

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Jan 17, 2021. "Let the Healing Begin: Setting our future"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

Even though it's a new year, thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

Sunday was the last in our healing series, and after the events of a couple of weeks ago, we have to admit we need to be actively working towards healing more than at any time in our lifetime. At the risk of being too political, healing can only come when we name what causes divisiveness, hold those accountable who speak words of hate, division, commit acts that cause divides, who promote a perpetual system of inequality and racial injustice. And then actively work to create expectations and structures that call out injustice, things that divide, and become the children of God by rolling up our sleeves and doing the work of making peace.

So, without going into too much detail, the past two weeks we've talked about the causes of division. Such as creating and pushing 'sides' and 'camps' in a way that forces people to choose who they're following. This often stems from a very narrow view of scripture, and from a personal theology, (understanding of who God is), that is not centered in Jesus nor focused on the cross. And then we did a diagnostic test determining if the love we believe we share is the 'full' love Paul described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. This list was not for us to try to do each of those better, but rather to see where love may not be felt by others in its fullness. Both of these are available for review on our app.

So, just for fun. **Based on last week's message on the specific elements found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 that talk about love, where were you strong, and where do you ... need some work?**

III Sunday.

Sunday we talked about the future of building a community on a foundation that would promote and encourage unity in diversity, rather than creating sides that cause division or forced conformity for everyone to get along. But first there was a little review. Paul reminded the people that our differences are designed by God not to create sides, or the right way or wrong way to do things, but rather to grow this beautiful tapestry of different gifts and abilities all working in unity for the purpose of something bigger. And, an even harsher message from Paul stated that those who create and

cause division are actually operating out of their “*sinful nature*”. We tend to think of people who do things we don’t do as the real sinners, far from God, but Paul was saying those who create sides of right and wrong, in and out, are working out of their “*sinful nature*”.

A couple of questions just to remind us of the seriousness of divisiveness.

How have you experienced division in a community, church or some other organization?

What did you see as the causes of that division?

Scripture used Sunday was lengthy. We’ll include the entire body, but only use a part of it for the rest of this devotion. **Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.** We’ll only land on verses **10-23** for our discussion.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did it say to you about the causes for division?

How do you see it speaking into things we can do to help build unity?

Let’s center on the teaching of building a foundation. Paul said this IS the essential starting place to building a community of any kind, but especially a community of faith. And he gave us some specific elements of what this foundation rests on.

1. The cross of Jesus. This has been a constant theme all through this series. The cross not only reminds us of the work that happened on that cross, but also the heart of Jesus as he willingly sacrificed his life. Once, we fully grasp the sacrifice of self, and heart, that Jesus displayed on the cross, then we will fully understand and embrace what we must do to bring unity.

How could keeping the work of the cross front and center help you work towards unity?

2. Remembering everyone who is a part of this work is part of the temple which God resides.

This passage explicitly states that each person was gifted differently. Not for us to follow or promote them. But to be an important part of a larger work that God is doing. Our differences and diversity aren’t for us to claim who’s right and who’s not. But rather for all of us to work together side by side.

Why is it easy for us to forget people not like us are part of God’s family?

3. Constantly checking for surfacing pride that you might be the standard. There is this constant tension, (it will always be there), and battle to make our preferences, values, and beliefs the standard for everyone else to be measured by. We have to fight the urge to be the guardian of purity, and realize we are just a part of this greater thing being done.

What do we do with an understanding of right and wrong, but not letting it make us proud?

IV Challenge.

Even though this was our final in the “healing divisions” series, we know our work is never done. To be agents of unity and healing, actually making peace, we have to constantly remember the key truths Paul shared. We must be Jesus-centered and cross focused. And we have to learn to embrace that the diversity of thought, opinions, perspective are all part of God’s great work, and we do our part of helping move all of us, not to be the same, but in the same direction.

So, what could you do specifically to help be a part of the work God is doing?