

June 30, 2013 by Steve Brandon



Dwelling In Unity

Psalm 133

Dwelling In Unity, ...

1. It is Good and Pleasant (verse 1).
2. It is Like Anointing Oil (verse 2).
3. It is Like Refreshing Rain (verse 3).

As most of you know, the elders along with Maggie and Yvonne (Karen couldn't make it) took a road trip this past week to Colorado. We joined up with Tom Marcus and his network of churches called Crossway Chapel at their annual meeting called, "The Huddle."

If you remember, Tom Marcus visited us in October. He is a very gifted man with a heart to see lost people come to Christ. Some of the fruit of his time with us was an increased emphasis upon evangelism (at least in my own heart). Yvonne and I increased our praying for the unsaved and increased our efforts at reaching out to neighbors (around the church building and around our own neighborhood). During his October visit, Tom invited us to come to "The Huddle" to check out their network of churches.

There were about 15 churches that were represented at the meeting. Most of them have links to the fruitfulness of Tom's ministry. Some of them have links back to the years that Tom spent at Grace Church of DuPage (our grandmother church) in Warrenville, IL. Most of them have links to his own time he spent in Colorado, when he planted a church in Fort Collins, Colorado, Mountain View Community Church. This church has planted a handful of churches around the Fort Collins community. Some of them have also planted churches. Several years ago, Tom moved to Wilmington, North Carolina, where he planted Crossway Chapel of Wilmington. They are continuing their church planting efforts in North Carolina as well.

"The Huddle" is a time for the churches to connect, be encouraged, be strengthened, and urged to continue forward with their mission of making disciples and planting churches. They also are working hard to share resources, so that every church doesn't have to re-invent the wheel. Because of Tom's influence, all of these churches have a very evangelistic, outward focus.

As expected, the meeting has stirred in the elders a greater heart and desire to be a church that reaches out to the unsaved. Pray that the Lord will guide us in this process. Pray that the Lord would use you to reach out to those in your spheres of influence with the gospel of Christ.

I was especially encouraged by the "life-giving" environment that was at "The Huddle." Several men gave some talks, stirring our hearts in greater love for our Savior. During other sessions, church leaders shared their joys in the ministry (new churches, baptisms, growth in attendance, marriages reconciled). They were also very real in sharing their struggles (dealing with elder conflicts, broken marriages in the congregation, and even the pain of adultery among a staff-member of one of the churches). After sharing their joys and difficulties, every church was surrounded by those in attendance. Hands were laid upon pastors and their wives, and they were prayed for. It was a greatly encouraging time for all of us, as the leaders of these churches demonstrated great humility and heart to serve the Lord.

Our trip to Colorado was a great time on several levels. First of all, it was a great time to be away with my wife. Such trips are very helpful in strengthening our relationship with one another. I'm thankful that we were given the opportunity to get away and to be refreshed.

Second, it was also very nice to spend time with Phil and Darryn and Maggie. My only regret is that Karen couldn't also join us. Such time together can only help to strengthen our relationships with one another.

I'm so thankful for the unity of heart that Phil, Darryn and I have. It is a huge blessing to me as a pastor to have humble, like-minded men who are serving right alongside of me. My prayer is that such a spirit will continue for years to come.

Thirdly, it was very encouraging to see a network of churches that is led by men who genuinely care for one another. As you watched them interact, you could see the depth of their relationships. Their love for each other was very obvious. They genuinely care for one another. What a sweet thing it was.

What a sweet trip we had. The entire trip was a picture of Psalm 133, which is our text this morning.

Again, this is one of the Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134), the songs that Israel would sing as they traveled to Jerusalem to worship the LORD three times each year, according to the command given by Moses (Exodus 23:14-17). Each of the Psalms have something to teach us about worship and preparing our hearts for worship. Whether it is the source of our help, which comes from the LORD (Ps. 121:1). Or, whether it is the secret to our victories in the past (Ps. 124:1). Or, whether it is the grace that is available to all who believe (Ps. 130). Each of these Psalms lead us to worship. This is my hope in preaching through these Psalms -- that they would increase our hearts in worshipping the Lord.

Psalm 133 is a great little Psalm that speaks of the blessings of brothers who dwell together in unity. In fact, that's the theme of each verse in

Psalm 133: "Dwelling together in unity is a great blessing." The first verse merely states this point. Verses 2 and 3 illustrate the point with a word picture.

Let's read it together. Listen for how each verse speaks of the blessing of dwelling together in unity.

Psalm 133
Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the Lord commanded the blessing -- life forever.

The title of my message this morning, is "Dwelling in Unity." Here's my first point, ...

Dwelling in Unity ...

