

Text: Psalm 133:1-3

Title: “Living in Unity”

SERMON BUMPER – Let’s open our Bibles to Psalm 133. With only three verses it’s actually one of the shortest chapters in the Bible but it carries a powerful message for us today. When the Israelites would go up to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship on special occasions they often sang songs called “Songs of Ascent.” Psalm 133 is one of those songs. When we come to church we come in a car by ourselves or with our family. When the Israelites went up to Jerusalem to worship they would go as a crowd ... families or tribes traveling together in unity toward a common destination with a common purpose. David sings about this. **Read Psalm 133.**

Hardly a week goes by that I don’t encounter a broken family ... a husband and wife struggling to get along ... brothers and sisters that won’t even be in the same room with each other ... family members who won’t even speak to one another at a wedding. It can get ugly for sure. And perhaps we all have heard the horror stories of church fights that get so ugly they have to call the police. Disunity is an ugly thing. But David has the opposite on his mind. As he writes this song he’s thinking about the beauty of people living together in unity.

You see, God desires for us to enjoy unity in our relationship with Him and in our relationships with others, at home and at church. Notice what we learn about unity from this short psalm.

1. UNITY IS A SATISFYING EXPERIENCE.

You can hear the sheer delight in David’s voice.

Psalm 133:1 - How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

Actually, in the original text the sentence begins with the word, “Behold! Look! The combination of the words “good” and “pleasant” paint the picture of something really sweet. It’s lovely and attractive. For brothers to “live together in unity” means there’s a bond that sets their relationship apart from all other relationships. They’re brothers and sisters, either by blood or by a covenant, who enjoy closeness and intimacy with each other.

OUTLINE - Write this in your notes: **Unity pleases God and is pleasing to us.**

Unity pleases God, and that's why He says so much about it in His Word. And that's why over and over God warns those who would destroy the unity of a family or a church. And that's why Jesus prayed for His disciples in...

John 17:20-21 - "My prayer is ... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Unity pleases God, but it is also pleasing (satisfying) for us. It thrills my heart when I see it in my family when we're gathered for a meal and there's laughter and joy. It thrills my heart when I see it in our church when we gather on the Lord's Day and hug each other's necks and pray for one another and sing together.

Now, unity does not mean uniformity, and it doesn't necessarily mean we are always unanimous about everything. It's an inward attitude. For unity to happen in a home or in a church we have to put aside our preferences and our pride so we can focus on what we are to be and do together as the people of God. Jesus prayed for unity among His followers so world would see that the Father has sent the Son to save the world from their sins.

Unity means we value the role of every person in the family or in the church. There are no superstars.

ILLUSTRATION – Those of you who follow the NBA know that a couple of weeks ago one of the biggest trades in NBA history took place when LeBron James left the Cleveland Cavaliers to play for the Los Angeles Lakers. After that trade sports analysts predicted that the odds of Cleveland winning the NBA championship without LeBron dropped to 500-to-1. One man is pulled out and the future of the team craters. In my thinking that's not a very good team. And thankfully the church more than a team; we're a body where every part is essential to the health of the whole body.

So we learn from this psalm that unity is a satisfying experience, but also...

2. UNITY IS A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.

Unity is spiritual because it has to do with our relationship with God.

Psalm 133:2 - It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.

First of all, notice the name "Aaron." This Aaron is the brother of Moses, that great man of God in the OT. When God made His covenant with Israel through Moses, Aaron was assigned to be the first priest. He would make it possible for a holy God to have fellowship (unity) with unholy people. Aaron would do this by offering sacrifices for the sins of the people. Aaron was a peacemaker, a unifier among God's people. Once each year, Aaron went into the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle to offer the blood of a sacrifice as atonement for the sins of the people. But in the NT we see that Jesus came to be our true High Priest who offered His own sinless body as a sacrifice for our sins so that when we trust in Him we can enjoy union with a holy God. That's the Gospel.

Now when Aaron was first set apart for this important ministry God commanded Moses to anoint Aaron with a special, fragrant oil. This oil was poured lavishly on Aaron's head, then it flowed down into his beard and then dripped down on the collar of his robe. So much oil was used that all those who were witnessing the event could see the oil dripping and smell its sweet fragrance.

