

Unity - John 17:20-26

Summary: Unity is not formed from agreement, but from love and forgiveness.

The words contained in today's lesson are some of the most **troubling** Jesus ever spoke.

We think we understand Jesus' parables, like the **Parable of the Sower**, or the **Parable of the Prodigal Son.**"

The significance of "**Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest,**" and "**I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly,**" we can grasp.

But we're confused when Jesus talks about unity.

One of the struggles that we have with the concept of unity is that **we envision heaven on earth.**

Unity is life without **conflict or dissention.**

Unity is a **sea of love.**

For some unity is **one church, with one set of beliefs, to which all ascribe.**

These fantasies are not going to happen, and I'm not sure this was the unity for which Jesus was praying.

In his book, Life Together, Bonhoeffer says that Christian Community, as many tend to imagine **it is a 'wish dream'** --- that the harmony we envision is not likely or perhaps

even possible. In fact, he says, **you and I have no right or reason to be disillusioned when it doesn't meet our expectations.** For it is somehow in our very experience of this community not meeting our hopes and dreams that we actually finally discover our 'life together' --- not because we necessarily like one another or agree with one another --- but because of the ways in which all of our struggle with each other enables us to see more clearly and be all the more grateful for what Christ has done for us.

That glory is **best known in true forgiveness.** That glory is best experienced among those who can examine their own faults and recognize their need for God... which is what our **struggles** also do.

We aren't perfect. We're family.

I have **never encountered a perfect family.** Certainly, the family in which I grew up wasn't perfect, and much to my chagrin my family, which is composed of Pastor Sue and two children, is not idyllic.

Families argue, disappoint, say and do hurtful things (**both intentionally and unintentionally**), even though there is love.

There are people who would say that this is dysfunctional. If this is so, then we all come from some sort of **dysfunctional** family.

The Church is family. We are a family of **one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.**

We act like a family.

We bicker,

we argue,

we have hurt feelings, and

we run to our rooms and pout.

We also love each other, forgive each other.

We're there for each other, if there is ever a

need.

Unity is surrounding a brother or **sister in prayer during a time of need.**

It is bringing a meal to someone just **home from the hospital,**

or providing **transportation to someone going through rehab.**

Unity is pounding nails on a **Habitat for Humanity** build next to

someone we had a shouting match with over a congregational policy.

Unity **is rejoicing** with someone who is **celebrating** and

shedding tears with someone who is **grieving.**

Unity is **working together.**

Unity is **discovering that the church is bigger than one congregation.**

Unity is working together **boldly**, lovingly to proclaim the gospel of Jesus

Christ. It is through such unity that the people around us will believe who

Jesus Christ is—**the way, the truth and the life.**

Unity isn't what it's cracked up to be—**it is far better.**

When people see the unity that our **faith inspires and the Holy Spirit empowers, lives are changed**—and the world is transformed one life at a time.

Amen