

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT

Daily Briefing • Day 2 of 5 • Unity as Testimony

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
John 13:35

Sunday we looked at a church that found unity and community as a byproduct of shared mission. Today we look at what that unity is for, and why Jesus said the watching world would learn something about Him from it. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You say that people see You in the unity of Your church as we love one another the way You loved us. Our culture is divided and fractured, at each other's throats all the time. I pray that You would help me leave those values, beliefs, and behaviors behind and adopt and implement Yours, so that I can value people, concern myself with the well-being of my brothers and sisters in Christ, and resolve conflict quickly and completely. I ask for Your help with this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

Our culture talks about unity more than almost any culture before it, and it is coming apart at the same time. People demand tolerance and community while tearing each other apart online and across dinner tables. And there is a problem underneath the demand: our culture denies God, which means rejecting absolute truth and absolute morality, and then it turns around and insists that you ought to accept people who are different and look out for the weak. Denying absolute morality and then issuing moral demands is inconsistent.

By way of contrast, the church has something our culture cannot manufacture. Sunday we looked at a church that was unified and in community as a result of shared experience, values, beliefs, and mission, and every bit of it rests on God's existence. On the last night before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for believers who had not been born yet, which includes you. He was asking that those future believers would all be one, just as the Father is in Him and He is in the Father (John 17:20-21). The model is not a policy or a preference; it is the relationship between the Father and the Son. Humans were made in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of the Son, and churches can be united in that truth the way the Father and Son are united in community.

Then Jesus says what that unity is for, and the reason points outward. He asks for it "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21), and again "so that the world may know that you sent me" (John 17:23). Earlier that same evening He gave the new commandment and attached the same outcome: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Jesus tied the world's ability to recognize Him to the way His people treat each other.

Sit with how much weight that puts on an ordinary Tuesday. In a culture as divided as ours, a church that actually loves its own people is a testimony to the beauty and wisdom of God, and Jesus offered it as evidence for His own identity. Which means the reverse is true. Congregations that split over politics, preferences, and positioning pull the evidence off the table in front of the people who most need to see it.

READ & MEDITATE

John 17:20-23

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that 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. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even

as we are one, ²³I 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 13:34-35

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

Read John 17:20-23 and count how many times Jesus gives a reason for the unity He requests of the Father, and notice the audience each reason names. Then read John 13:34-35 and notice the standard He sets for the love He commands. Not as much as you can manage. As much as He loved you.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Jesus prayed for unity and gave a reason that points outward, at people who do not yet believe.

What does that tell you about how God intends to make Himself known in a divided world?

Fill in the blank from John 17:21:

*“...that they also may be in us, so that the world may _____ that you have sent me.”
(John 17:21)*

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

That one word is the reason Jesus gives, and He repeats it two verses later with a different verb.

What changes about how you handle concern for or conflict with another Christian once you know Jesus made your unity part of His case to the watching world?

Sunday named four things that hold a church together: shared experience, values, beliefs, and mission.

Which of those four are you actually sharing with somebody at this church right now, and which one is missing?

A divided church pulls the evidence off the table in front of the people who most need to see unity that contrasts with our culture in conflict.

Name one believer or group of believers you have written off. What was the actual reason?

Was it something the Bible actually makes essential such as key doctrines (Galatians 1:8-9) or ethical standards (1 Corinthians 5:9-11), or a secondary issue you promoted into a dividing line?

Jesus set the standard for this love at the level of His own: just as I have loved you.

If someone far from God watched how you treat other Christians for one month, would Jesus be easier or harder for them to believe? Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. As we've read, God's ear is not dull. Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite John 13:35 from memory:
