

GET TOGETHER ON THIS ROCK
THIRD SUN. AFTER EPIPHANY

1 COR 1:10-18
JAN 22, 2017

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

In winter, when clearing snow results in big pile by playground,
fun game children like to play is king of the mountain,
seeing who can stand alone on top.
It is a fun game, not necessarily a good or safe one.
It easily results in feelings or other things getting hurt.
It is not just the playground that brings out human tendency
to try to achieve goals that involves pushing others away.
It happens even in the church.
But text pictures a different ideal: not just trying to stand out
but trying to all stand together,
which involves standing closely;
and standing not on a pile of slippery snow or shifting sand
but on solid rock of what God does for us through Jesus.

WE UNITE IN TEACHING A SOLID TRUTH
JESUS JOINS US TOGETHER WITH OTHERS
WE RELY ON JESUS TO REUNITE US WITH GOD

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¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

On a school field trip, like to a museum,
students may be instructed to all wear same school shirt
which can make it easier to keep group together.
in order to keep them all safe & accounted for.

When a choir is preparing to present a song,
they work on singing each word together at same time
so that they are clear and easier to understand.
In this weekend's presidential inauguration, were calls for unity
for the sake of being stronger together than separately.
Leaders during Revolutionary War agreed,
"We must all hang together,
or we will surely hang separately."
There are various reasons & ways for a group to be unified,
We may be united by common goals, for example,
but have different ideas about how to achieve them.
But Paul calls for church to be completely united, no divisions,
and the only way for this to happen is having
same mind & judgment, that is agreeing on same beliefs.
What our common faith in God is whata makes is Christians
not our behavior or nature or anything else.
We may have different practices, preferences, personalities,
but what influences and lies behind all these
is our beliefs. Different beliefs is what divides us.
The more we believe and agree on the same things,
the more united we will be, which will make us stronger
& more clear in sharing what we believe with others.
This does not come easily because we are all sinful.
The nature of sin is being focused in on ourselves.
This naturally separates us from others, especially God.
But the more we are reunited with God,
the more eager we are to be reconciled to others
& to remove barriers to sharing & believing Gospel.

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It is common for students to be loyal to their school, teams, etc.
What often goes with this is rivalry with other schools.

Students may have a favorite teacher or subject.
but this doesn't mean that those who teaches math
or science or reading disagree with the others
or are more important than the others.

This is apparently what happened in Corinth,
and can happen in churches or schools also today,
people were focusing on personalities & approaches.
but Paul is trying to say, hold it,
we are all trying to teach same thing, pointing to Jesus.

Cephas is the Hebrew name for Peter.
He was unsophisticated Galilean but knew Jesus personally.
Traditionalists may have championed his authority.
Paul was highly educated Roman citizen from Asia
and founded this church in Corinth.

Those who first came to faith there may have been
most loyal to him and how he taught.

Apollos was an African from very cultured city of Alexandria
He may have been a gentile convert.

He was a powerful preacher who came after Paul left.
Some may have learned new things from him.

They were each very different but real source of division
was not any of them but a person mentioned 4 times: "I"
Division is caused by pride & focus on ourselves.

Being brought to faith in Jesus brings people together.

Paul may have been making same point with names
of those he just happens to mention baptizing in Corinth.

Crispus was the leader of the synagogue when Paul came.

When the Jews opposed Paul & drove him out,
Crispus went along because he believed in Jesus.

And Stephanus became new leader of synagogue
as they tried to take Paul to court.

But guess who else Paul baptized and is even listed
as writing this letter along with Paul - Stephanus.

The same thing can be true in our church and school.

We can come from different places and cultures
and even have been opponents on issues before

but we can come together in unity and love
because we agree on one thing: everything depends
on what Jesus has done for us.

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not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Division and disputes between people causes many problems,
but the biggest problem in the world and in our lives
comes from being separated from God
which happens as result of our rebellious sinfulness.
and is the root cause of every other kind of divisiveness.

There are many reasons to appeal for unity, as I mentioned,
so that there can be peace, safety, strength, clarity, etc.
but the bottom line reason for our unity is not so that
but because of unity we each can now have with God.

When we are brought together with him,
we can't help but be brought together with each other.

This is why Paul keeps pointing back to the cross of Christ.
this is the only way our sins can be taken away
and that God brings us back to himself.

This at first seemed disgusting to Jews like Peter
who focused on being a good person
Scandalous to Romans like Paul who focused on justice
Silly to sophisticated people like Apollos
who focused on what made reasonable sense.

But the only way for broken sinners like us, who have
made ourselves repulsive and separated from God
and from everyone else to be helped
is for God's perfect son, Jesus, to come to us
and embrace us by becoming a human with us
and taking the suffering we create by dying for us
so we are made clean & reunited with a holy God
by his free forgiveness,
which now makes us able to forgive others

One thing that unites people is same origin or background.
No matter where we have been before, we all come from
the same place - Jesus' cross.

This is why we all stand together, because we all stand
on the same rock, the solid foundation of Jesus.

The way to unite and overcome division is not to preach
against others but to preach what Christ has done for us.

The way to doctrinal unity is to ask about every teaching,
how is this connected to what God does for us in Christ?

Such as Paul's example of baptism, which is a way
God himself connects us to Christ to give us new life.
Solid education is built on the basics.

The reason for Lutheran schools is to give children
a solid foundation for their whole lives.

There no foundation more solid than faith in the gospel.
This is why we work together
in every form of Christian education,
because we stand together on this rock which is Christ.

WE UNITE IN TEACHING A SOLID TRUTH

not just the lowest common denominator, but everything
God has given us in the Bible to believe.

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who may be very different from us in various ways
but who are brought together by faith in him.

WE RELY ON JESUS TO REUNITE US WITH GOD

because only his crucifixion and resurrection for us
has the power to take away the sin
which separates us from God and others
and we can't help but be united together with those
who have been brought together with God
here in his church and in heaven forever.