck in His thoughts.

4) God begins to sing the New Life Church song.

2. Any kind of Godly unity pleases God which then releases His power.

a. The unity of silence released power that fell the walls of Jericho.

b. The unity of song released power to overcome Israel's enemies in 2 Chronicles 20.

c. And the unity of sadness and supplications released power on the day of Pentecost.

d. In this passage God likes it so much He commands a blessing (combination of oil and dew)

1) It's like oil - the power to help others

When the oil is released for others

2) It's like dew - the blessing to refresh yourself

The dew is released for you

3. This kind of Unity doesn't come easy, it comes at a cost.

- a. This kind of Unity isn't produced in good times but in bad, not in the easy times but the tough.
- b. Real Unity isn't the absence of divisiveness or relational problems but the ability to work through them.**
- c. If Michael the archangel was ever to ask the Lord why is He singing the New Life Church song? He might say, *"I let some things go wrong in their midst and instead of gripping about the problems they gathered for prayer. Instead of gossiping about each other they decided to guard one another. Instead of seeing it as a chastening, they saw it as a challenge. Instead of getting depressed they got determined. Instead of blaming each other they started to build each other. And instead of splitting from one another they decided to stay with each other."*
- d. Ephesians 4:2-3 - "Be always humble, gentle, and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another. Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together." TEV**

- *"Alert at noticing differences, quick at mending fences."* The Message

B. Diversity of Gifts and Ministries - The Church is like an orchestra.

- 1. Different instruments, but the same director. The instruments make different sounds but contribute to the same song.
 - a. Some instruments whisper like a violin - others shout like a trumpet.**
 - b. Some inspire like the saxophone - others comfort like a flute.
 - c. Others like drums create the rhythm and cadence.**
- 2. The soft flute needs the brash trumpet which needs the steady drum.
- 3. The operative word is need. They need each other, by themselves they make music, but together they make magic.**
- 4. As individuals of a church we may minister, but together as a congregation we can move mountains.
- 5. John 12:1-11& Luke 10:38 - In this story are 3 different instruments or types of Church members.**
 - a. Some play the drums like Martha - They work.
 - 1) Every church needs a Martha - 100 Marthas**
 - 2) Sleeves rolled and ready they keep the church on pace.
 - 3) Because of Martha's:**

- Church budgets get balanced
- **Church babies get bounced**
- Church buildings get built

4) Martha's are the energizer bunnies of the Church.

- They store strength like a camel stores water.
- **Since they don't seek the spotlight they don't live off the applause. It doesn't mean they don't need it, they just not addicted to it.**
- You don't appreciate Martha's until they are missing.

5) The weakness of a Martha is that they have a tendency of elevating work over worship.

- Too many times in an effort to get the work of the Lord done, a Martha will lose contact with the Lord of the work.
- **It is possible to be so active in the service of Christ as to forget to love Him.**
- Martha's need to remember that worship is service.

b. Some play the flute like Mary - they worship.

1) Mary's are gifted with praise and a heart to pray.

- **They don't just sing they worship.**
- They talk about Christ they radiate Christ.

2) Mary's have one foot in heaven and the other on a cloud. It's not easy for them to come to earth.

- Sometimes they need to be reminded that there are chores to be done and classes to be taught.
- **But don't remind them too harshly. Flutes are fragile. Mary's are precious souls with tender hearts.**
- If they have found a place at the feet of Christ, don't ask them to leave. Much better to ask them to pray for you.

3) The weakness of Mary's is they tend to elevate worship over work.

- It has been said that separating work from worship is like separating the heat and light from a candle.

- **You know both are produced by the candle, you know they are not the same thing, but you also know that you cannot separate them.**
- Marys need to remember that the purpose of prayer and worship is to produce a lasting work for the Lord.
- **Marys need to remember that service is worship.**

c. Some play the trumpet like Lazarus - They witness.

1) Lazarus did nothing at the dinner, he saved his actions for outside the house.

- Their heart is for those outside the Church.
- **They believe that the church may have many tasks, but only one mission.**
- Lazaruses understand that witnessing is not a spare-time occupation, or a once-a-week activity. It must be a quality of life.
- **A Lazarus doesn't go witnessing, he is a witness.**

2) But, the weakness of a Lazarus is that they elevate the lost over the saved.

6. All are needed. Some convert the lost, some encourage the saved, and some keep the movement in step.

a. Remember from 1 Corinthians 12:6, that it is *"God who works all things in all persons."*

1) He will work an element of worship and witnessing into all workers

2) He will work an element of work and witnessing into all worshipers

3) He will work an element of work and worship into all witnesses

- If you combine a Lazarus, a Martha, and a Mary, you will get a Mavis.
- **She works, she worships and she witnesses**
- I am primarily an expositor of God's word and an equipper of God's people.
- **But because they were needed God at times has worked all things in me.**

b. If God called you to be a Martha, then seek to remind the rest of us, there is evangelism in feeding the sick and there is worship in changing babies.

c. If God has called you to be a Mary, then remind the rest of us that praises give the proclaimer power and worship is a worthy service.

d. If God has called you to be a Lazarus then remind the rest of us that we too have a story to tell and that we too have a neighbor who is lost.

7. There is one more Character in this story who didn't find his place and he is one who typifies more than any other the average church member.
- a. **His name is Judas and he doesn't work, worship, or witness. He just wants.**
 - b. Let me tell you a story which will illustrate what kind of person I am talking about.
 - 1) **"A cold wind was howling and a chilling rain was beating down when the telephone rang in the home of a doctor. The caller said that his wife needed urgent medical attention. The doctor said, 'I'll be glad to come, but my car is being repaired, could you come and get me?' There was indignation at the other end of the phone as an angry voice sputtered, 'what, in this weather?'"**
 - 2) I have found that selfishness turns life into a burden, but that selflessness turns burdens into life.
 - 3) **I have also found that there is no room for God in the man who is full of himself.**
 - c. In every church there are those who:
 - 1) **Like Martha take time to work.**
 - 2) Like Mary take time to worship.
 - 3) **Like Lazarus take time to witness.**
 - 4) Or like Judas who just takes and takes.
 - d. **Martha's minister to the Saints** - Martha's perspire and keep the church on pace
Mary's minister to the Savior - **Mary's pray and creat an atmosphere of praise**

Lazarus's minister to Sinners - Lazurus's proclaim and cause productivity

Judas's minister to Self - **Judas' point accusing fingers which result in church life being poisoned.**
 - e. **Are you a Judas? I ask this carefully, but for your sake you need to answer it honestly.**
 - 1) Do you criticize the gifts of others, yet seldom if ever give your own?
 - 2) **Are you benefitting from the Church while never giving to it?**
 - 3) Do others give sacrificially while you give miserly?

IN CONCLUSION: If you are a Martha, be strengthened. God sees your work!
If you are a Mary, be encouraged. God sees your worship!
 If you are a Lazarus, be inspired. God sees your witnessing!
But, if you are a Judas, be warned. God sees your want!