

PSALM 27:1-9 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-19

THE CHILDREN'S TIME DURING WORSHIP CAN BE A WONDERFUL JOY FOR ADULTS AND TEENS, AS WELL AS FOR THE YOUNGER MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY.

PERHAPS SOME OF THE REASON FOR THIS LIES IN THE FACT THAT ADULTS NEVER KNOW WHAT A YOUNG CHILD, IN PARTICULAR, MIGHT SAY.

FOR EXAMPLE: ONE SUNDAY THE PASTOR WAS DELIVERING A CHILDREN'S SERMON ON THE TOPIC OF CHURCH UNITY, AND TOLD HIS YOUNG PARISHIONERS: "THE BIBLE SAYS WE ALL MUST BE ONE."

A PRESCHOOL AGED BOY POPPED UP FROM HIS SEAT, AND WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES SAID- "NO!" PERPLEXED AND CONCERNED OVER THE CHILD'S DISTRESS THE PASTOR ASKED WHY HE WAS SO UPSET.

THE CHILD EXPLAINED- "I DON'T WANT TO BE ONE, CAUSE I'VE ALREADY BEEN ONE. I'M FOUR NOW AND I WANT TO BE FIVE."

THE FOUR-YEAR OLD'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE PASTOR'S WORDS ABOUT CHRISTIANS BEING ONE-SHOULD BE OF LITTLE SURPRISE SINCE- MANY ADULTS MISUNDERSTAND THE BIBLE'S DIRECTION ON THIS ISSUE AS WELL.

PERHAPS ONE REASON FOR THIS IS CHRISTIAN UNITY OFTEN SEEMS LIKE AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY- IN VANITY.

AFTER ALL- WE ARE NOT VISIBLY UNITED IN ONE CHURCH, AND ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE UNTIL CHRIST COMES BACK TO EARTH TO PERSONALLY DO SO.

OF COURSE- IT IS TRUE THAT THE MAJORITY BELIEVERS REALLY DO WANT ALL CHRISTIANS TO BE ONE IN THE LORD, TO BE UNITED.

HOWEVER, MOST OF US, IF ONLY IN THE FAR REACHES OF OUR MINDS, ENVISION THAT TO BE ONE MEANS OTHERS WILL "SEE THE LIGHT" - AS WE SEE IT.

WE ENVISION THEY WILL FINALLY REALIZE OUR WAY OF WORSHIPING AND OUR THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF FAITH IS THE RIGHT WAY.

OF COURSE, WE MISUNDERSTAND HIS POINT IF WE INTERPRET PAUL'S CALL FOR THE CORINTHIANS TO BE ONE, MEANS THEY ALL AGREE ON EVERYTHING, AND NEVER DIFFER IN OPINION OR PRACTICE OF FAITH.

CLEARLY THE APOSTLE ELSEWHERE IN THE LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS AND IN MANY OF HIS OTHER LETTERS, NEVER SAYS ONENESS IN CHRIST MEANS WE MUST ALL THINK AND ACT ALIKE.

MUCH TO THE CONTRARY, HE WRITES IN SEVERAL PLACES ABOUT DIFFERENT GIFTS AND WAYS OF USING THEM.

HE EVEN WRITES ABOUT CHRISTIANS UNDERSTANDING CHURCH RULES IN DIFFERENT WAYS- SO AS TO CAUSE SOME TO EAT ANYTHING THEY WANT AND OTHERS TO RESTRICT THEIR DIET.

SURELY, WHAT GOD IS SAYING THROUGH HIS APOSTLE IS THAT WE ARE UNTIED AS CHRISTIANS, IN SPITE OF OUR DIVERSITY.

IT IS ABOUT BEING ONE IN THE GOAL OF SERVING CHRIST, NOT UNIFORMITY IN ALL THINGS.

PERHAPS IT MIGHT HELP OUR REFLECTION ON THIS POINT IF WE THINK OF ALL BELIEVERS AS MEMBERS OF JESUS' CHOIR.

THIS MEANS WE ALL ARE, OR SHOULD BE SINGING THE SAME SONG-BUT USING OUR OWN UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT VOICES.