Now all of this is important because God knows that we can never be right with other people so long as we are not right with God. Or to put it another way...

OUTLINE - Horizontal unity with others is a result of vertical unity with God.

You see, all relational problems, at the root, are spiritual problems. If we're not right with others, the solution is spiritual. And if we don't work to resolve broken relationships it reveals a spiritual problem in our lives. We can't be right with others if we are not first right with God.

And as followers of Jesus, the basis of our unity with one another is the reconciling work of our great High Priest Jesus Christ. The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit who is lavishly poured out on us making unity possible by His ministry in our hearts. That's why the Bible tells us...

Ephesians 4:3 - Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

That's why we are told in...

Romans 12:18 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

So we learn from this psalm that unity is a satisfying experience and a spiritual experience. But also...

3. UNITY IS A SUPERNATURAL EXPERIENCE.

Unity is the pathway to the supernatural blessings of God.

Psalm 133:3 - It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Hermon is a mountain that towers above the Holy Land on the northern border with Syria and Lebanon. Most of the year Mt. Hermon is capped with snow. As the snow melts it flows down to form the Jordan River that flows into the north end of the Sea of Galilee and out of the south end on down to the Dead Sea. The river is a refreshing presence in the whole region and it all starts on Mt. Hermon. But here the reference is to the heavy dew that falls on that mountain, refreshing the vegetation in that arid part of the world. David longs for the “dew” of Hermon to fall on another mountain, Mount Zion, which is symbolic of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel.

Dew in the Bible is a symbol of the supernatural blessings of God. For example, when Isaac blessed Jacob and gave him the privileges of the first-born son (even though he wasn't the first-born) Isaac said...

Genesis 27:28 - May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness—an abundance of grain and new wine.

In the Bible dew is a symbol of God's blessings. I love Tom Elliff's definition of blessing:

OUTLINE - “A blessing is a sovereign act of God by which He causes someone or something to supernaturally produce more than would naturally be possible.”

Wouldn't you love for the blessings of God to be upon your life, your home and our church so that we could supernaturally produce more than is naturally possible?

Now, like dew, God's supernatural blessings appear when the conditions are right. We don't see much of any kind of moisture this time of the year in Texas. But when the atmospheric conditions are right we see dew form on the grass or on our windshield. Dew appears when the conditions are right ... when air cools and causes something invisible (water vapor) to become visible in the form of little water droplets.

And the invisible grace of God becomes visible in the form of His supernatural blessings when the conditions are right. And one of those conditions is unity.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the sons of God." We're never more like God than when we are striving to make peace with others wherever God puts us. And Jesus promises a blessing for those who are peacemakers.

God wants to pour out his abundant, supernatural blessings on His people when the atmosphere of unity is right ... in the home and in the church.

Psalm 133:3b - For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

"For there..." Where? Where there are brothers living together in unity God by His sovereign will orders His grace to be bestowed. And that blessing is "life evermore." This is the very life of God Himself that we share in when we receive the gift of eternal life through Christ. And that life is experienced in community with other believers. None of us are perfect, but we need each other.

ILLUSTRATION – A few months ago there was an article in the New York Times about a very unusual orchestra performance that took place in Philadelphia. The orchestra was made up of 400 amateurs and professionals, children all the way up to senior adults. A gifted musician named David Lang composed and conducted this symphony. As the performers took their places on the stage and began the symphony the audience noticed the musicians were not playing normal instruments. Each performer was playing a broken instrument. There was a trumpet held together with blue painter's tape, a violin with a string missing, a cello that had to be carried in pieces. This was all a kind of protest performance to highlight the fact that the funding had been cut for school music programs. But the

symphony started out with just the noise you might expect from a bunch of broken instruments, but then as it progressed you could make out the melody, and then some simple harmonies and eventually a beautiful masterpiece. David Lang called his work, “Symphony for a Broken Orchestra.”

We’re all broken instruments with pieces missing, but we are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed in the Body of Christ to make the beautiful harmony of unity. And by the grace of God when your broken life plays along with my broken life it becomes something beautiful that points other to Jesus.

Psalm 133:1 - How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!