

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 17th March 2024 10 am

Jesus unites

Earlier sermon on this passage 05_04_17.doc

Welcome to all

Opening Scripture.....

Hymn MP 560 Praise my soul the king of heaven

Scripture Psalm 135 (page 626)

Prayer

Children's talk Hanging all on the one peg

Chorus MP 38 As we are gathered Jesus is here
MP 54 Bind us together Lord Bind us together

Notices Nebu & Leena, Thursday, Easter Sunday at 11am, Zoom,

Programme for the week running up to Easter, invite for Cameo

Prayer and Lord's prayer

Readings I Corinthians 1:10-17 (page 1144)
James 3:13 - 4:12 (page 1215), See also Eph 4: 1-13.

Hymn MP 1100 Open the eyes of my heart Lord

Sermon *Jesus unites*

Hymn MP 463 May the mind of Christ my saviour

Closing Prayer:

MP 389 Jesus you are changing me

MP 381 Jesus stand among us

Prayer and Exordium

Read Psalm 133

- I've been watching the Six Nations Rugby, the England Ireland match the Saturday before last, phew what a match. Both teams were exceptional. They played well and scored well because they worked together well. It was an impressive team performance.
- Rugby may not be your sport, but it is true for any team sport.

In the church too – the same principles apply. We must united and together.

In that team huddle, squad coach Paul says: *“you're not working together”*

He says to us : **10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.**

Paul says **I appeal to you ‘brothers’**, you are all brothers, - now act like it. Aren't families supposed to work together? Does yours? It should, and the church family should. Joseph had to tell his brothers not to argue on the way. The church had written to Paul about a number of issues; worship, marriage, food offered to idols etc. But Paul says ‘First I need to talk to you about something – your divisions’, this is a problem and as we shall see, what has caused these divisions - is what is behind all the other problems.

10 “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”,

Paul appeals to them in the name of the Jesus – the Lord over His church, His body. Jesus, the captain of the church, **is faithful** see the end of v9 – He's the example, and if he is faithful so should we be. If we are united to Him – the Head – then we will be united to each other.

That is how a body functions. It is only a staggering drunk whose parts of the body do not function together.

- As a team functions well when everyone follows the captain, as the musicians play well together when every eye is on the conductor, ... so it is with the church.

And what is Paul pleading for? **that all of you agree with one another.** x2

But Paul is that realistic? How can that happen with people?

- No he is not talking about the colour of the lino in the kitchen or the colour of a church wall – and I heard of a church with members deeply upset about that. No this is more about what we believe,

The AV says **that ye all speak the same thing**, the word is the verb **lege** which means ‘to speak’ inference that we agree on what we say.

John Locke said “That you all speak the same thing, is that you all hold the same doctrine” in other words - The essence of this division is belief.

We as a church, if we profess the same truths, we will express them in the same words; yes will as they say ‘sing off the same hymn sheet’.

To "speak the same thing" stands opposed to speaking different and conflicting things, or controversy. Now there will never be *perfect* uniformity of opinion among us this side of heaven - yet, on the great and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, Christians are to agree.

■ In other words, if you go up to ten folk in the church you should not have ten different views on the faith.

Conformity to the truth that is in Christ aligns us with the Head - and thus aligns us all with every other member of the body who is doing the same. And if someone is not aligning with the Head - then we need to graciously help them to do so.

Conformity in belief comes through regular Bible reading, and we then express our faith in the language of the Bible, and thus "speak the same thing." The more we do that - the more our views convergence. >>

Here is an example of the usefulness and even necessity of confessions and articles of faith, being made and agreed to by members of the church. They should be drawn up in a form of sound words, - and adhered to.

Introducing new non-biblical words and phrases such as everyone’s on a ‘spiritual journey’, or *ask Jesus into your life* is often the means of bringing in new teachings, and this divergence < > and thus contention. Using the same words to express truth by is a very proper and prudent expedient to prevent divisions.

So here also is an argument for catechizing, learning by Q & A which is to instil the same answer and maintain an orthodoxy amongst us all.

Then when you ask anyone about the faith you have the same answer.

Ahh that sounds a bit cultlike, - Are we clones? puppeting the same words?

■ In Greek mythology Procrustes, the son of Poseidon, was a bandit who made his victims fit the size of his bed. He did this either by stretching their limbs or cutting them off.

Paul is not saying Church conformity comes from looking down a barrel, ‘say this or else’, (JWs) for he goes on to say that we **may be perfectly united in mind and thought**. We are to think the same - and that cannot be forced.