FOR EXAMPLE- OUR JESUS CHOIR HAS- ALTOS AND SOPRANOS, TENORS, BASSES AND BARITONES.

SOME OF US MAY EVEN USE SIGN LANGUAGE, OR SING ONLY IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS RATHER THAN ALOUD.

THEREFORE, WHEN WE THINK OF THE CHURCH- NOT JUST THIS CHURCH BUT ALL CHURCHES- IT MAY HELP TO REMEMBER THE WISDOM OF A CHOIR DIRECTOR WHO TOLD HER CHARGES:

“IF YOU CAN’T HEAR THE VOICES OF THOSE STANDING BESIDE YOU, YOU’RE SINGING TOO LOUDLY.”

THE POINT BEING OF COURSE, WHEN THE CHOIR IS SINGING AS ONE- VOICES NEED TO EITHER BLEND TOGETHER OR CONTRAST IN SPECIFIC WAYS, BUT NOT SO THAT ONLY A SINGLE VOICE IS HEARD.

SO ALSO IN THE CHURCH- BELIEVERS NEED TO BE WILLING TO HARMONIZE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

THIS MEANS BEING OF ONE MIND AND THOUGHT IN THE SENSE OF FOLLOWING JESUS’S EXAMPLE OF FOCUSING ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND NOT HIMSELF.

IT INCLUDES SEEKING TO HAVE AND MAINTAIN THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR ALL, HIS HEART, MEANING HIS DESIRE FOR A US TO HAVE A COMMON WITNESS TO GOD’S LOVE REVEALED IN HIM.

IN ESSENCE WE ARE CALLED TO BE UNTIED IN SUCH A WAY THAT OUR DIFFERENCES ARE STILL IN HARMONY WITH THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

WE NEED TO SING TOGETHER, SO CHRIST IS PRESENTED TO THE WORLD-NOT BY SEPARATE VOICES ALL TRYING TO OUT-SING EACH OTHER, BUT INSTEAD SINGING-WORKING TOGETHER.

THERE IS INDEED MUCH TO MOTIVATE CHRISTIANS TO SING TOGETHER, RATHER THAN SEEKING TO ALL BE SOLOISTS.

THE REASON IS FOUND IN THE GREATEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE OUR FALL INTO SIN-- THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

INDEED THE CROSS-OF CHRIST, THAT IS- HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION IS OUR SUPREME MOTIVATION FOR LOVE AND HARMONY.

IT IS THE POWER OF THE CROSS AND THE GLORY OF THE ONE WHO DIED THERE FOR OUR SAKES, ALONG WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT MAKES US ONE IN CHRIST OUR RISEN SAVIOR.

YES, IT IS THE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST THAT GIVES OUR LIVES DIRECTION AND MEANING, AND MAKES OUR PURPOSE, AS CHRISTIANS ONE PURPOSE.

PSALM 27 REMINDS US ABOUT THIS IN THE OPENING DECLARATION THAT THE LORD IS OUR LIGHT AND OUR SALVATION.

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, DRAWS US CLOSE TO GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.

THE SPIRIT PROVIDES US WITH THE RESOURCES AND ENERGY WE NEED TO WORSHIP, AND TO SERVE GOD’S PURPOSE TOGETHER, IN OUR DIFFERENT WAYS.

LET’S LOOK AT IT THIS WAY- YOU’VE ALL SEEN THE ADS FOR ENERGIZER BATTERIES, SHOWING THE PINK BUNNY THAT KEEPS ON GOING AND GOING AND GOING.

THE BUNNY- BANGING ITS DRUM IS THE OUTWARD SYMBOL, BUT REALLY THE POINT OF THE COMMERCIAL IS NOT THE RABBIT BUT THE BATTERY.

THE BATTERY IS WHAT KEEPS THE RABBIT BANGING THE DRUM. SIMILARLY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SOURCE THAT ENERGIZES CHRISTIANS.

HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER- EVEN THE BEST BATTERY IN THE WORLD WON’T WORK WELL IF THERE IS A BAD CONNECTION.