1. It is Good and Pleasant (verse 1).

This comes straight from verse 1, ...

Psalm 133:1
Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!

David gives us two adjectives in verse 1 to describe the benefits of brothers dwelling in unity. "Good" and "pleasant". These are essentially synonyms -- They mean the same thing. If there is any difference at all, the first focuses upon the morality of unity. It is good. The second focuses upon the benefits of unity. It is pleasant.

Unity is good, because it is the way that things are meant to be. God created the world good (Genesis 1). All was unified in the garden. Adam and Eve were dwelling in unity. Genesis 2:25, "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." This is a picture of unity and oneness. It was good.

Then, sin came in and destroyed the unity between the man and his wife. God said to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). The verse contains the idea of conflict in marriage, which has existed ever since. Such conflict is not good.

But, conflict hasn't merely continued in marriage since the fall. It has extended to the family. The first literal brothers had conflict with each other. Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4). The sons of the Patriarchs sold their brother (Joseph) into slavery.

But, the conflict hasn't merely been within families. It has extended to the community of God's people. When Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, it seems as if all they could do was grumble. Further, they had constant conflicts with Moses, their God-appointed leader.

But, the conflict hasn't merely been within the community of God's people. It has extended to nations. In fact, the history of mankind is a history of wars and conflict and disunity. All you need to do is read the Old Testament and you can see the disunity.

Disunity in this world has come about as a result of the fall. And this is not good! From the beginning, it was not so. God created the world good. God is working, so that the unity will one day be restored. He sent Jesus to die for our sins, and we are waiting for unity to return. In the end, all things will be put in subjection to Him (1 Cor. 15:27-28). All will be in order. All will be unified. And it will be good once again. Unity is good, because it is the way that things are meant to be.

Verse 1 also says that brothers walking in unity is "pleasant." That is, it is delightful. It is enjoyable. It is beneficial. It is beautiful. Unity is pleasant, because it brings joy into our hearts. And by God's grace, we get a taste of that joy whenever we are dwelling in unity with others.

Verses 2 and 3 give us two pictures of how pleasant unity is.

Dwelling in Unity ...

2. It is Like Anointing Oil (verse 2).

Verse 2, ...

Psalm 133:2
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Coming down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard,
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

Any Jew would have easily understood this. They knew priests. They knew high priests. They knew the place of Aaron, the first high priest. The story of his anointing is told in Exodus 29.

Exodus 29:1-9

Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour. You shall put them in one basket, and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams. Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him. You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. You shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

Later in the chapter, it explains how the bull and rams should be sacrificed, and how their blood should be sprinkled on the right ear lobe and on the right thumb and on the big toe of the right foot. This is followed by some more sacrifices and even some more oil that is used to anoint Aaron and his sons.

Psalm 133:2 focuses our thoughts upon the moment when the oil was poured upon Aaron's head. So much oil was poured that it dripped upon his beard, it dripped down his beard, it dripped down upon the collar of the sacred robes that he wore. This was a significant event in the life of Israel. It established the priesthood. Future priests were ordained for ministry, but never anointed quite like this (Ex. 30:31-33). This was a one-time event in the history of Israel. It signified the way that people could approach God, through the priests that He had established.

And as the pilgrims traveling to Zion would come to the temple, they would set their eyes upon the priests. They may even be privileged to see the high priest. And David directs their minds back to the day when Aaron was anointed. What a special day that was.

The only parallel that I can think of would be our celebration this Thursday, the Fourth of July. The day is a national holiday. All government businesses are closed. Most of us take the day off work. In the evening, many find themselves in some park someplace for a special time of rejoicing. Kids run around with sparklers in their hands. Some teenagers set off some fire crackers and smoke-bombs. Then, we watch in wonder and awe to the fireworks in the sky.

And as we do, our minds can easily drift back to the reason why we are celebrating. God has given us a country in which we can enjoy our freedoms. And we may well be drawn back to think of July 4th, 1776 and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We can almost picture the room in which stood men like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson and John Adams and John Hancock, and the 52 others. We can almost picture each of them taking pen in hand and signing the original document, thereby changing the course of our nation forever.

Oh, there have been struggles ever since. And all has not been good and pleasant. But, there have been enough blessings come from the day that document was signed that we can look back with thankfulness and joy for what was done. That's why we celebrate on Thursday, some 237 years after the event.

Such feelings would have been similar to what was felt by the worshiper who came to the temple from far away places and saw the priests ministering to God on behalf of the people. They could have easily thought back to the day when Aaron was anointed the first high priest. They could have easily thought back to the establishment of the priesthood, the founding day of all temple worship, thereby changing the course of the nation forever.

This is a picture of the blessing of unity. It's all good. It's all pleasant. It brings out all the good in life.

