

Sermon for August 3, 2008

Boscobel & Mt. Zion UMCs

Text: Ephesians 4:1-16

Title: "Come Together"

Introduction: Ever wonder what it would be like to inherit great amounts of money from an unknown relative? Have you ever thought about what you would do with the money? I've heard people say when they won the lottery, "Well, I'm just going to keep living the way I always have. I'm going to keep going to work and doing my part in society." And you want to say back, "Yea, Right!"

So, what would you do? If you inherited \$10 million that you did not know you were going to get from a family member you did not know you had? Would you spend it on yourself? Your family? Would you put it in a bank for your kids and grandkids? Would you give it to a charity to help underprivileged people? Honor your family member who left it to you?!? I would hope so!

This is where we are at in our series, "ONE" as we study Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. In the first 3 chapters Paul has taught the people of Ephesus about the incredible gifts they have from God, whether they are Jew or Other (Gentile), they are promised God's riches. Now, Paul spends the last 3 chapters of Ephesians explaining our responsibilities to Christ.

Remember again what Paul is trying to accomplish as he writes this letter from a prison in Rome. He is writing back to the people of the Christian Church he started there in Ephesus to encourage them to become "ONE". Paul understood that there was great potential for that Church in Ephesus to influence a whole lot of people in their city and in the surrounding areas, IF they would work together. So, Paul writes in hopes that the church there will live up to it's potential.

Guess why I'm preaching this series? To encourage the UM Churches of Boscobel and Mt. Zion to live up to their potential!! We have an incredible opportunity to influence our community and the surrounding areas for Jesus Christ, BUT we are going to have to be 'ONE' to do it!

Now, in the Old Testament we find again and again where God promises that he will bless the people of Israel (Jews), IF they first obey God by doing whatever it is he desires for them to do. David, you will conquer another nation if you will do this or that. Joshua, you will conquer Jericho if you march around the outside of the city once a day for a week. Noah, you and your family will live if you spend the next few years building a boat in your backyard. Moses, you will be blessed if you quit watching sheep for your Father-in-Law and go back to Egypt. Israelites wandering in the wilderness for forty years, you will have food if you do not try to store it up, but instead trust that God will provide food from heaven every day. Moses you will conquer the Promised Land if you will just go in and take it. David, you will be a great King if you will just be patient. God said to the people of Israel, "You will be rewarded for your obedience."

But, in the New Testament, with the New Covenant through Jesus Christ, Paul is teaching the Ephesians that they do not have to EARN God's blessing; they already have it! That's what Paul spent the 1st 3 Chapters of Ephesians or the 1st half of his letter teaching the people about. You are rich! God has blessed you! God has ALREADY rewarded you, now you need to live up to it!

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. You will find our Scripture for today in there and also some space to write some notes from what you hear and see in today's message. My hope is that you will hear something that will be helpful to you in your faith journey or someone you know in theirs. We all need to continue to grow in our faith and our 'Miracle Grow' is in God's Word!! With that said, let's start the second half of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians...

READ EPHESIANS 4:1-16 NOW AND PRAY!

So all this that Paul writes in our Scripture for today he writes in response to what he wrote in the first 3 chapters. Because God has made you wealthy spiritually, we should respond to God in a certain manner. Paul gives clear instructions in these verses on how to respond to God's grace and mercy in our lives. Paul teaches us:

- I. What To Be (vs. 1-3)
 - A. #1 = BE HUMBLE = If we are going to become "ONE" here, each of us has to be Humble.
 1. Humility is that thing that if you figure out you have it, you've lost it!
 2. Humility is to put Christ 1st, others 2nd and self last.
 3. Humble is the opposite of Pride. Pride promotes self BUT Humility promotes Unity ... Oneness!
 4. To be Humble means to know ourselves, accept ourselves and be ourselves for God's glory.
 5. To be Humble means to not think too much of ourselves (pride) ... OR too little of ourselves (slap to God's face).
 6. EXAMPLE?
 - B. #2 = BE GENTLE = If we are going to become "ONE" here, each of us has to be Gentle.
 1. To Be Gentle does not mean to be 'weak'. Gentleness is power under control.
 2. Gentleness is the opposite of harshness and rudeness.
 3. To be Gentle suggests that we have our emotions under control ... one knows when to get mad and when not to!
 4. One who is controlled by God and is Gentle is angry at the right time, but never the wrong time!
 5. Jesus was gentle, but don't tell that to the money-changers in the Temple!
 - C. #3 = BE PATIENT = If we are going to become "ONE" here, each of us has to exhibit Patience!
 1. Talk about not getting angry when we don't need to!
 2. Patience shows what Jesus knew ... people are not perfect. People will make mistakes – Forever!
 3. Patience shows that we understand that there is only One who is Perfect and it's not you or me.

4. Patience shows that I understand that even though I've told you 100 times how to do something, I still don't get upset when I have to tell you the 101st!
 5. We have to be Patient with each other ... or we will not become "ONE" as God's Word commands.
- D. Now that we know WHAT to BE, Paul tells us the reasons WHY!

II. Why To Be (vs. 4-6)

In verses 4-6, Paul tells us WHY we need to come together, the basis for us becoming ONE so that we can carry out God's Mission! Notice how Paul uses the word 'ONE' over and over again...

