

UNO/ONE

Good evening many of you have been keeping your distance and I hope keeping up with one another. I would be interested in knowing what are some ways that you have passed the time (productive or recreation)? Feel free to share them in the comments if you are following along live or do a journal for the journey and make notes or jot down thoughts of these trying but blessed times. You might use that journal to keep working through these studies and sermons.

Also if you need to share privately any thoughts on the lessons/sermons or prayer requests you may respond here live, send a message through messenger, or through bowtiepastor@gmail.com.

One of the ways our family has found some family recreation time in the evenings has been reminding ourselves how to play some old card games. One of those games is *Uno* which means one. If you have never played *Uno* the gist of the game is a player must get rid of all their cards, when they get to their final card they must indicate they believe they are down to their final card by saying Uno. This alerts the other players that this person is close to winning/ending the game. Other players with most often attempt to block this move in various ways. If the player with one card remaining fails to call out Uno, then they incur a penalty and are unable to end play on the next turn.

It is truly a fun way to pass an hour or two, but it can also be frustrating. There are many ways during the game another player can make you collect more cards or change the color on you. Although it is fun a good bit of the time, it can be frustrating and aggravating trying to get to Uno and then win, you must look out for number one (numero uno).

Let's consider together how being number one is different than being one? What thoughts do you have that you might like to share with the group if you are tuning in on Facebook? When we consider being number one instead of being one, it may not look that different at the surface. However, any time we enumerate (being number one), there are winners and losers. This may not be a big deal when it comes to playing a board game, card game, or sport, but when it comes to

God's Kingdom this is a big issue. When we feel the need to compete the Kingdom loses.

There is one universal church, with many members/manifestations/local addresses. It's similar to saying your bank has many locations but one name. Typically, when a local church thinks they are the totality of the church, it reflects the structure within the that local church. In many cases being number one is more important than being one. It is in competition that God's Kingdom and mission suffer. Being number one is about the individual whereas, being one is a relational way of existing. When we are one our differences are not held as divisive but make us diverse. Helping us to reach more broadly and grow more deeply.

Oneness is a clearly evident in the relationship of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.)

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Deuteronomy 6:4 ESV

The context of this scripture falls in Deuteronomy 6 following a retelling of the Ten Commandments then this statement is the foundation for all worship (and relationship) as we are created relationally in God's image. This verse comes as the people will soon be heading into the Promised Land. They are reminded that "The Lord is one," but for us to be one, we must acknowledge that God is *our* Lord. We become brothers and sisters because we acknowledge that we have the same Father.

A similar story comes to us from the New Testament in John's Gospel.

¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will

believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

John 17:11, 15, 20-21, 23 ESV

This prayer was given to God by Jesus with his disciples. This was the last time they would be together before their world was turned upside down. In John's account, following this prayer Jesus was betrayed, arrested, faced the father-in-law of the high priest, and the high priest that year Caiaphas who stated, "that one man should die for the people". Peter denies him multiple times, he is brought before the Roman Governor Pilate. Pilate wants nothing to do with him, he questions Jesus, gives into the people, releases Barabbas, and delivers Jesus to be crucified. All within the span of a few hours. In a few more hours the penalty would be carried out and Jesus crucified.

This was a troubling time and a turbulent time for Jesus and his disciples. It looks as if things are quickly moving toward his death. The disciples must have felt confused, scared, and uncertain (about the future and their future) much less the ministry Jesus had given them. How would Jesus' mission and ministry survive these days, and his death?

How about you? What events or circumstances have you feeling confused, scared, and disappointed? What has you feeling unsure

about the future and your own future? In what way or how does the work of Jesus go on? How do we in these turbulent times understand Jesus' call as our vocation even if it is not our living? It's not what we do but who we are.

Take a few moments if you need to answer some of these questions for yourself. You can do that now and share in the comments if you like, or in a journey journal, or out loud with a family member or trusted friend. In sharing think too about positive ways in which we can share dreams and visions of the work of Christ in the midst of these days.

These notes are available in the notes section of the Antioch Facebook page or through email. If you have not received them yet, you may not be on the email list. You can email me at bowtiepastor@gmail.com for me to add you to our list.