Only someone with the Spirit of Christ, who knows Him will understand Him, and think like Him, we are told that we now **have the mind of Christ** 1 Cor 2 and therefore **are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind** Rom 12:1 So to **speak all the same** comes from what we think. The truth of God’s word – brought to life by his Spirit - changes my thinking and so unites us and binds us together.

Let us **be perfectly united in mind and thought**. Thoughts being the judgments of the mind, (see AV).

Every Christian should hold to and express the same Christian teaching.

■ I frequently hear pastors saying that in their church there is a wide spectrum of beliefs. Mmm, how are they approaching that I wonder?, They try to steer a middle course. It all sounds very commendable.

Secular *people management* seminars endorse this: don’t alienate people, take people with you, find what you can agree on, don’t cause division by being too dogmatic, find the middle ground, be willing to compromise, how plausible all these statements are, that’s because we are so used to hearing them.

All this comes from the world with its rampant individualism. It tries to persuade us that every different opinion is to be expressed and must be considered equally valid.

This is wrong. Pastors and preachers are to confidently proclaim the word of God x2 - and we are all to be renewed and conformed in our minds towards it. Not to do this - to please people, or in an attempt at a quiet life – is to unwittingly promote contention and strife and division.

■ On Tuesday a brother spoke of pressure to compromise at his university’s CU. Some people wanted to accept a RC who refused to agree to the doctrine statement. As the leader he was under very strong pressure to give in, to give way. He didn’t. The CU nearly folded. The next year the CU grew and became very strong and saw others come to faith.

Why? How? Because they stood firm being **united in mind and thought**.

Paul says in the church **that there be no divisions among you. - no divisions!**

The word is scismata —from where we get our word *schism* from.

■ Let me show you - Tearing of a shirt

The word means to ‘tear’ The church is to be regarded as one, and indivisible.

It is not to be rent into different factions, divisions, contending parties and sects ranged under the banners of different leaders.

The opposite should be true that we **may be perfectly united in mind and thought**. Or as the AV **that ye be perfectly joined together**. The word's meaning is 'to restore, mend, or repair that which is rent or disordered'. It is to put everything in its proper place, so that it shall be complete harmonious with all its parts working together as an **Orchestra plays, or a machine works or an athlete performs or an army fights**.

However, the foundation of Christian union is not a forced uniformity – but a uniting of heart and mind. The proper way to produce true union in the church of God, is to united in love to God, and love to our brothers / sisters.

Well let's look at the example Paul gives here

Firstly how has Paul heard about the divisions? **11 My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.**

Let us note: Paul is not making allegations in a vague unsupported way, it is not a 'rumour', nor a 'I have heard' statement. He declares his source, He explains how it is he knows, all is out in the open.

12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

This may be just one example of a number of causes of divisions. It has been said that he may have had other names in mind but uses these to show the absurdity of their arranging themselves under different leaders. In 1 Cor 4:6 Paul says **“brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, .. then you will not take pride in one man over against another.”**

So what about these name **Paul, Apollos, Cephas** that's **Peter or Christ**.

Did they represent cliques or groups in the church?

The church at Corinth was composed partly of Jews and partly of non-Jews. Ac 18. Did the non-Jewish gentile converts align themselves under **Paul** the apostle to the gentiles? And others to Peter the apostle to the Jews?, Ga 2:7

Or did they think “I'm for Paul, He founded our church, I came to faith through him”.

■ **Kinship church, when the minister leaves some follow Him.**

Or maybe “Paul's the chief apostle, He has the best and purest doctrine”
Yet at Corinth they found Paul unimpressive and weak when with them.

3a

A contrast to **Apollos**. We're for Him, we favour him, a solid brave and bold preacher and an eloquent speaker. He was easy listening, Oh we like to listen to him, how many choose a church based on how much you enjoy listening to the speaker?

- **Board up in Bewdley Church List of speakers coming?? Help/hinder?**
- **Three preachers when I came Ken, Howard and Meirion. I remember some saying how they preferred to come some weeks. Did not the Lord speak through all of them? Yes certainly.**
- **I will let you know - next week Paul Olise is the speaker – He's Nigerian, does that change anything??**

Then some were for **Peter**. He was older and had been with Christ from the beginning. He had seen the miracles first hand and heard from Jesus's lips.

