

## The Beauty of Family Unity

Scripture: Galatians 3:23 -29, Psalm 133, and Colossians 3:12 – 17

2/12/23

A local church pastor regularly talked about the congregation he was serving as 'FAMILY'. Like a garment that fits perfectly, the term 'family' was what he always referred to his congregation as. His church was the family of God. They had faith that the pastor would not lead his family astray. He lived by the words found in Galatians 3:26 – *'For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.'*

We are a church family and our status as a family is reinforced when we take communion as a family. As young and old and all believers in Jesus Christ, we make our way to the communion table each week for a family meal. Each one of will eat of the bread and drink of the cup together.

Now in Glendale Arizona, two teams 'The Philadelphia Eagles' and 'The Kansas City Chiefs' are preparing for a great game. It will probably be the second most watched game this year, just behind the World Cup final. The two teams will share that they are families. Their coaches, Nick Siriana of the Eagles and Andy White of the Chiefs, will tell them that if they play like a family and support one and other, they will win. Which family are you cheering for?

Let's hear it for the Eagles! Let's hear it for the Chiefs!

For the church, unfortunately, the sense of family and togetherness that we enjoy as we gather in Jesus' name can change when our setting change. A church family shared that after a pastor left after over 20 years with them, that their church family was broken. They was fighting within the church and some people had left the church. Their church family had become a dysfunctional family!

A church can go from taking a nice family picture, to taking a picture where visible cracks are within the church family. The church family will exhibit visible attitude differences and the once strong church family, will become a struggling church!

It is a sad picture! It is when people share the same faith, but just do not get along! It is when people share the same blood, but do not love each other.

Do you know that a team will wear the same jersey? Today the Eagles and the Chiefs will come out of the tunnel to enter the game wear the same jerseys. The Eagles will be wearing their green jerseys will eagle wings on their helmet and the Chiefs will be wearing their red jerseys with an arrow head on their helmet.

What are you going to wear when you exit that door after our worship service? What will you wear? I hope what you will be wearing is the love of Jesus Christ and I also hope that this love will be shared with others! I hope people will know what who you have chosen to serve!

It is sad when conflict and confusion abounds. It is sad when a brother and sister begin to fight. It is sad when a brother rise up against a brother or a sister will rise up against a sister. It is sad when one political party calls the other political party the enemy and they try to overthrow the government. It is sad!

If we allow ourselves to drink the murky waters of our culture, those who share fellowship together may find themselves at war with each other!

If we come to this communion table each Sunday and eat and drink together but do not have love for each other, we may find ourselves at war with each other on Monday. The unity that believers in Jesus Christ embrace at this table communion table should uplift our everyday living when we share this experience. Maybe that is why we celebrate communion each and every week!

Psalm 133 captures the beauty of unity – *‘How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in harmony.’* This short Psalm is among the collection of Psalms known as the ‘Songs of Ascent’. They are also known as the ‘Travel Songs’. The children of Israel would sing them when they traveled to or gathered at an annual feast in Jerusalem. Though they came from different locations, they were family. They were men, women, and children of God. Whether native born Israelites or foreigners living amongst them, they would gather in Jerusalem. And in this gathering, they would be reminded that they are family!

Psalm 133 celebrates the beauty of unity and harmony among those who share a covenantal bond in God and it invites us into this unity.

Our unity is found in Jesus Christ. Believers in Christ come from varied backgrounds. Believers in Jesus come from varied social, ethical, and tribal backgrounds. But our primary identity is found in Christ. In Christ we have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of our sins, and the riches of the grace of God.

As those who identify in Christ and experience union with Him and with the Holy Spirit, we should not be swayed by agendas and influences that compete with the supremacy of Jesus and our allegiance to Him. Rather, we are to be a force that counters the darkness in our divided world.

In Colossians 3:12 – 17, Paul encourages us to have a spirit led conduct that should have the characteristics of being a member of Christ's family. Paul also reminds us that we need to be inclusive, not exclusive, in who is in our family. Paul says – *'In this new life, it does not matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric or uncivilized or slave or free, Christ is all that matters and he lives in all of us!'*

Christ is all that matters! May our family in Christ bring into focus a healthy family dynamic that is essential to unity.

Since God chose us to be the holy people he loves, we must clothe ourselves with tender hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We must make allowances for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends us. We must remember that the lord forgave us, so we must forgive others. And above all else, we must clothe ourselves with LOVE which binds us all together in perfect harmony!

What is seen here is so attractive, desirable, and beautiful that we want to be part of this family. We want to encourage others in our family above all else. We want to do this so that our church family may grow in these qualities and in unity as the Holy Spirit works in and through us. And as for those not yet in the family of God, there is room in the family at the communion table for to all who believed in Jesus and accept him, Jesus gives all the right to become a child of God.

Go Eagles and Go Chiefs. Enjoy today's game!

Let us pray: We have been given a clear picture of what God's kingdom is to look like. It should be multicultural, multigenerational, and multiclass. We need to be on the side of that coming kingdom. AMEN.