

SERMON OUTLINE: ABOUT UNITY AND EQUALITY

Preacher: Joshua Caldwell, guest preacher

Text: **John 17:20–26** – 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. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 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. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Ephesians 4:1–6 -- 1 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.

Central Idea: *The unity of the church should reflect the unity of the God we worship. When sin, pride, preferences, and unforgiveness divide us, the gospel gives us practical tools to restore and protect unity.*

INTRODUCTION — DO WE LOOK LIKE THE GOD WE WORSHIP?

- *We live in a deeply divided culture.*

Political divisions.

Racial divisions.

Economic divisions.

Generational divisions.

Cultural divisions.

Social-media divisions.

- *What happens when the church begins to look more like the divided world than the united God who created it?*
- *What does our God reveal about unity?*

POINT 1 —Unity reflects who God is.

The foundation of Christian unity isn't sociology, it isn't psychology, it isn't organizational strategy. **It is theology.**

We pursue unity because **the God we worship is one.**

- **GOD IS ONE**

Deuteronomy 6:4

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”

Isaiah 45:5

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.”

- **THE ONE GOD EXISTS AS THREE PERSONS**

The Father is God.

John 6:27

The Son is God.

John 1:1

“The Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

The Holy Spirit is God.

Acts 5:3–4

Peter tells Ananias that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God.

And we see all three simultaneously at Jesus' baptism:

Matthew 3:16–17

- The Son is baptized.
- The Spirit descends.
- The Father speaks.

Three distinct Persons. One God.

This is the doctrine of the Trinity.

- **DISTINCT DOES NOT MEAN DIVIDED**

The Father isn't the Son.

The Son isn't the Spirit.

The Spirit isn't the Father.

One God. Distinct Persons. Perfect unity. Biblical unity does not require sameness. Unity allows distinction without division.

- **JESUS USES UNITY AS THE PATTERN FOR OUR UNITY**

John 17:20-23

Jesus prays: "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."

Our unity is supposed to reflect God's unity.

- **PAUL CONNECTS THE UNITY OF GOD TO THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH**

Ephesians 4:4-6

"One body, and one Spirit..."

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism..."

"One God and Father of all..."

One God → One Lord → One Spirit → One body.

If the God we worship is united, the people who represent Him should pursue unity.

We worship a united God while often living as a divided people.

POINT 2 — WHY do we desire division?

What keeps God's people from living like God's people?

- **PARTIALITY — "YOU'RE NOT LIKE ME."**

Partiality says: "You are more valuable because of what you have, who you are, or what you can offer me."

The gospel says: "Your value is found in being made in God's image and redeemed by Christ."

- **STRONGER AND WEAKER BROTHERS — "YOU DON'T THINK LIKE ME."**

Not every disagreement should become a division.

We must learn the difference between: **Biblical doctrine, personal conviction, personal preference.**

If everything becomes a hill to die on, eventually **there will be nothing left but hills and dead relationships.**

- **PRIDE — "MY WAY MATTERS MORE."**

Division often begins with:

"I, My opinion, my preference, my rights, my recognition, my way."

Paul says: **Look at Jesus.**

Philippians 2:5

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..."

- **UNFORGIVENESS — "YOU HURT ME."**

Matthew 18:15

Jesus says:

"Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone."

The world says: **Post about it. Tell everybody. Build a coalition.**

POINT 3 — Biblical tools to fight the fight

- **How do we fight for and protect biblical unity?**

TOOL #1 — HUMILITY

Philippians 2:3-5

"Do I need to win this argument, or do I need to preserve this relationship?"

Humility doesn't mean abandoning truth. It means **truth isn't an excuse for pride.**

TOOL #2 — LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love:

- is patient

- is kind
- isn't jealous
- doesn't boast
- isn't easily provoked
- doesn't keep a record of wrongs

Love changes how we interpret people.

Instead of: "Why are they always like that?"

Ask: "**How can I understand them?**"

TOOL #3 — FORGIVENESS

Colossians 3:12-14

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave you."

Forgiveness doesn't say: "**It didn't hurt.**"

It says: "**The hurt will not determine how I treat you.**"

TOOL #4 — FORBEARANCE

Ephesians 4:1-3

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Forbearance means:

"**I will give you room to grow.**" You may be strong where I'm weak. I may be strong where you're weak. That's why we're a body.

CONCLUSION — "DO WE LOOK LIKE OUR GOD?"

The issue isn't simply whether **we like each other**. The issue is whether **our lives accurately represent the God we claim to worship**.