■ **The RC's like Peter - Pope the xx'th descendant of Peter. No evidence**

Others were saying no we follow **Christ**. Maybe some had been in Judea and had seen the Lord Jesus, and thus regarded themselves as particularly favoured and distinguished; or,

Or maybe we don't follow men - Christ alone is our Head. Sounds good. But hadn't Paul as an apostle of Christ preached Christ? Jesus continued – continues - to speak through the Apostles words, for they are Christ's words

■ **Do not be a two-tier Christian with - your red letter Bible!**

Paul shows how ridiculous all this is **13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?** Of course not! He says that and continues on because of the natural tendency to elevate the baptizer.

Let us beware of our natural tendency to follow man

This is how the world works. In Lystra when the cripple was healed the crowds bowed down to the Apostles: **Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.** Acts 14:12

When God is not on the throne then we put people there and elevate them

We naturally line up with people, follow the fashion, follow the crowd.

We are told even Barnabas was lead astray, how prone we all are to wander.

⇒ **The problem here is favouritism.**

The natural desire to favour one person over another, one personality over another, one temperament over another, one preacher over another, one ministry over another. This person has helped me more, this person is sharper doctrinally, this person is friendlier, the list goes on and on.

3b

Do not fall for this carnal way of thinking. In the church it directly contradicts the law of love. Hear James 2:1 **My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism.** Resist it. It is important to think in a Christ-like way. **But if you show favouritism, you sin** Jas 2:9

Do you do that? Is everyone ranked? Everyone lined up in your mind? more attention is given to one person - than another? Paul addressing these church problems says later in this letter that everyone is to have **equal concern** for one another. **equal concern**

This tendency to favour one over another must be resisted. Often it shows in elevating your own culture over others. It is fine when at home or choosing a restaurant but not in church. Here we are to demonstrate and rejoice in the richness of God's Kingdom, the mix of those within the body.

Please make an effort to talk to everyone equally, with that **equal concern**.

- A fellow work at BCM has been tasked to help sort out a problem in his church. In his church people sit in three groups African, Hong King and English. They give time and attention to their own. He is tasked to bring unity, to stop the cliques. I don't know how he will do it.
- I said he should allocate seat numbers on the way in so they sit next to someone they would normally disdain to talk to.. But what do you think? Good idea? I was only joking, - you can force it!

⇒ The lasting genuine solution is that people think in a Christ-like way – and therefore act in a Christ-like way. Jesus unites us. x2 > no division.

This is through humble obedience to the word of God, to Bible reading, to preaching. This is effected by obedience to the Spirit of Christ within you. No Spirit of Christ? Then there will be no desire or power to live like Him!

Gospel - If you do not have Christ's love in your heart, if you do not have Christ's power in your heart, if you don't know His grace, then confess now your sin, repent of that hard heart. Christ's work on the cross is there for you.

What causes division?

What is the cause of the quarrels and divisions in the church? You know the answer. James 4 says **What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight..... You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.** Jas 4:1-4

⇒ **Worldly attitude - brings worldly thinking - which brings worldly quarrels - which brings worldly division. I need to repeat that!**

These are the enemy of God. They should not enter the household of God.

- I was at a seminar on Christian well-being – at the end of the hour I thought that is amazing – I have not heard the devil mentioned once!

Satan has a glee in his eye when he can see Christians **quarrelling**.

The prime desire of the devil is to disrupt the Lord's people. His aim is to: Separate man from God, separate man from man.

Beware of the tongue the world of evil that so quickly can produce quarrels. The result is division. **Beware** of a party spirit, - lead by favouritism, - lead by pride. Here are the choice weapons in the devil's large armoury.

Let us not be naive, The devil has a ministry of hate, he came to kill, steal and destroy. And he is active like a **roaring bull in the proverbial china shop. And we are fragile like that china.** He is very effective.

⇒ **In the church he loves to divide and destroy by stirring up pride.**

Someone 'offended' is someone who has not checked and killed off their pride. It is as easy as that. The more the pride - the more easily offended.

That is why James goes on to say "**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**" **Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**" Jas 4:6-7 the Lord will give you **more grace**.

Pride is behind the other problems that showed up at the church in Corinth. Satan loves to see 'unforgiveness' Count the times 'forgive' is mentioned here "**If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, and why? in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.**" 2Co 2:10-11 'forgive' mentioned five times!

Don't forgive and a host of problems follow – for them, for you, and for us.

It is a team effort, we all have a responsibility to be peacemakers. Let us be on our guard that the devil may not use 'personality, culture, mannerism, styles' etc. He loves to distort and make little things become big things

We are to **make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** Eph 4:1-3 And how do we keep the unity?: **Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.** Eph 4:1-3

Ps 133:1- **How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!**

END