

072818

I. My Notes... WWC message 072918

II. Series: A Summer of Psalms

a. Title: Together is Better

b. Text: Psalm 133

c. Quote: "We are all in this struggle together". Pastor Rick

III. Introduction

a. I'll start out with an honest (and probably revealing) confession. I'm frustrated with all the bitterness and dissension I read on social media. I know that it is a place for expression, a place to connect with people that are your "friends"... though I can't imagine how someone can have an active relationship with 350 "Facebook Friends" (taken from www.fool.com) and if you are younger you have almost 700 of these friends. I get it, people have opinions and they want to share them. More than anything, people want to be heard. I am of the opinion there can be differing viewpoints and they should be shared constructively and with understanding. These "personal" attacks and tearing one another down does an incredible amount of harm. Something I learned from my past is, that once something is said it can never be unsaid. It might be forgiven but you just can't un-ring that bell.

b. We are much better together. Hellen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much". That doesn't mean we have to be carbon copies of one another. Each of us has individual strengths and assets that we bring to the table. And when we use them together we have the tools and abilities (collectively) to accomplish any task. I know this whole thought process can be a volatile subject and I'm not looking to get anyone riled up. What I am saying is there is a better way, a fresh perspective is needed.

- c. The following story is taken from a sermon by Bob Joyce on church unity... “I read about a church that split, and that split began over an argument at a potluck supper when a lady brought a congealed salad she made with Cool Whip instead of real whipping cream. There’s a book entitled **War In The Pews** that talks about real-life instances which are absolutely outrageous.

Churches have split over whether the pianist should sit to the right or the left side of the podium, over whether the Lord's Supper should be served from the front to the back or the back to the front, over trying to decide whether a kitchen should be a part of the church building or not.

One church split over who was the real pastor. They had two pastors. Two groups thought they each had their own guy, and both of them got up to lead a service one Sunday. Both led the singing. Both groups tried to out-sing each other. Then both pastors started preaching, trying to out-preach each other. Finally, they just broke out into fistcuffs, and the police had to come in and break it up. That's absolutely outrageous.

In Mississippi, I led revival services in a small town northeast of Vicksburg and there were two churches that shared a common parking lot. They were the same denomination. But, because of some upset, they had split and they now share that parking lot. I wondered if they remembered what the split was about.

We're not being transformed.

The author Sheldon VanAuken once made the statement, "The greatest argument for Christianity is Christians. There is nothing more compelling than those who live the life of Christ. But guess what he said is the greatest argument against Christianity. Christians who don't live the life of Christ."

- d. As Christians, as people, we need to find ways to come together. We must begin to dwell on the things which brings us to a common ground instead of dividing over issues of preference. I hope to encourage you today.

IV. Text

a. Psalm 133:1-3 (ESV)

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

b. This Psalm is the 14th in the Psalms of the Ascents. The Ascent Psalms are grouped together Psalms 120-134

c. These psalms were songs of worship, sung by those traveling either on the way to Jerusalem or returning from there.

d. Songs touch us, they reach our emotions on a deep level.

e. I am always amazed how a song writer, how a poet, can express – in a few words – what I feel deeply or what I need to hear.

f. I think David (King, man after God's heart) recognized that we needed to be encouraged to come together

g. He described the ritual of anointing the High Priest and the blessing that accompanied it

h. God's blessing is promised on those that stand together, lasts forever – it is eternal

V. Sidebar

a. We tend to focus on differences. Maybe because we want to be unique or special

- b. More likely, it is because we want to be valued and seen – the differences are easily observable (at times)
- c. I often wonder if there is a way to value the benefits of individuality while promoting the strengths and assets that come with community – with standing together
- d. I'm not trying to turn this into a philosophical debate. I know that our Lord has given us individual gifts and traits – these are used to benefit (help, support, strengthen) the body, all the while encouraging us to stand in the strength of unity
- e. I wonder if we really understand unity – living, existing together
- f. Community – common characteristics (attitudes), fellowship with others, interdependent... Communion – sharing intimate thoughts and feelings, the ritual Christians participate in, recognition and acceptance between the individual and the church
- g. Is it a plausible idea that individuality and unity can exist at the same time? Is it a possibility that the strengths and characteristics that exist within each person can strengthen and promote togetherness?
- h. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT2)

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

VI. Good and Pleasant

- a. There are things, in life, that you would consider good... like taking medicine. It is good and helps you deal with an issue that you are struggling with. But truth be told medicine doesn't taste all that good
- b. There are things, in life, that you would consider pleasant. Sticking with the idea around taste – which can be as varied as each of us are. Having too much of things that are pleasant tasting can put you in the position of needing medicine
- c. Good and pleasant together is a bit more difficult to come across
- d. According to the psalmist, we are to “behold” – to pay attention and recognize, what is good and pleasant
- e. Think about this Psalm of Ascent. If it was sung during travel, especially on journeys/trips to and from Jerusalem, who were they traveling with? Family!
- f. Sharing everything, with those around them, on journeys that lasted days
- g. In our “instant” culture, we don't have much of a sense of that kind of commitment and investment
- h. We must support, help, encourage, and walk with each other throughout the course of life. That means when things are simple and easy, we can relax and celebrate.
- i. When there are difficulties, we all get to pitch in and bring about a positive resolution
- j. That is GOOD and PLEASANT as far as the Lord God is concerned

VII. A Story

- a. It's really too bad that we have learned to withdraw from one another
- b. When I was in a child, we lived in a neighborhood where everyone knew each other. The kids would play together- no, not “play dates”. We would

ride bikes, explore, make up games, share sodas and icees, etc. I remember that the family across the street had a huge tragedy. The Father was diagnosed with cancer (a death sentence at the time). The neighborhood rallied around the family... the Moms cooking meals, taking on laundry and household chores, and caring for the kids. The Fathers mowing the lawn, replacing the fence, reroofing the house.