THE SAME IS TRUE WHEN IT COMES TO THE SPIRIT’S POWER WITHIN US.

IF WE ARE NOT RECEIVING ALL GOD IS SENDING TO US, THE HOLY SPIRIT’S ABILITY TO TRANSFORM AND UNITE US IS DIMINISHED.

THEREFORE IS IT IMPERATIVE WE KEEP A GOOD CONNECTION, AND PAY ATTENTION WHEN WE EXPERIENCE SIGNS THAT OUR CONNECTION TO THE LORD IS WEAKENING.

FOR EXAMPLE- THE APOSTLE GOT WORD ABOUT THE CHURCH IN CORINTH THAT LED HIM TO SUSPECT THEIR CONNECTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS NOT AS STRONG AS IT SHOULD BE.

THIS LETTER ADDRESSED THE EVIDENCE OF DISCORD AND DISTAIN WITHIN THE CHURCH, CAUSED BY IT.

THEREFORE, PAUL REMINDED THEM THAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST, MEANING HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, WAS THE SOURCE OF THEIR CONNECTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THUS TO EACH OTHER.

OF COURSE WHAT HE MEANT BY THE CROSS WAS NOT THE WOODEN BEAMS JESUS DIED ON, BUT RATHER WHAT THE CROSS-CAME TO SYMBOLIZE FOLLOWING HIS RESURRECTION.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS TRANSFORMED THE CROSS, AS A SYMBOL OF DEATH AND SHAME TO ONE OF NEW LIFE AND GLORY.

THUS THE CROSS- BECAME THE MEANS OF OUR SALVATION, AND THE POWER SOURCE FROM WHICH CHRIST SENDS HIS SPIRIT TO INSPIRE US, AND UNITE US.

THEREFORE IN THE MIDST OF OUR DIVERGENT VIEWS AS CHRISTIANS, WE NEED TO KEEP OUR FOCUS ON THE CROSS AND ITS MEANING FOR ALL BELIEVERS.

HERE IS A STORY TOLD ABOUT THE FOUNDER OF THE METHODIST CHURCH, JOHN WESLEY.

IT IS SAID THAT HE WAS ASKED IF THERE WILL BE ANY PRESBYTERIANS IN HEAVEN.

HE RESPONDED: "NO, THERE WON'T BE. THERE WON'T BE ANY BAPTISTS, LUTHERANS, CATHOLICS, OR EPISCOPALIANS IN HEAVEN EITHER.

IN FACT, THERE WON'T BE ANY METHODISTS. THERE WILL ONLY BE CHRISTIANS IN HEAVEN."

NOTICE- PAUL SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO THE CHRISTIANS OF CORINTH AFTER HE HEARD SOME OF THEM WERE BRAGGING ABOUT WHICH APOSTLE THEY WERE BAPTIZED BY, OR FAVORED.

HE MADE THE POINT THAT IT DOES NOT MATTER WHO IT WAS WHO BAPTIZED THEM, IT ONLY MATTERS THAT ONE IS SAVED BY CHRIST.

AFTER ALL IT WAS JESUS, AND NOT ANYONE ELSE WHO DIED FOR THEIR SINS AND DELIVERED THEIR SOULS FROM EVIL.

HIS MESSAGE IS AN IMPORTANT ONE FOR ALL INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS AND CONGREGATIONS.

THE APOSTLE EMPHASIZED THE GOAL FOR ALL OF US IS TO SERVE JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO OUR GIFTS, AND HOW WE ARE CALLED TO USE THEM.

IDEALLY, WE ALL NEED TO STRIVE TO BE LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST- AND TO PUT CHRIST FIRST WHEN IT COMES TO OUR WORK IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD.

PUTTING JESUS FIRST ALSO MEANS OUR ONENESS IN HIM IS NOT ABOUT UNIFORMITY OF- THEOLOGY OR WORSHIP.

NOR IS IT ABOUT THE WAY WE PRACTICE OUR FAITH, BUT RATHER IT IS ABOUT SERVING CHRIST, AND SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS.

IT IS NOT EVEN ABOUT ALWAYS AGREEING, OR NEVER GETTING ANGRY WITH EACH OTHER.

