

Celebrating Our Fresh Start

This is one of the most **divisive times** in American history. Everyone seems to want to figure out whose **political or ideological team we celebrate at weddings instead of just doing like picking teams** after which you get on with the game? That's because it's **worth celebrating**. We **celebrate at a concert** when multiple creative musicians and vocalists come together to make something special. Oneness is **worth celebrating**.

Particularly when it is the church. We have people **leaving churches because of political issues** and things like **masks**. And then you **look at our history** in the protestant churches. We started by breaking away and we've been dividing ever since. This is not to be **construed with strategically planting churches or ministries** that is multiplication, which is described in the book of Acts. **We have seen churches split many times over things that aren't essential, or spiritual, but rather over preferences**. It is based upon **pride**, not on spreading the gospel.

We celebrate the Holy Spirit making 2 into 1.

The apostle Paul was leading people to follow Jesus and then helping them come together as a fellowship, a church. This, in many cases, had different kinds of people. Some were **Jews, others were not**. Some were **slaves** and others were **slave owners**. Some had **money**, others were **poor**. In his **letter of encouragement to one of these churches** he wrote these powerful words.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? ²Then make me truly happy by **agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. ³ **Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves**. ⁴ **Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too**. ⁵ **You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had**. Philippians 2:1-5**

Did you notice all of that talk of being one? He used phrases like "agreeing wholeheartedly," "working together with one mind and purpose." Then he gives the **attitudes and action that will enable all of that one-ness**.

- Don't be selfish.
- Don't try to impress.
- Be humble.
- Think of others as better than yourself.
- Don't look out for your own interest.
- Take an interest in others.

- Have the same attitude as Christ...

We will read the rest of this chapter, later where he writes a poem that describes Jesus' attitude.

We can tell from this passage that...**It is Jesus' desire that we are unified.**

He wants us to follow him in the way we relate with others. His one-ness and unity with the father is our example.

This then becomes about submission to King Jesus or disobedience.

This next passage is what is called **Jesus' farewell prayer**. This whole section is called his **farewell discourse**. This happens to be the **longest prayer of Jesus**. This is very similar to what Moses prayed. Jesus begins in verses 1-8 **talking about his relationship with God the Father**. **Then he turns to his prayer for the church**. This is the part we will read.

As we are reading through this passage, **mark any reference to unity or one-ness that you can find.** ⁹ **"My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you.** ¹⁰ **All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory.** ¹¹ **Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are...** ²⁰ **"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.** ²¹ **I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.** ²² **"I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one.** ²³ **I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.**
John 17:9-11 & 20-23

It is Jesus' desire that when he leaves them in his physical form, that they will experience the same intimacy and one-ness that He has with the Father.

It's based on his unity with the God the Father and The Holy Spirit. **In other words, it is based upon who God is. He is one.**

He prays this first for his disciples and then he prays it for those who will come after. That means us.

This unity is powered by love, it is not generated by us but given to us.

"The confidence of the church's mission rests here: If it lives in the Spirit (and thereby in the Father and Son), if it reflects God's glory and love, if it shows a unity in its ranks born by a shared knowledge of God, its testimony will astonish the world." 468

On this first anniversary we are seeing that...**We are better together.**

There are things that have **benefited both** those who were Eagle Ridge Church of God before becoming one church with Beaverton and those who were a part of Beaverton Church of God.

How it helped Midland...**We had to think beyond ourselves and our own survival.** We were nudged into **thinking about another community.** We got to see **God do something big** right in front of us. **We were given the gift of sacrifice.** That means we got to **act like Jesus.**

How it helped Beaverton...**God gave the opportunity to exercise great courage,** to do something new and to stand up to opposition. No longer are a few people **keeping that ministry afloat.** They were in a difficult position to **get another pastor,** even part time. There was a **survival mentality.** It is **tiring** to feel as if you are keeping the church you love afloat. This, blessed with a **renovated facility** that can be **even more useful in the community.** **The focus can be outward when it isn't about trying to survive.** And we believe that there will be a **resource center** in Beaverton to help people with meeting their basic needs, one of which is a relationship with someone who cares, who introduces them to Jesus. You got **new people** like Deb and Dave, Dwane, Cassie and Ty, Joel and Shelley...

Refer to video

Both got to be a part of something that could be a model for other churches to start a new life cycle.

