

UP – Psalms of Ascent
Unity
Psalm 133

I grew up in a very LOVING home. My parents loved me and my brothers and my sister, and they taught us how to love one another. But it was not an easy process. My parents had 4 very different children, and they had their hands full training us about how to get along. This was most evident when we went on LONG TRIPS together! Back in the day, we jockeyed over who would get the prime position in the car (*laying up in the back dash beside the window, especially when it was cloudy*), and wrestled with how we could keep from TOUCHING one another as we rode along. I can remember my dad having to patiently reprimand us about fighting and arguing. His patience wore thin as we whined and complained and picked at one another. At times, he had to use some external corrective measures to get us to be civil with one another. *I remember one incident clearly when Dad was completely exasperated after correcting us for the one-millionth time, he shouted out, “We are going to FINISH this trip together and you are GOING to HAVE FUN!”* It was a frustrated, positive THREAT! He knew what we would be missing if we continued to travel with a DIVISIVE SPIRIT.

I think that it is APPROPRIATE and somewhat HUMOROUS that Psalm 133 is included as a Psalm of Ascent that had to be sung out loud as these various families traveled the long journey together to Jerusalem! Can you imagine the issues they had to face as they made that long HOT (or COLD) trek together? Parents probably enjoyed having the children sing these words!

Psalm 133 NASB

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!
 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing--life forever.

Oh, that we truly UNDERSTOOD and EMBRACED this in our HOMES and in our CHURCHES, much less in our NATION! Unity is one of the greatest BLESSINGS in human relationships. In fact, it is more than just a blessing; it is the KEY to blessing. Where there is unity, there is LIFE and HEALTH.

Unity is an ESSENTIAL complex component of all HEALTHY relationships.

UNITY=To dwell together as a UNIT, a UNION/JUNCTION, all together at ONCE.

**This comes from the ROOT WORD: To JOIN as ONE*

Do we really need to be reminded about how IMPORTANT unity is? Apparently so! David started with the word BEHOLD. This means that he wants us to really LOOK at it and THINK about it. Don't take unity for granted! Don't ignore how its

presence (or absence) affects our daily lives and relationships! Can you even put a PRICE TAG on the VALUE that unity has to us? It brings JOY to our experiences together. He reminds us that unity is GOOD and PLEASANT.

*GOOD=Beneficial, Right, Excellent (Is relative=BETTER!)

*PLEASANT=Delightful, Lovely, **MUSICAL!**

Unity is NOT UNIFORMITY! It does not mean that you LOSE what makes you UNIQUE as an individual. It does not mean that you FORFEIT your INFLUENCE or even your INPUT into a given setting. In fact, unity is made strong because of the DIVERSITY of those who are living together! Unity is like HARMONY; it is a beautiful CHORD that is made up of DIFFERENT NOTES that DO NOT CLASH with one another, but instead work together to make beautiful MUSIC!

These descriptive terms are of course in CONTRAST to DISUNITY! How awful it is when families or brothers and sisters in Christ cannot get along with one another!

*ILLUSTRATIONS: [Ricky and Lenny] [Church Fights in Gravel Ridge, AR]

In light of this, I want to look at what David COMPARED unity to in this Psalm. He uses TWO ANALOGIES: Oil and Dew. Both of them have much to teach us! I will focus mostly on his FIRST analogy from **Exodus 30:22-33 NIV**

22 Then the LORD said to Moses, 23 "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant calamus, 24 500 shekels of cassia--all according to the sanctuary shekel--and a hin of olive oil. 25 Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. 26 Then use it to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law, 27 the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, 28 the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. 29 You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. 30 "Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. 31 Say to the Israelites, 'This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. 32 Do not pour it on anyone else's body and do not make any other oil using the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. 33 Whoever makes perfume like it and puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from their people.' "

The OIL: GOD'S RECIPE FOR UNITY. (Contained 5 divinely prescribed spices)

-This oil was COSTLY! [Oils have to be painfully extruded from their source]

*Makes them precious: Perfume is a \$40 BILLION dollar per year industry!

-This oil was UNIQUE! [It stood out among all other fragrances! JOHN 17]

-This oil was CRUCIAL to SERVICE! [ALL priests had to wear it!]

*We are all priests!

-This oil was COMPREHENSIVE!