But, David doesn't stop there. He adds another picture of unity.

Dwelling in Unity ...

3. It is Like Refreshing Rain (verse 3).

Verse 3, ...

Psalm 133:3

It is like the dew of Hermon

Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;

For there the Lord commanded the blessing -- life forever.

Remember, Israel lived in a dry land, where water was scarce. Cities were built near sources of water. Having a supply of water was the only way to survive. Rain was precious to them.

Where did the rain come from? It came from Mount Hermon, that mountain about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. Its elevation (nearly 10,000 feet) and geography is such that it is usually covered with snow. It has been called, "snowy mountain." It has been called, "gray-haired mountain."

As the snow melts on the southern face, much of it funnels into the Sea of Galilee. From there, the water runs down the Jordan river, ending up in the Dead Sea.

But, David here isn't talking about the melting snow, he's talking about the evaporating snow. He's talking of the moisture that comes from Mount Hermon and brings its rain to refresh the mountains of Zion. It comes as refreshing and life-giving. As one poet said, ...

So the dews on Hermon's hill
Which the summer clouds distil,
Floating southward in the night,
Pearly gems on Zion light. [\[1\]](#)

Without the rains coming to Jerusalem, life would be difficult. But, as it is, the rain gives life.

Ultimately, the life brought by the water is a fore-taste of the eternal life given by God. Look at the last phrase in verse 3: "For there the Lord commanded the blessing -- life forever." For the Jew, eternal life flowed out of Mount Zion. Zion was where God put His name. Zion is where God chose to dwell. Zion is where sacrifices were offered to God to atone for the sins of Israel. That's why people came three times a year to Jerusalem to worship. Because Jerusalem was where life was found.

Now, for us, of course, things are different. The Messiah has come. We don't need to go to Jerusalem and bring our lambs and goats as sacrifices. Jesus has come -- the Lamb of God. His sacrifice upon the cross is sufficient to atone for our sins. As John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

We simply need to believe in Him to receive the great blessing of God, life forever. John 3:16 famously says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Do you believe?

Does today find you trusting in Jesus for forgiveness of sins? I urge you to believe in Him and know the blessing of eternal life. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Oh, church family, believe in the Son! Find joy in the eternal life that He brings!

Now, I'm not quite done with my message. I want to return to verse 1. I want for us to notice how David speaks about these blessings to "brothers" who dwell together in unity. David isn't merely speaking about mere biological "brothers. In fact, I would argue that David is here addressing "the community." That is, the people of God

This is a Psalm of Ascent. It has its focus upon the gathering of God's people in Zion for worship. He is saying, "How good and how pleasant it is for God's people to dwell in unity." Surely, it is a sight to behold, when the people of God gather together in unity, it is a pleasure to know.

That's why the Psalmist said, "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10). There is a blessing to be with God's people in God's house. And when they are Dwelling in Unity, It is Like Anointing Oil (verse 2). And when they are Dwelling in Unity, It is Like Refreshing Rain (verse 3).

Now, this isn't to limit verse 1 only to the dwelling of God's people in unity. In fact, I would argue that this principle would hold for the family, and it would extend to the nation as well. Families experience blessings in dwelling together in unity. Nations experience blessings in dwelling together in unity.

Consider marriage. When Adam was alone in the garden, the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). In other words, it wasn't good for the man to be alone. It is good for the man to have a helper. It is good for husband and wife to live in harmony and peace together.

It is bad and unpleasant when the unity is broken. Do you know the Proverbs that speak about the contentious wife? They all speak of how terrible it is to live with a complaining and argumentative wife, which stirs disunity in the home. Proverbs 21:9 speaks of this. "It is better to live in a corner of a roof Than in a house shared with a contentious woman." Proverbs 21:19 does as well: "It is better to live in a desert land Than with a contentious and vexing woman."

On the other hand, when a man and woman are living together in peace and love, it is a sight to behold. "There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a young woman. (Proverbs 30:18-19, NIV) This is why weddings are usually so happy! A man and a woman are united! They are walking in unity! They know little by way of conflict!

I was at a wedding last night. My niece was married. She is the first of my parents' grandchildren to be married. All of my brothers and sisters and their spouses and their children were there. We had a great time of rejoicing with our family. All of us were together. And all of us were happy.

But, especially happy were Emily and Andrew, the bride and groom. They begin their life together. And their happiness can continue for years to come, even so much as to model the unity of believers with Jesus. Remember, the marriage relationship between a man and a woman is to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

It's a picture of unity and harmony. But, when the marriage relationship is broken, it brings the worst of pains. I don't need to tell you of the pains of divorce. You all are familiar with them. I don't need to tell you of the pains of unfaithfulness in marriage. You all can well imagine them.

