

# Can't We All Just Get Along?

April 11, 2021

2nd Sunday of Easter

As I first began to pray and prepare for this sermon my eyes caught on the words; "brothers live together in unity," and I thought that this would be a most relevant topic for the times we live in! This past year or so, our world and nation has seemed to enter into a state of chaos. It seemed only fitting that I would begin with a video clip featuring some highlights of our nation's favorite pasttime! I'm just hoping that you can remember more of my message than all the baseball managers that you saw! But just in case, I'm sure that Ken and Steve have made a list of them that you can check.... preferably after the service.

I'm sure I don't have to tell you that this past year has been an extremely trying one for many, many people. We have gone through and continue to go through a global pandemic of unfathomable proportions in which over 550,000 Americans lost their lives. We somehow survived an election year full of lies and deceits and for some...doubts. In many ways our country is deeply divided. We have gone through and continue to go through civil unrest related to all the hate and racism amongst us. The shooting massacres go on and on. We have gone through isolation. We have watched so many friends and relatives die. There is an immigration problem on our southern border that continues. And there is even discord within our UMC that will no doubt end in a breaking apart of our denomination. So besides that, Mrs. Lincoln, did you enjoy the play? All of that being said, Psalm 133 offers us hope and the promise of a relationship with Jesus, and I'll try to explain how.

As I began my research into Psalm 133, I realized how woefully inexperienced this humble lay servant is for writing sermons. It gives one a special appreciation for our pastors, past and present. I know I wouldn't even be up here if it hadn't been for Pastor Greg and my fellow lay servants! So I give you all a big thanks for all you have done for me.

One wouldn't think that 3 verses of scripture would be so jam packed full of information! Psalm 133 was written by David as one of 15 songs of ascent. Songs of ascent were pilgrimage songs; songs that were sung while traveling to Jerusalem with family and friends for a feast. This one is focused on the joy of harmonious relationships, so I don't really think that umpire/manager discussions would qualify! What do you think?

Verse 1 - How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! In some Bible translations, there is an actual "Behold!" at the

beginning of the verse. To quote from Ray Fowler's website: "The goodness of living together in unity is so good, that the psalmist says, 'Behold! Look! Marvel at what I am about to describe to you!'"

How many things do you know are both good and pleasant at the same time? Just as a quick example, think of how many times growing up you heard a parent tell you to eat whatever, because it's good for you! Yep, but it wasn't necessarily a pleasant experience! Yet we are reminded in James 1:17 that "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father." Another example of how good and pleasant might not seem to go together is Good Friday that we just revisited! For me, experiencing death on a cross is not a pleasant experience, even though I know in the grand scheme of things that it was/is very good for all of us believers. How about discipline? Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." So when good and pleasant go together, it must be from God!

And who are brothers? If we are talking strictly biological brothers, this conjures up some interesting conversations that I have had with my brother! So let's go back to the Bible. Genesis 13:8 defines it as follows, "So Abram said to Lot, 'Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers.'" I believe that David was referring to the whole gang of family and friends that were traveling together to go to Jerusalem. For us today, brothers includes all Christian believers, regardless of sex, race, sexual orientation, or any of that! Then there is the question about whether or not brothers or brothers and sisters always get along. Back to the managers and umpires, or Cain and Abel? How about Joseph's brothers? Didn't they get so fed up with him that they sold him as a slave?

Now as to UNITY! A few dictionary definitions are:

1. The state or fact of being one.
2. Something that is wholly united and complete within itself.
3. A state or quality of general concord and mutual understanding.

Sounds like a perfect fit to our umpire/manager video and/or the current state of our nation, doesn't it! But on occasions when we **are** of a state of general concord and mutual understanding, it certainly is Good and Pleasant and from God!

So originally, I thought THAT was basically what this psalm was about. Singing praises when we are all of one mind! Then I began looking into the next two verses! And what a difference they add to the entirety of this song of ascent!

It is like precious oil poured on the head. Not just plain old regular olive oil, but precious oil! Precious oil was/is something so important to God that He gave Moses directions on exactly how to make it and what to use it for that is found in Exodus 30:22. Many of you recall the precious oil also being used on Jesus more than once! According to my Life Application Study Bible, "brotherly unity, like the anointing oil, shows that we are dedicated to serving God wholeheartedly!"

Precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. I'm thinking, why would David use all these visuals? Then I found out why! Aaron was the high priest. His head was symbolic for Christ being the head of the church! The many times David uses running down or falling is to emphasize that it is coming down from heaven, from God! Blessings flowing down from God. The amount of oil poured on the head was so generous, just like God's blessings, that they flowed down onto Aaron's beard and robe! That's a lot of oil! Think about this image of oil dripping down the face and off the chin and onto the collar and robe for a minute! For a second, I thought about demonstrating this! Wouldn't that have been a sight! That oil is not going to be quickly wiped off. Just like God's blessings, it's going to stick with us awhile. Aaron's robe had the twelve tribes of Israel sewn into it. Again to quote Ray Fowler: "The good blessing of Christian unity flows from the head to the beard to the robe. It is an image of the whole body of Christ united together with Jesus as our Head!"

"Oil in the Bible is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And what do we learn from the New Testament? That God poured out his Spirit on Jesus the Head, and Jesus poured out the Spirit on his body the church."

And now on to verse 3: "It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion." Let's get a geographical perspective because I love maps!

Maybe Steve can put the map on the screen for a minute! We found out that it isn't easy to get a map with both on it!

Mt. Hermon is to the far north where Israel, Lebanon and Syria come together. Mt Hermon has an altitude of 9,232 ft. and is covered in snow in the winter and very lush and green in the summer with cool nights and mornings of heavy dew. Mt. Zion is just south of the Armenian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem with an altitude of 2,510 feet where it is very dry throughout most of the year. Very different mountains that are 99 miles apart by car! What do you think David is suggesting to us here?

I think that David was trying to create a visual of something that would be extremely good and pleasant. Many of his people could see Mt. Hermon and possibly had even experienced its heavy summer dew. They

also had been to Jerusalem and possibly to Mt. Zion and had firsthand knowledge of its parching arid heat in the summer. So a nice cool morning dew in the heat would be quite refreshing. Isn't that exactly what God's blessings are? Refreshing! Renewing! Isn't that what God's spirit gives us? A rebirth given to us freely by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Some suggest that the dew is uniting one, Mt. Hermon, with the other, Mt. Zion, to remind us that in the church we are all one? No matter our status or position? Even though we are often very different we are united in Christian love as brothers and sisters of Jesus. Either way these are GOOD and PLEASANT images.

And the last line of the psalm: "For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore." How powerful is that! God's abundance of grace and blessings falling down on us from above! He BESTOWS or literally commands his blessing upon us as we "make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace," as written in Ephesians 4:3. But wait! There's more! He adds "even life forevermore" to conclude the song! David is giving us a preview of the everlasting life that Jesus has promised!

So what do we need to do my brothers and sisters? The directions are written here in the Bible for us. Reading those directions is easy! Following them and putting them into action will take some effort. For my own sake I need to remind myself daily by communicating with God and telling him that I love him with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind, and to love my neighbor as myself. Then I need to go out into the world and practice what I preach by witnessing to Jesus Christ in the World and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I would like to leave you with the following from Romans 15:5-6:

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God Loves You And So Do I

*Brad Addis*