

Clothed with Compassion

United in Christ

“Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” - Colossians 3:11

In our world today, it seems we are divided in every way one could imagine. It's enjoyable to consider all the differences that we have culturally and ethnically, sharing our experiences with others. Increasingly, however, our world is encumbered by divisions that are damaging and leave many hopeless, longing for justice, hope and peace.

I grew up in New York City, born in Brooklyn and lived in both Brooklyn and Staten Island. I was privileged to live in such an incredible place, and I have always had a sense of pride about where I am from. Throughout my childhood, I was surrounded by people from about every walk of life, which is made possible by the sheer scale of the city. It wasn't something I thought about much while I lived in the city, but people living, working, and enjoying life all around me were from nearly every part of the world, and yet collectively, we were all New Yorkers, with shared experiences being from the same city, same borough, same neighborhood.

Watching young children interact with others, without animus or prejudice, is such a beautiful thing to witness. I can remember times at school or in the many parks around NYC, playing baseball, basketball, and handball with friends. We made up teams, selection was usually based on knowledge of skill level for each person, and we would play hard for our team, we would play to win. None of our differences seemed to matter at that time, we focused on winning and working together as a team.

God has created each of us to be an important piece of the most incredible tapestry we could ever imagine, His Kingdom. It is such a travesty, that with all the beauty God has made in us and around us, there could be so much hate, anger, and destruction. It is important for us to remember that God has crafted every person and has put His image on us.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, writes some important reminders to us. We are one body, with many parts; no one can tell another part of the body that it isn't needed or isn't important. We ought to value the other parts of the body and recognize how much we need each other to thrive. The body requires various parts to function properly.

“The eye can never say to the hand, “I don't need you.”

The head can't say to the feet, “I don't need you.”

-1 Corinthians 12:21

Making observations of our world today, watching tensions rise, and turmoil erupting on streets throughout our country and the world, it certainly makes me think about what the response should be for followers of Christ. We are to be clothed in compassion as it says in Colossians 3:12 and to also have kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

The body of Christ, the Church, need always remember that we are part of each other. Regarding the Kingdom of God, our earthly distinctions seem to take a back seat in comparison

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to the grandeur of being part of the body of Christ. This of course doesn't mean that we should throw away the things that make us who we are, God gave those things to us, and it is quite an extraordinary thing to consider the lineage that has led to each person's existence.

Just like the teams we would form on baseball fields, basketball courts, and handball courts, we would function as a unit and cheer each other on to the whole team's success. It would be rather strange if members of the same team were quarrelsome or maligned against one another. A team built on dysfunction and strife won't be a winning team. Unity is needed to make a body function well. Jesus teaches this lesson to His disciples when they are inquiring of Jesus how others would know that the disciples were indeed followers of Christ; Jesus tells them:

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." -John 13:35

Following Jesus, we must decrease so that Christ may increase in us. This is not an easy thing to do, just look at the letters in the New Testament written to the churches. There should be a delightful, dare I say, refreshing, unity in the body of Christ. When others see the love that we have for one another, they should be able to recognize Christ in us, it is proved by our character and conduct within our members.

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How do we show compassion to a world that desperately needs solace and reprieve from the constant bombardment of negative news, destructive words, and increasing anxieties? We learn to encourage, love, show kindness, and genuinely care for one another. This will be the proof that we belong to Christ and will be a powerful example to our world, one that cannot be refuted.

- 1. How can you be a bridge to help others overcome barriers that are imposed by society?**
- 2. What can you do to stir up unity among your classmates or veterinary professionals?**
- 3. How can you encourage someone who feels hopeless, with the hope of Christ?**



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