- c. I doubt you would see that kind of response today... and it is a desperately needed attitude

VIII. Anointing

- a. In Scripture, oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit
- b. As believers, once we have come into a relationship with Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are "anointed" with the Holy Spirit.
- c. Remember our study in 1 John?

- i. 1 John 2:27 (CSB)

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in him.

- d. We often hear Christians pray for "an anointing of the Spirit" on God's servants, yet each true believer has already been anointed of God. This anointing establishes us so that we do not fall (2 Cor. 1:21-22) and enlightens us so that we do not go astray (1 John 2:20, 27). Every believer needs this strengthening and teaching ministry of God's Spirit. *Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) – Old – Wisdom and Poetry.*

- e. The prophecy in Isaiah 11 about the Messiah said that the Spirit of the LORD would rest upon Him (cf. 11: 1,2) and Jesus stated that same Spirit would rest upon us (see John 14 and 16)
- f. We have been anointed with the same Spirit the rested-on Jesus
- g. Aaron was anointed to prepare him to go before the Lord. That anointing had to be done each time – it was temporary. The Holy Spirit remains in with us and keeps us in a right relationship with the Lord
- h. We are united by this anointing

IX. Being Blessed

- a. What is the blessing of unity?
- b. Too often, when people come together they disagree, they fight, and there are often deep-seeded reasons behind these things
- c. The communication skills of today are lacking. With everyone trying to communicate thru a screen, in 140 letters or less, true communication... connection - is difficult to say the least
- d. We desire connection.... Many would tell you they want to be part of something bigger than themselves
- e. We need to take the time to hear and understand others – especially those in our family – before we speak
- f. One huge blessing of unity is having someone to lean on... in the hard times.
- g. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (MSG)

It's better to have a partner than go it alone. Share the work, share the wealth. And if one falls down, the other helps, But if there's no one to help, tough! Two in a bed warm each other. Alone, you shiver all night. By yourself

you're unprotected. With a friend you can face the worst. Can you round up a third? A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.

- h. Support and help are essential but there is more
- i. When we have learned to love one another, to serve one another, to be together... not only are we being a "blessing" to each other. But, we are communicating to everyone around us what God's love and grace looks like.
- j. That kind of example allows others to see that the void they have been trying to fill, the deep need they have, love and acceptance is available

X. It Can Be Hard to Find

- a. Larry Crabbe (Teacher, Author) wrote a book called Soul Talk. I read it some time ago. As I was preparing for this message, I saw this quote.
- b. "Which is worse? A church program to build community that doesn't get off the ground or one person sitting every Sunday in the back of the church who remains unknown? A Sunday school class that once drew hundreds but has now dwindled to thirty or a Sunday school teacher whose sense of failure is never explored by a caring friend? A family torn apart by the father's drinking, his wife's frustration, and their third grader's learning disabilities or a self-hating dad, a terrified mom, and a lonely little boy, three human beings whose beauty and value no one ever discovers? A national campaign that fails to gain steam for the pro-life movement or a single woman on her way home from an abortion clinic in the backseat of a taxi, a woman whose soul no one ever touches?" (Soul Talk, HarperCollins Publishing, 2005)
- c. Unity is something we choose to live – it isn't just a good idea or being around people that you think agree with you

- d. God has appointed the blessing of life to be seen in unity – it is those who dwell there, who walk with one another thru any/every circumstance; Who seek to love the Lord and share that in every aspect of life; they discover the good and pleasant things that the Lord has laid before them

XI. Final Words

- a. Amos 3:3 (MSG)

Do two people walk hand in hand if they aren't going to the same place?

- b. John 17:11 (CSB)

I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one.

- c. Romans 12:4-5 (NCV)

Each one of us has a body with many parts, and these parts all have different uses. In the same way, we are many, but in Christ we are all one body. Each one is a part of that body, and each part belongs to all the other parts.

- d. 1 Peter 3:8 (Phillips NT)

To sum up, you should all be of one mind living like brothers with true love and sympathy for each other, generous and courteous at all times.

- e. We have a responsibility for one another. It's not a responsibility of judgement and condemnation. It is one of grace and love

- f. Jesus illustrated it – He lived it. It is possible that we can live it too, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit

- g. Let's Pray

h. May you find your reason, your gift, so that you can be a blessing to others.
May the Holy Spirit fill you to overflowing and bind you deeply with the Lord
so that you can sense His presence in every step of your journey