This prayer is part of a lengthy teaching following Jesus's last supper and his washing his disciple's feet before his crucifixion. Jesus begins these final hours with these words...

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35 ESV

How is this type of love even possible, let us look again at Jesus' prayer...¹¹ *And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.*

Jesus tell them that he is going back to the Father and will not be in the world much longer, but the disciples would be, and so are we as Jesus' disciples today. His love is manifest through us. Jesus prays that the disciples would be kept by God, and they would be *one* as he and the Father are *one*. They would not be one without Christ, they may be too tempted to look out for number one than to be one.

¹⁵ *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*

We may be looking for God to deliver us from these days, times, or moments. Jesus's prayer for his disciples wasn't that they would run away or be protected from the world, but they be kept from the evil one. The evil one seeks to steal, kill, and destroy and he starts with relationships. Divide and conquer, remember what he did all the way be to Adam and Eve. Oneness is for our defense and stability...

¹² *And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

Ecclesiastes 4:12 ESV

There is strength in numbers, but only when that number is unified, one. It is a relationship of disciples to other disciples with the Lord in

the middle of it all. This three-fold relationship is strong and is not easily broken. Jesus asks in prayer not only just for his current disciples, but for their ministry and mission in his name. That unity would not only be with these 11, but with all who would believe.

. ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

All those that would believe, would believe through the word that the disciples shared. Jesus extends, "that they may all be one" like Jesus and the Father, and these believers in them. Why? So that the world may believe that you have sent Jesus. Our oneness is so important, it is the way that the world will know that God sent Jesus. Not big buildings, events, not flashy presentations, but in being one.

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:35 ESV

How is this even possible? Jesus instructs his disciples to love one another. When we become one there is no another, we love as if we are loving ourselves, because to love a brother or sister in Jesus is essentially loving ourselves if we are one. It will take humbleness and humility. Those don't come easy if we want to be enumerated (counted) as number one.

Paul reminds us...

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members,^[a] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Romans 12:3-5 ESV

We are not to think less of ourselves (a demeaning way), we are to think of ourselves less (in a humble way). In doing we are able to connect with Christ and others in a way that brings oneness.

One body, many members, not the same function, but the same purpose, and though many are one body in Christ and so we are members of one another. We belong to each other. What a gift in these days. Truly, take time after this is over to think of the ways we are one, with each other in Christ?

⁴ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Ephesians 4:1-7 ESV

Paul to the church at Ephesus and to all who would believe...he says, he is a prisoner for the Lord. That could be physically in prison which he was often but also meant, he was bound to Christ. He urges to walk in a manner worthy of the calling. How? With all humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love. Not just

bearing, but eagerly maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Many times, there is not eagerness to maintain unity, because to maintain unity, "I don't get to be numbered as one." I give up my rights to myself. I give up my right to be right. Being or having a right doesn't make us righteous. It is impossible without Christ and the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Ephesians 4:4-7 ESV

We are one body, Spirit; calling in hope; one Lord, faith, baptism, one God and Father of all. God is over, through, and in all. Paul comes back around to grace that was given to each one and it is Christ's gift. I cannot claim special privilege because grace was not my work but God's. When we are graceful, live graciously, and extend that grace we are participating in Jesus' work. We do not do it alone. We are one with Christ and each other.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19 ESV

We don't love because we are good, we love because we are loved. Christ's love compels us. In these turbulent times I am wondering how we can become more observant, faithful, hopeful, and loving?

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18 ESV

Verse 17 strikes home in recent days...if anyone has the world's goods (things we need in scarce times, toilet paper, other basic needs). If we have things that others need and close our hearts, how does God's love live in us? It doesn't. We are called up to join John (oneness) when he says, "let *us* (one) not love in word or talk (words are worthless), but in deed and truth."

In the days ahead, be reminded you are not alone. We are one for our defense and stability, we are one as we serve one another in ministry, we are one as we participate in his mission in the world today. Don't be counted as number one (numero uno), but be called together becoming one in Christ. One in him. Uno need not be a game or a competition, but the way we live in relationship with Christ and others. Are we Uno? Jesus prayed so, and I do too.

God bless

Pray

Remind about Front Porch Friday's

Poll about an opportunity to do additional discipleship another day, time, or method.

Check out app or website at www.antiochsandston.org.