This past week, I had a chance to speak with one of the pastors of the Crossway Chapel network who dealt with his associate falling into

infidelity. And I said, "What did you learn from dealing with the whole situation." Among many things he told me, the thing that stands out most of all is how he said that witnessing the pain caused in the marriage was sufficient for him to resolve never to fall into the same error himself.

He said that he was there when his friend told his wife of what he had done. He has watched as they have attempted to restore their relationship. It has been a very, very painful and difficult road that they have traveled.

See, Psalm 133:1 is true of marriage. And the opposite of Psalm 133:1 is true of marriage as well: "Behold, how bad and how painful it is for married couples to dwell in disunity." That's why divorce is so common. "It's just too painful at home! We need some relief. Let's just live apart from each other."

Psalm 133:1 is true of marriage. It's also true of the family as well. This is the picture that we looked at a few weeks ago, ...

Psalm 128:1-4
How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,
Who walks in His ways.
When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,
You will be happy and it will be well with you.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within your house,
Your children like olive plants
Around your table.
Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the Lord.
This is the picture of a big, happy, healthy, unified family.
They receive the blessing of God in their lives.

The opposite is true as well, isn't it. "Behold, how bad and how painful it is for family to dwell in disunity."

Proverbs 17:1 says, "Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it Than a house full of feasting with strife." And Proverbs 15:17 says, "Better is a dish of vegetables where love is Than a fattened ox served with hatred." In other words, family unity is far better than any material blessing you might have. You can live in a big house. You can have a cabin in the woods. You can own a yacht and a private jet. And none of those things can compare to a home of love and harmony and peace and unity, regardless of the income of the home. Proverbs 15:16, "Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and turmoil with it."

Psalm 133:1 is true of marriage. Psalm 133:1 is true of family. Psalm 133:1 is true of nations. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance." (Psalm 33:12). "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people." (Proverbs 14:33).

Jesus said, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; And any city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). This is taking place right before our eyes. Our nation is divided. We will have a difficult time standing.

Psalm 133:1 is true of marriage. Psalm 133:1 is true of family. Psalm 133:1 is true of nations. Psalm 133:1 is true of the church.

(And this is where I want for us to end this morning. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity." "Behold, how bad and how painful it is for brothers to dwell in disunity.")

Quite frankly, the times of my life that have been most joyful have been the times of unity in the church. The times of my life that have been the most painful have been the times of disunity in the church. If there is anything that Jesus wants, it is unity in His church. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." (John 17:22-23).

As the church is unified, it displays the power of Christ working in the church. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

When the church is unified in love and peace and harmony and good-will toward one another, it will make an effect upon the world. People will come to believe. It is no accident that the early church made such an impact in their day.

Acts 2:44-47
And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Don't miss the connection between the unity of heart that they shared in the early church and the work of God in their midst. As they shared

with each other, God saved those who watched.

Is this your heart? Do you desire God to work at Rock Valley Bible Church? Then, I say, pursue the unity of Rock Valley Bible Church. Pray for peace and love within our walls.

It's no wonder that David urged for people to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6-9). It's no wonder that Psalm 125 and Psalm 128 end with prayers for peace! They wanted God's name to be known. They wanted God's work to be accomplished. As peace reigned in Jerusalem, so also did God's blessing

And I say this, church family -- as peace and unity and harmony reign in our church family, God's word will be open to make an impact in this world.

I remember a time at Rock Valley Bible Church when we did not experience unity at the church. It was an awful time. So much of our energy was focused inward that we had little energy to focus outward. This is exactly what Satan wants. He wants nothing more than to engage the church in fighting with one another. He wants the deeds of the flesh to be manifest.

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:19-21) Do you notice how many of the deeds of the flesh are fighting words? Sadly, these things are too often the pattern of the church.

Just last night at the wedding, I was speaking with my uncle. He asked about how things were going at our church. He told me about how things were going at his church. He told me of several problems. Then he said, "You know how nasty people can be." That's the word he used -- "nasty". He was describing the deeds of the flesh in the life of the church, turning everything sour in the church.

By God's grace, we are not in a time of disunity at Rock Valley Bible Church. As a result, we can spend our energies outward, seeking to impact the world for Christ. Let us do so.

Pray that the time that the elders spent at "The Huddle" would bear fruit in bringing us to have a great heart in reaching out to the lost. Pray that the fruit of the Spirit would be manifest in our lives.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Gal. 5:22-23). When these things are evident in our lives, not only will it be "good" and "pleasant" for us; but, God will also be ready and willing to work among us. "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 30, 2013 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] William Digby Seymour, as recorded in Spurgeon's Treasury of David