

The Soul Felt Its Worth

Part 3: Can we actually be united?

Galatians 3:26-28

WE: You know who I don't like? THEM. They're the worst!

They think differently, they vote differently, they parent differently, they use their money differently, they have different views about... vaccination, death penalty, abortion, race issues...

Of course THEY think you're dumb too. But they are wrong, right?

That's why we don't really associate with those types. Don't listen to that side's news or follow those types, why we might have or thought about moving schools, cities/states

We say we are tired of others causing division but we continue to divide ourselves from others and continue to listen to the voices that insist on and sometimes make money off of us being divided.

- Talking about division and the animosity that comes from it.
- Not talking about times when it is a healthy separation. Change /move/ have boundaries with certain relationships/institutions
- There are times it is good and healthy for people to go their separate ways

But the problem is when it becomes Division. When people are divisive.

And this type of Division is nothing new...

Sure we've always seen the advantage of being united to the people in our tribe/side/etc... We protect and defend US against THEM. As old as humanity.

Even see it in animal world... different troops of chimpanzees fighting for territory... etc. Basically,

Division is the natural state of humanity.

But there is something about Xmas that makes us remember this isn't how it's supposed to be... there is something about xmas that promises something better...

It's b/c **Xmas shows the true worth of every person.**

It's a truth that O Holy Night makes spectacularly clear in it's 3rd verse...

"Truly He taught us to love one another
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease"

This verse is the reason you even know this song... originally a french song... but in 1855 an American minister turned music critic (John Sullivan Dwight) who was a passionate abolitionist translated it into English and it became incredibly popular in the northern states.

But were those writers just playing on some sentimentality of the time? Why do those words hit so clear and hard... b/c they are true...

There's a reason the words to O Holy Night were so inspiring to the xian abolitionists of the 1800's... and why they still give hope today...

Jesus came to save and unite all of humanity.

GOD: We see this truth in Paul's letter to Galatia.

A little background... Jesus said people will know you are my disciples by your love for each other... but as soon as the church started to be formed the old natural divisions started to be drawn again...

Rich over poor... men over women... and in a religion with Jewish roots, Jews over non Jewish- Gentiles. In the church Gentiles were being demoted to 2nd class status b/c weren't God's Jewish "Chosen" children.

So in comes the Apostle Paul... Galatians. Lays out one of the most amazing distinctions/claims/promises of xianity...

Gal 3:26-27

True unity begins when we individually allow Jesus to change us from the inside out.

Paul saying when you trust Jesus for your standing w/ God/forgiveness of sins (last episode) you become something new. You become a new creation... like a metamorphosis

A crawling caterpillar and flighted butterfly couldn't look and act more different, right?

You take off old person and put on new that is being made more and more to look like Jesus... become a new type of human.

Doesn't change your culture/ancestry/finances/etc. But changes who you are defined as... your identity is now Child of God.

With all the privileges, status, and abilities that comes with. And on an equal level with all his other children...

Paul goes on... **with a new relationship w/ God comes a completely new way of relating to each other.**

Gal 3:28

Do you know how huge this is? See we are so used to the idea of equality...

But for the 1st century mind... the natural order is that the husband/father was the ruler of his family... wives/children/slaves... and the wealthier men were above/ruled the poorer men.

And you didn't try to get along with other races/countries, you conquered them.

Jews- didn't associate with non-jews.

Aristotle Taught- Greeks/Romans were better suited to rule over the barbarians. Who were better suited to be slaves.

Jewish prayer: "God thank you for not making me a gentile, a woman, or a slave..." AND actually see similar prayers in Socrates and Plato.

Aristotle- "Of household management we have seen that there are three parts- one is the rule of a master over slaves, which has been discussed already, another of a father, and the third of a husband. A husband and father, we saw, rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over his children being a royal, over his wife a constitutional rule. For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature."

- **Aristotle *Politics***

Even in the ruins of Pompeii we see the remains of the rich and poor on opposite sides of a room. Not even a common impending death could unite them, this cultural division was so strong!

All of life revolved around divisions. The goal was to know your place and act your part and protect YOUR people.

Everyone accepted the natural division and the desire to elevate/protect us against them.

Then comes God in a body... born on a holy night... who chose to live, die, rise again so every human can have an eternal relationship and life with our Heavenly Father... proving that every person has infinite worth to an infinite and personal God.

By dying for and giving life to everyone equally... **Jesus abolished all inequalities and all cultural, racial, economic, and gender barriers.**

In Jesus... the slave really and truly is our brother in every sense of the word.

For the 1st Jf's, when they got it... This wasn't just some good idea... or a hopeful ideal that could never be fully attained... It was the REALITY they lived

This passage was very likely part of the baptismal liturgy of the early church... What they would say to those being baptized into the community...