- A. ONE BODY = All believers form the ONE BODY of Christ. Paul uses the Body to help people understand how we are to work together.
 1. I am amazed at how God continually brings people to BMZ Churches and how their talents and gifts work together to make ministry happen.
 2. We are to all use our gifts and become the shoulder, the elbow, the hand, the thumb or whatever part we play in the 'Body' of Christ.
- B. ONE SPIRIT = The same Holy Spirit comes into each of our lives when we invite Him in. We are all guided by that same Spirit of God / Love.
- C. ONE CALLING to the SAME GLORIOUS FUTURE = We all expect Jesus to come again as He promised. We all have a hope for eternity in God's Paradise / Heaven. We can hopefully agree on that!
- D. ONE LORD = The Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, lives again and will one day come back and get us and take us to where He is going. It's hard to believe that two people who claim the same LORD cannot agree and work together.
- E. ONE FAITH = This refers to the basics that as followers of Christ we all believe. We talk about that in our creeds and as we worship. God the Father of Jesus Christ the Son who died for our sins and we have hope for eternal life in God's House.
- F. ONE BAPTISM = We each are challenged as believers to be baptized to show publicly what we believe to be happening in our inner lives. We each go through that ONE Baptism to show our understanding of Christ at work in our lives.
- G. ONE GOD AND FATHER = We are children in the same family ... adopted by God when we accept God's offer. If we all love and serve the same Father as siblings, we ought to be able to work and grow together in unity!

Okay, so those are the reasons that Paul argues that we should become ONE as Jesus and God are ONE.

Now that we know WHAT we are supposed to do to become ONE and the REASONS Paul gives for us to become ONE, we need to know HOW to make it happen!

III. How To Be (vs. 7-11)

- A. In verses 7-11, Paul goes from what we all have in common to how we are all different!
1. Although we are to come together as ONE, it does not mean that we are all the same.
 2. God threw away a lot of molds when He made us!
 3. We are unique and each of us has a different gift mix given by God's Spirit.
- B. God is the one who plans all this out, you know.
1. God gives each of us different gifts and talents, so that when God brings us together as a local Church, we fit together!
 2. There are no Lone Rangers in Christianity.
 3. We need each other and without us coming together as ONE, the Gifts that the Holy Spirit gives go to waste!
 4. **WE NEED EACH OTHER TO ACCOMPLISH GOD'S MISSION FOR US!**
- C. Paul Mentions four Lead positions in the Church in verse 11.
1. Apostles = In Paul's day these were people who had seen Christ alive again after everyone knew that He had died on the cross. They were "Eyewitnesses" to Jesus resurrection. They were commissioned to go and tell people what they had seen.
 2. Prophets = In Paul's day these were people who proclaimed God's Word, even though it had not yet been written out. They knew the stories of Jesus and they were ones who 'heard' from God what to teach.
 3. Evangelists = These people traveled from place to place and shared the "Good News" about Jesus Christ and invited people to be saved from their sins. In Paul's day, everyone in the Church was challenged to do that ... and the same today!
 4. Pastors and Teachers = Paul indicates that this is the same person doing both jobs. That's Me!
 - a. Pastor means 'shepherd', so a pastor is the shepherd of a flock of localized sheep/people.
 - b. It is up to the Pastor to FEED and LEAD the flock!
 - c. Both of these things happen through the Word of God.
 - d. If I ever try to lead you in a way that disagrees with the Bible, check me on it!
 - e. If I am FEEDING and LEADING by the Word of God, guess what your job is? Right! Eat and Follow!
 - f. It is my calling by God to FEED and LEAD!

- g. When I told my Dad that I thought that God was calling me to be a Pastor, he said, “If you become a Pastor without God calling you, you will be miserable. But, if God calls you to be a Pastor and you don’t do it, you will be even more miserable.”
- h. For those of you considering becoming Pastors...

Finally, Paul tells us what will happen if we DO grow together and become ONE...

IV. Results (vs.12-16)

- A. Verse 12 = The Pastor is not hired by the Church to do the work, but to equip God’s people to do the work and build up the Church!
 - 1. As we work together, we become ONE. We work toward a common goal. We work together to build up the Kingdom of God through our Church.
 - 2. We come together, because we hear and obey God’s Word, in our faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- B. Result #1 = **Christ-likeness** – the more we follow God’s Word, the more we become like Christ!
- C. Result #2 = **Stability** – The more we understand Who God is and What God wants from us (that’s what Paul is working on here), the less likely we are to be distracted by all the religious options out there. There are so many options religiously that it’s easy to get caught up in what sounds really good ... IF, we don’t know what God’s Word says!
- D. Result #3 = **Truth in Love** – We will hold to the truth in love... We will hold each other accountable to live the way that Christ wants us to live. We will tell each other the truth in LOVE ... not in mean, unkind ways, but in ways that build each other up as we strive to be more like Christ!
- E. Result #4 = **Health and Growth** – The expectation by God is that the Church is about Health and Growth. When we work together as part of the Body of Christ, the result is Church Health and Church Growth. If we are not growing, we are probably not being who God wants us to be...

My question this morning is: Are you leading a life that is worthy of your calling ... called by God? Jesus has paid the price. Are we living the life that is pleasing to the One who gave His Life for us?!? Individual lives make up the body. If our body parts are sick, the whole body becomes sick.

I ask again: Are you leading a life that is worthy of your calling ... called by God?

We get to take communion together this morning. We do it together ... as one body coming before God. We are ONE under the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As you come forward this morning, I challenge you to take a moment to ask Jesus, “Am I a healthy part of this body?”

Let’s Pray!