

February 2, 2014

Being Community: United in Jesus Christ in midst of our diversity

Philippians 2: 1-18; Galatians 3: 26-29; Romans 15:5

How do you define unity?

Two images of unity.

1. All look the same – wearing the V for Vendetta masks
2. Different, diverse, yet connected to one another – Ode to Joy flashmob

We express this second sense of unity in our vision statement:

we “celebrate our unity in Christ in the midst of the diversity of God’s family”

The point is: conformity is not unity

In fact Scripture uses conformity to describe what not to do: “do not be conformed to the pattern of the world” – Romans 12:2

Romans 12:2 goes onto say:

“Be transformed by the renewing of your minds”

I think one aspect of being transformed by the renewing of our minds is to be grasped by a biblical understanding of unity.

Biblical unity is not rooted in conformity

Nor in homogeneity

Unity is not even rooted in us.

It is rooted in Christ

Unity is the character of our being in relationship with Christ Jesus.

This unity that comes through being in Christ

– is not in thinking the same

– it is rooted in thinking like Jesus

– having the mind of Jesus

This unity is not found in our agreement

– it is rooted in being at peace with one another

– because we recognize that we are made one in Jesus.

- Galatians 3: 28: Neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave or free, neither male or female

- Why?

- We who belong to Christ (are baptized in Christ) are clothed with Christ

Our unity comes through wearing Christ in our lives

But this does not mean that our clothes look the same

– somehow wearing Christ, our clothes are all different

– different gifts, talents, personalities, passions, perspectives

– Diversity does not diminish the unity found in Christ, rather it is the creative expression of the fullness of unity that is rooted in Christ!

And, such diversity does not divide us – rather it enables us to appreciate the fullness of God in Christ and the fullness of being human in Christ.

We know that it takes a lifetime for us to discover the depths of one another's lives, why would it not be true that it takes a lifetime to discover the depths of Christ Jesus as we live out our relationship with him, as we read and interpret Scripture through his eyes, through his mind?

There is much to discover in Christ,
– as we “believe Jesus and believe what Jesus believes” (Augsburger)

Unity is not coming to the same conclusions – **Unity comes from being focused through the same person.**

How do we live out this kind of unity?

1. It begins with recognizing our call

Php 2: “being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”

It is a call to be in Christ!

We are to live out our lives focused and rooted in Christ . . .

Do we begin our days – by centering our attention, ourselves upon Christ

2. It continues by putting on Christ

Gal 3: “to clothe ourselves in Christ”

The clothes of Christ are clothes of many colors – like the coat of Joseph

- read Scripture
- engage in spiritual conversation
- receive the diversity of the clothing of Christ

3. Be open to be transformed

Romans 15:5 “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had”

When we are in Jesus – no matter how diverse we are – we are united and held together by Christ Jesus

Our unity is not in our sameness

- our unity is in our finding ourselves
- together in Christ,
- following Christ,
- being the community of Christ
- in which we do different things, have different talents and gifts,
- and also think differently: different understandings, perspectives and interpretations on Scripture and issues.

So it is essential for us to be a discerning community as we gather around the Table of Christ
– for Christ to be our hub who holds us together

To hear God, to hear God through one another
– because God’s voice is multi-voiced, multidimensional

And we hear God fully only as we are a diverse community held together by Christ Jesus.

The more homogeneous we are, the less we can hear God fully;

The more diverse we are the more we can hear God in all God’s fullness.

So may we grow deeper in Christ Jesus and
“celebrate our unity in Christ in the midst of the diversity of God’s family”