I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. John 17:23

What is one of the biggest separations right now in America? I don't think it's between black and white. I think it's between rural and urban. So what do we get to demonstrate, that a small town rural area group of people and a buttoned down city group of people can be unified under Jesus and for his gospel. What an opportunity!

²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that

you belong to Christ, you are the **true children of Abraham**. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you. Galatians 3:27-29

Let's break this down. Jew or Greek, that is **racial or cultural**. Slave or free, that is **economic and power**. Male and female, that is **gender roles**. But it goes even further. Because you are one in Christ, you are **the true children of Abraham**. That means that God has a **covenant to be your God and you his people that cannot be broken**. What was once based on a **nation** or an ethnic group now is only based on one thing, **submission to Jesus as King**.

The church is not a **niche or a homogeneous unit**. It is a **body**.

We are better in reaching the lost when we are together. **When we are diverse and yet one, we spread into the nooks and crannies of culture better**. We don't all hang out in the same places, work in the same places, or recreate in the same places.

You can tell that **something is valuable when it costs you something to get it**. That's the way it is with unity. **Together demands effort and sacrifice**.

I talk about one-ness in every wedding I do. It is hard work, but absolutely worth it.

Here's a practical blueprint for unity. Do these things and it will happen. Do the opposite of these things and there's no way it will happen. **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.** ³ **Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.** Ephesians 4:1-3

Again Jesus is our example of unity demanding effort and sacrifice. After all, his being one with the father is the basis of our ability to be one.

²⁷and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:27-28

Let's go back to Philippians 2 where we find Jesus as the example of what it took to provide the unity that we are to preserve. ⁶ **Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.** ⁷ **Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,** ⁸ **he humbled**

himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:6-11

We are to make an effort to maintain what Jesus has established. Being one church in two locations takes work.

- The preaching schedule...but it's worth it!
- The technical stuff...
- Relationships with one another...
- Picnic in the summer...Baptismal services together...
- Bridge groups that have Midland and Beaverton people...

Together brings greater joy.

If it's what God desires for us, if we are better at doing what God has called us to do together, if we see people sacrificing for one another, then that will naturally bring joy.

Something that takes effort to accomplish always brings more joy than what is taken for granted.

Pleasing the one you love brings joy.

² Then make me truly happy by **agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.**
Philippians 2:2

One of the real secrets of following Jesus is that our joy doesn't come from what we achieve. There is a deeper joy that comes from seeing those who you sacrifice with, serve with, worship with, and suffer with, live a life worthy of their calling. ¹⁷ But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. ¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. ¹⁹ For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

That is even more intense when it is someone who you have poured your life into, someone who you have discipled. No, I'm not talking about a

program necessarily. I'm talking about someone you have a **relationship with, who you are helping them learn how to follow Jesus.**

Steps to building off of our fresh start...Renew our covenant with one another. I want to **run through the parts of this covenant** and then we will repeat it together as our commitment to continue this fresh start that has started.

I will assume good motives when I don't understand. It is so easy to not understand what someone is doing or saying and assume the worst. That's what happens in our culture; let's be different, even when we disagree.

I will view diversity as an advantage for the kingdom. I mean age, men and women, republicans and democrats, blue collar, white collar, black, white, Asian, homegrown or transplants.

I will not let frustration turn to bitterness. Here's a fact in any relationship, **we will disappoint one another.** To think that it won't happen is naive. This issue is **will we let it fester and grow into something much worse and that is bitterness.** God's word warns, **do not let bitterness take root** because it will poison many. That is what destroys churches.

I will build up and not tear down my brothers and sisters.

I will seek first to serve not to be served. This is the Jesus' way. He came to serve and not be served and he is our example in all things. **When I'm frustrated with Robin or one of the kids,** I try to figure out a way that I can serve them without being asked.

I will pray for and encourage our leaders (pastor, staff and Elders). **First, we desperately need it.** No amen's necessary at this moment. **Second, it's hard to keep a bad attitude toward someone** for whom you are interceding at the throne. It's easier to appreciate your terribly flawed leaders.

I will seek to express the fruit of the spirit over the gifts of the spirit. **When I find myself whining about not getting to do what I'm "gifted to do" or that I'm not fully being utilized or highlighted** as I should be, that is a sure sign that I've got it backwards. I'm focused on the gifts instead of the fruit. **I must trust those people who God has put in place to lead and then ask "Is my present attitude producing this kind of fruit?"**

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22-23

Thank you all for being willing to sacrifice for unity and Kingdom.