

## Title: “United in Christ Jesus”

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1 Corinthians 1:10

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**Service Readings:** Is 9:1-4, 1 Cor. 1:10-18, Matt 4:12-25

*The church is the body and Jesus is the head. As a body, we must be united in the work that we have been given to do.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Why do we preach? What is the point? Each and every week preachers will stand in the pulpit and proclaim the same message: you have sinned in thought, word and deed, by what you have done and by what you have failed to do. The illustrations may be different each week, just as the focus or perspective may change. Maybe one week we look at the crushing weight of ..... sin and the next we focus on prayer. But in every case the goal is always the same: to show where you have fallen short of God’s expectations for your life. And once you see that, once you begin to *really* appreciate that no matter how hard you might try to be obedient, you can never be, then.... then.... it is time for the good news, the Gospel. This is where we point to Jesus and his crucifixion. We remind you that he carried your sins, even the ones that you have yet to commit this week, to the cross. We point out that he suffered God’s judgement, his wrath, for your sake. Jesus paid for these sins so that through him you can now stand in the courtroom of God and be declared innocent, forgiven, holy, and have the confidence of an eternal life with God in heaven.

In fact, this pattern, this recipe is so commonplace that we even require our Confirmands to listen to our sermons each week and identify where we speak about Law and where we speak about Gospel because we want them to understand that both are in each and every sermon, and we want to instill in them a habit of listening for them each and every week.

So, that means that when you hear stories in these sermons about people saying funny things, or children being, well, children, and when you are brought into the life of some person who is struggling through a dark time or some other person who is just.... sinful, these are all just different ways of presenting the exact same message to you: the message of Law and the message of Gospel.

The question, then becomes this: why? Why do we preach? What is the point?

Now, it seems like a good time to insert the sermon illustration, for you already *know that all good sermons include one!* So, here it is for this week: A young couple had been married for only a few days, so they were still solidly experiencing the honeymoon phase of their relationship. Barely a moment would go by before one would turn to the other and say “I love you.” It was all very cute, actually. Anyway, after about two weeks, the young husband seemed to stop saying it to his lovely wife. It took a few days for her to notice, but when she did she lovingly confronted him about it. She

said, "Honey, do you love me any longer?" And he replied, "Of course I love you! I love you more than anything!" To which she then asked, "then why don't you tell me you love me?" He looked at her blankly for a brief moment, as if confused as to why she would even *ask* that question, and then simply said, "Honey. I already told you that I love you. If that ever changes, I'll let you know."

So, back to my question. Why do we preach? If I told you once, isn't that enough? Do you really need a preacher to remind you of it every single week? I think the answer to that question is the same answer that Paul drives at in today's portion of his letter to the Corinthians:

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. <sup>12</sup> 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." <sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

That church was forming into separate cliques that seemed to align to a different leader: Paul, Apollos, Cephas. They were arguing about which was the better apostle, or teacher, or whatever and so Paul reminds them that they have been united in Christ and so there should be no divisions among them. But here's the thing. Paul understood that the problem was not the divisions. He knew that this was a symptom of a much deeper problem. The root of the problem was that they had forgotten that they have been united in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! They had turned from following him and began to look to these apostles, instead. Were they not followers of Jesus?

What he is reminding them in these simple sentences is nothing less than this: Remember that through the sin of Adam and Eve we were separated from God. Genesis doesn't talk about any separation between man and woman but between us and God. The battle line had been drawn and the sides had been selected. This was the division to end all divisions. This was the time when man turned from following God and began to follow himself, instead. Mankind was no longer one with God, it was separated from him. But then God sent his only son, Jesus to reunite them. And he did it through that sacrifice on the cross. It was the only way to reunite what had been divided. The price had to be paid for this division and Jesus paid it. No longer would we stand divided but we would now stand united: not from our work, but from his.

Paul is teaching them that in this gospel we find a self-sacrifice: Jesus giving himself in response to and for the care of all mankind. Upon his cross he carried the burdens, the sins, of others and he did it with joy and with thanksgiving.

Paul is reminding them that as a body of believers, united in Jesus through his death and resurrection, we must remember that we belong to him, not as a political faction but as someone that he bought and paid an enormous price for. And we are to live in this reality that we belong not to ourselves but to him who purchased us. We must set aside our differences, set aside our alliances, and even set aside our desires to serve our savior. We follow Jesus Christ. Period. Every breath we take, every thought we have, every action we make must be done for his glory and his alone.

So, why do we preach? It is because we are sinful humans and need this reminder. Just like the early church we turn from Jesus and follow our own desires. We need to hear the words from God and we need these words to stir in us the Holy Spirit who compels us to repent and seek forgiveness. We need to be in his presence and eat of his body and blood so that we can once again be united with him and with each other. Just like the married couple, once is never enough.

Don't look now, but I think I just preached a sermon!

Please pray with me.

Thank You, Father God, that we have been raised into newness of life in Christ and have become one with Him and members together of His Body, which is the Church.

Help us all to set our hearts on things above, knowing that Christ Jesus is seated on the right hand of the Father and we are positioned in Christ, and seated together with Him in heavenly places.

Help us all to die to self and to the things of this world, and may we learn to live godly in Christ Jesus. Help us not to be enticed by sinful desires, impurity, greed or ungodliness, but rather may we strive for Christian unity among ourselves and consider the needs of others, before our own.

May we individually and collectively put on the new nature of Christ and be renewed daily, in our hearts and minds, so that in the power of the Spirit we may become more and more like Christ, clothed with His tender-heartedness, mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Help us all to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, and may our lives be a living example of Christ Jesus our Lord, Who lives in each one of us, and in Whose name we pray,

Amen.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-on-Unity>