

We Are Called to Care

Scripture Readings: Ephesians 4:1 – 6 and Colossians 3:8 – 13

2/19/23

A story to start: A Bible study was a small group to start. They only had six people involved. It was a very small group! This small group had a problem – it continued to grow into over thirty people! The deacons in the church suggested that they split the Bible study group but no one wanted to leave the original group. So they stayed together!

They had started with a small group and most of them were reluctant to speak. As the group grew, they realized that they could honestly share with each other. They prayed together. They helped each other in practical ways. Everything worked out great!

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus about who they were in Jesus. He said – they were blessed, chosen, forgiven, and the adopted children of God. He said – they were the revealed mystery of Christ. They were Jews and Gentiles coming together to form God's church.

Then in our scripture reading from Ephesians, Paul tells us – *'Lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. This will be reveal itself in practical ways. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. These are qualities that do not come naturally. We need to Holy Spirit's help to forge a unifying bond of peace.'*

So, how are we doing with these words from Paul? When have we experienced disunity in the church? When have we experienced unity and what do we think made the difference?

On a more personal note, how are you doing with these words from Paul? When have you experienced disunity in the church? When have you experienced unity and what do you think made the difference?

All great questions for us to ponder!

And in Psalm 133, David wrote these words – *‘How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.’*

This is our calling – to live in unity with Christ. It is who we are!

During the upcoming season of Lent, I will be leading a Discussion Group on ‘Character Driven Leadership’. It will start on Feb. 28th, a Tuesday afternoon at noon. I will also be offering this Bible study on ZOOM at 7pm for an hour for our virtual viewers. The Bible study will continue each Tuesday until April 4th. On the back table is an introduction to the Bible study that you can pick up and for our virtual viewers, please contact me or the church and I will send you the introduction electronically. This is a Discussion Group, so come ready to talk!

On TV, a new construction company said that it can build a new home in a month! The walls will go up very quickly!

In our lives, walls go up quickly! Our emotional walls go up quickly. A second story: on one side was a professor who was teaching about racial harmony skills. He explained to a Christian audience how, with God help, you can study gruesome facts about our country's cruel history on racial tensions without losing hope. On the opposite side, was a man who did not want to hear this information. He asked the professor – 'Why are you spreading such lies? My nation is not racist!' The professor and this man went back and forth discussing their disagreement. Finally a soft spoken lady stood up and simply asked – 'Will you join me in prayer?' Suddenly, the room became quiet and she added this – 'Might we turn together to God in prayer.'

Her calming plea can be heard in Paul's instruction in Colossians. In Colossians 3:8 – 13, Paul tells us to rid ourselves of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.

Paul wrote these words from prison to a church torn by competing views about Jesus. Paul implores the battling factions to turn not against each other but toward each other in unity.

Paul says – *'Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.'*

Be we may say – HOW? Paul says we can do this by – making allowances for each other's faults and forgiving anyone who offends us.

And Jesus himself said – *'Any Kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart!'* May we heed Paul's words and may most especially heed Jesus' wisdom today and listen with love as Jesus leads us!

Let us pray:

O God, help us to be patient today. Help us to respond to others in a kind and loving way. And, O God, when we have disagreements, let us continue to love one another. Soften our spirit to hear our different views and to react with love for each other. AMEN.