*Its SMELL absolutely PERMEATED its environment. [Lisa's perfume!]

*It SATURATED all those on whom it rested! No one left out!

The spice of COMMITMENT: "... when BRETHREN dwell together in unity."

Dwell=To Abide, to REMAIN!

*FAMILY describes the CO-PASSENGERS that you did NOT get to CHOOSE!

*FRIENDS are the CO-PASSENGERS that you DO get to CHOOSE!

The FIRST REQUIREMENT of unity is that we STAY TOGETHER in order to work through our differences and difficulties! Sadly, it is easier today to DIVORCE one another than it is to make the beautiful choice to REMAIN together!

[\$69 Dollar Divorces in Florida!]

You see, unity is a CHOICE that we make NO MATTER WHAT we may be going through at a given time. Life is tough, and I do not want to understate the reality that many things that we go through with the people around us are extremely DIFFICULT. To compound this, UNITY is something that requires MORE than just ONE PERSON'S RESOLVE. Unity demands that YOU and I BOTH choose to handle our differences and difficulties with something other than our OWN SELF INTERESTS in mind! That makes unity a profound MIRACLE when we find ourselves disagreeing about some particular issue. DON'T RUN; REMAIN!

***Commitment necessarily requires the presence of TRUST!**

The spice of appropriate COMMUNICATION:

*Communication is always a TWO-WAY STREET!

-It requires that multiple people choose to LISTEN as well as to SPEAK!

-This allows us to UNDERSTAND one another as we seek to resolve issues.

*Appropriate communication is a MUST! **Ephesians 4:29 NLT**

29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

-Is your goal VOLUME or VALUE?

-Are you HONORING the others in the group by what you are saying?

-How are your words affecting the unity of the family?

Proverbs 6:16-19 NASB

16 There are six things the LORD hates--no, seven things he detests: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, 18 a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, 19 a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord in a family.

The spice of HUMILITY:

This means that you do not ASSUME that YOUR OPINION or even YOUR NEEDS are the most important consideration in every given matter! This requires that you really SEE and VALUE the needs and opinions of others. This expresses itself in a specific kind of love: **Ephesians 4:1-2 NLT**

1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

*Gentleness is an aspect of a SPIRIT-CONTROLLED humility.

[One of my favorite verses: **Psalm 18:35** – “Thy gentleness makes me great!”

*Patience is required for ANYTHING that you want to WORK THROUGH!

*Making allowance for faults: Remember that you are working with PEOPLE!

The spice of FORGIVENESS: Ephesians 4:31-32 NLT

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

You will NEVER remain in any committed context without the benefit of forgiveness. It is simply not possible. You will have to forgive people over and over for their failure to see what you saw or do what you do! They will have to do the same for you! We are imperfect and we need the spice of forgiveness in order to keep moving forward with one another.

*This forgiveness needs to RELEASE them from your DEBT!

The spice of LORDSHIP: Ephesians 4:3-6 NLT

3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.

*You and I are in the SAME FAMILY as children of God at CHC! We serve the same Lord, and HE DECIDES what our PURPOSE and our DIRECTION will be as a family. We have to be willing to navigate the difficulties and changes and troubles that we will face together over the years.

[My experience here in 27+ years: Hard-won UNITY!]

Let me ask you some questions: Is there unity in your MARRIAGE? Is there unity in your FAMILY? Do you see unity in our CHURCH FAMILY? More importantly, are YOU doing what you need to do and acting like you need to act in order to CULTIVATE unity in those contexts? Are you cultivating it, or CRUSHING it?

Every Israelite who sang this song after the reign of David had to face the reality that unity is a FRAGILE and PRECIOUS thing. They knew that their nation was no longer united, but divided into NORTH and SOUTH: ISRAEL and JUDAH. The final verse spoke of the fact that both had to be united for the blessing of unity to really exist among them because Mt. Hermon was in the NORTH (Israel), but its dew flowed directly into the SOUTH (Judah), thus watering the ENTIRE NATION.

3 It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for THERE the LORD commanded the blessing--life forever.

The blessing – LIFE - is always waiting on us, but we have to CHOOSE it by the way we live WITH ONE ANOTHER in UNITY, for only THERE does God release the blessing of life! What will YOU have to LOSE in order to discover this? My prayer is that you won't have to lose a thing!

Let's pray.