AND IT IS ABOUT NOT BEING PRIDEFUL OR SELFISH, BUT ABOUT SERVING JESUS TOGETHER.

IT IS ABOUT TEACHING AND LIVING OUT, TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, CHRIST'S LOVE SO AS TO HELP ONE ANOTHER, AND TO SHOW THE WORLD THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD.

IT IS ABOUT PROCLAIMING CHRIST IN OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS, OUR SERVICE AND WORSHIP.

THEREFORE -MAY WE GIVE TO THE LORD OUR LIVES, AND DEDICATE THE CHURCH, FOR HIS GLORY.

MAY OUR VOICES SING ONLY HIS SONG, AND OUR HEARTS, OUR MINDS, AND OUR STRENGTH BE DEVOTED TO HIS PURPOSE.

TO GET AN IDEA OF WHAT A POSITIVE IMPACT THIS CAN HAVE ON THE WORLD, LET'S THINK ABOUT SNOWFLAKES.

THIS SHOULD NOT BE HARD TO DO SINCE WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF WINTER IN THE NORTH COUNTRY.

A PERSON NAMED V. KELLY WROTE THIS ON THE SUBJECT:
“SNOWFLAKES ARE ONE OF NATURE’S MOST FRAGILE THINGS,
BUT JUST LOOK AT WHAT THEY CAN DO WHEN THEY STICK
TOGETHER.”

THE SAME IS TRUE FOR CHRISTIANS AND FOR CHURCHES, ON
OUR OWN WE ARE SO MUCH MORE FRAGILE THAN WHEN WE
STICK TOGETHER IN CHRIST.

LET US PRAY:

WE THANK YOU LORD GOD FOR THIS CHURCH AND FOR EVERY
CHRISTIAN CHURCH YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED IN CHRIST’S
NAME AND BY THE HOLY SPIRIT’S POWER.

FORGIVE US FOR THE TIMES WE ALLOW DIFFERENCES TO TEAR
US APART AND GIVE RISE TO DOUBTS ABOUT CHRIST’S LOVE
AND POWER.

THEREFORE, WE PRAY FOR THOSE CONGREGATIONS AND
DENOMINATIONS THAT WELCOME OUR OWN WITNESS TO
CHRIST.

AND WE ALSO PRAY FOR THOSE CHRISTIANS AND
COMMUNITIES OF FAITH WHO DISCOUNT US OR DENY WE
TRULY FOLLOW JESUS.

WE REJOICE IN THE TIMES INDIVIDUALS, CONGREGATIONS,
AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHURCHES ARE ABLE TO WORSHIP
AND WORK TOGETHER.

MAY OUR MOMENTS OF UNITY FOR THE SAKE OF WITNESSING
TO YOUR SON BECOME HIS LIGHT, NOT ONLY TO US, BUT ALSO
TO THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR.
IN HIS NAME WE GIVE YOU THANKS AND PRAISE. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY - 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-19

THE APOSTLE GOT WORD ABOUT THE CHURCH IN CORINTH THAT LED HIM TO SUSPECT THEIR CONNECTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS NOT AS STRONG AS IT SHOULD BE. THIS LETTER ADDRESSED THE EVIDENCE OF DISCORD AND DISTAIN WITHIN THE CHURCH, CAUSED BY IT.

THEREFORE, PAUL REMINDED THEM THAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST, MEANING HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, WAS THE SOURCE OF THEIR CONNECTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THUS TO EACH OTHER.

BUT WE MISUNDERSTAND HIS POINT IF WE INTERPRET PAUL'S CALL FOR THE CORINTHIANS TO BE ONE, MEANS THEY ALL AGREE ON EVERYTHING, AND NEVER DIFFER IN OPINION OR PRACTICE OF FAITH.

CLEARLY THE APOSTLE ELSEWHERE IN THE LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS AND IN MANY OF HIS OTHER LETTERS, NEVER SAYS ONENESS IN CHRIST MEANS WE MUST ALL THINK AND ACT ALIKE.

MUCH TO THE CONTRARY, HE WRITES IN SEVERAL PLACES ABOUT DIFFERENT GIFTS AND WAYS OF USING THEM. HE EVEN WRITES ABOUT CHRISTIANS UNDERSTANDING CHURCH RULES IN DIFFERENT WAYS- SO AS TO CAUSE SOME TO EAT ANYTHING THEY WANT AND OTHERS TO RESTRICT THEIR DIET.

SURELY, WHAT GOD IS SAYING THROUGH HIS APOSTLE IS THAT WE ARE UNTIED AS CHRISTIANS, IN SPITE OF OUR DIVERSITY. IT IS ABOUT BEING ONE IN THE GOAL OF SERVING CHRIST, NOT UNIFORMITY IN ALL THINGS.

PERHAPS IT MIGHT HELP OUR REFLECTION ON THIS POINT IF WE THINK OF ALL BELIEVERS AS MEMBERS OF JESUS' CHOIR. THIS MEANS WE ALL ARE, OR SHOULD BE SINGING THE SAME SONG- BUT USING OUR OWN UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT VOICES.

WHEN THE CHOIR IS SINGING AS ONE THE VOICES NEED TO EITHER BLEND TOGETHER, OR CONTRAST IN SPECIFIC WAYS TO SING THE SAME SONG. SO ALSO IN THE CHURCH- BELIEVERS ALL NEED TO BE WILLING TO HARMONIZE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

THIS MEANS BEING OF ONE MIND AND HEART IN THE SENSE OF FOLLOWING JESUS'S EXAMPLE OF FOCUSING ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND NOT HIMSELF. IN ESSENCE WE ARE CALLED TO BE UNTIED IN SUCH A WAY THAT OUR DIFFERENCES ARE STILL IN HARMONY WITH THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF GOD'S LOVE SHOWN IN HIS SON. THIS WE NEED TO SING TOGETHER, SO CHRIST IS PRESENTED TO THE WORLD-NOT BY SEPARATE VOICES ALL TRYING TO OUT-SING EACH OTHER, BUT INSTEAD SINGING AND WORKING TOGETHER.

THE REASON FOR THIS IS FOUND IN THE CROSS-OF CHRIST, THAT IS- HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION. THE CROSS IS OUR SUPREME MOTIVATION FOR LOVE AND HARMONY.

YES, IT IS THE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST THAT GIVES OUR LIVES DIRECTION AND MEANING, AND MAKES OUR PURPOSE, AS CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES ONE PURPOSE.

PUTTING JESUS FIRST ALSO MEANS OUR ONENESS IN HIM IS NOT ABOUT UNIFORMITY OF- THEOLOGY OR WORSHIP. NOR IS IT ABOUT THE WAY WE PRACTICE OUR FAITH, BUT RATHER IT IS ABOUT SERVING CHRIST, AND SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS.

IT IS NOT EVEN ABOUT ALWAYS AGREEING, OR NEVER GETTING ANGRY WITH EACH OTHER. AND IT IS ABOUT NOT BEING PRIDEFUL OR SELFISH, BUT ABOUT SERVING JESUS TOGETHER.

IT IS ABOUT TEACHING AND LIVING OUT, TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, CHRIST'S LOVE SO AS TO HELP ONE ANOTHER, AND TO SHOW THE WORLD THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD. IT IS ALSO ABOUT PROCLAIMING CHRIST IN OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS, OUR SERVICE AND WORSHIP.

TO GET AN IDEA OF WHAT A POSITIVE IMPACT THIS CAN HAVE ON THE WORLD, LET'S THINK ABOUT SNOWFLAKES. A PERSON NAMED V. KELLY WROTE THIS ON THE SUBJECT:

“SNOWFLAKES ARE ONE OF NATURE'S MOST FRAGILE THINGS, BUT JUST LOOK AT WHAT THEY CAN DO WHEN THEY STICK TOGETHER.”

THE SAME IS TRUE FOR CHRISTIANS AND FOR CHURCHES, ON OUR OWN WE ARE SO MUCH MORE FRAGILE THAN WHEN WE STICK TOGETHER IN CHRIST.