"You are ALL one in Christ"

Meaning breaking down these barriers was a central belief/goal/tenet of the earliest JF's.

Wasn't an optional part of the message of Jesus... It is part of the core of Jesus' teachings and the life of a JF.

Jesus- "Love your enemies... if you are kind only to your friends how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans [the rest of humanity] do that."

- **Matthew 5:47**

And actually living this out daily is one of the reasons Xians were distrusted in Roman society...

JF's were breaking down all the social norms that the culture had built itself upon... might/wealth/gender/race divisions.

When they got this right... the early JF's had all races, social statues, and genders interacting equally with each other.

Serving/loving/praying/forgiving/supporting one another.

They understood something we have forgotten... A JF has more in common with another JF than someone of their same race/culture/political party/vaccine status, etc.

I'm telling you, if you care anything about equality in our society... Jesus is your answer... not only did this idea start with him but it is only through him that we see a true reason to pursue unity.

In Jesus, we are all equally made one.

YOU:

If you want to follow Jesus, if you really want to be part of bringing peace on earth, if you really want to experience a new and glorious morn...

Pursue the unity that can only be found in Jesus.

Ready?

Read: Galatians 3:26-28

Pray: "Thank you for loving me. Change my heart. Show me the worth of others and how to love them as you do."

True unity begins when we individually allow Jesus to change us from the inside out.

- First we have to somehow get rid of the hate and division in our own hearts
- Accepting Jesus as the king of our lives and hearts allows our hearts to change... he begins the process... makes it possible to change.
- B/c what we see right now is people wanting/trying for unity but unable to change anything b/c they are more loyal to their side than Jesus and his ability to transform...
- Unless we rely on Jesus to change us... nothing truly changes.
- Jesus is the answer to the anger and division we see around us today.

So if JF- rely on him... fix your loyalty to him and ask him to keep transforming you and how you see others.
If still contemplating Jesus ask him to show you your worth to him and the worth of others around you.
Then allow the process to begin...

Ask: What do I use to make myself feel superior to others?

We all use something... Race/culture/gender/social/financial status/education/vaccination status/political beliefs...

Any expression of superiority violates the truth of the gospel of Jesus.

You are ALL one in Christ. **Jesus abolished all inequalities and all racial, economic, and gender barriers.**

Choose Unity: It's not some magic change that happens over night... it's a continuous choice to focus on unity... It's a cycle of change that has to take place inside us first and then we choose it to change our actions/choices on the outside. And when we choose the actions Jesus continues to work on our hearts transforming.

Might need to mute/unfollow those voices that keep trying to push our divisions...

I had to. That feeling of us v. them is so addicting.

Might need to repair some relationships that you've severed b/c of preferences/differences

- Might need to simply choose forgiveness if they aren't willing to seek unity

Means making concessions and compromises for each other. Being willing to look at other sides. Being willing to admit you might be wrong. And that different might be better.

Jesus makes us one family... we can disagree and still be in the same family.

Take off those old ratty clothes- they never looked good on you anyway, and put on Christ.

GOD:

Imagine a world where the JF's were focused more on the worth of every individual instead of the worthiness of their political/social cause.

Where we focused on our common Savior instead of what commonly divides us? Where the world noticed, recognized, and appreciated our unity and wanted that, too?

Aren't you tired of the division. Of the soul sucking boring back and forth of trying to outdo each other?

When we see ourselves as one in Jesus we see the worth of each one of us.

It can actually happen. We had a glimpse of it in 1914.

The true story of the Xmas Truce. 5 months after the beginning of WWI... An unofficial ceasefire began in certain parts of the front lines when German and British soldiers sang xmas carols to each other across no mans land...

On Xmas day German soldiers emerged from the trench and began walking toward their enemy's trench says, "Merry Xmas" in their enemy's language.

The British saw that the Germans were unarmed and came out of their trenches shaking hands with their enemies.

They exchanged presents, took photographs with each other, sang songs, played some games of soccer.

The commanders on both sides were afraid the men would lose their will to fight so forbade any fraternizing for the rest of the war.

But for that brief time we saw what Xmas was truly meant to bring... Enemies realizing they are one b/c of their shared trust and belonging to Jesus.

The world saw the true power and truth of xmas...

Xmas shows us the worth of every person everyday.

Questions

1. How did this series/episode help, challenge, or encourage yo
2. What stood out to you about unity in this episode?
3. Read Gal 3:26-28. What tends to be a barrier to unity for you? Why do you think that is?
4. How can your group pray for you and for unity in your relationships/church/community?

Summary:

We say we are tired of all of the division around us... but we keep dividing ourselves from each other. Division just seems to be part of our human nature. But Christmas promises peace on earth. Is unity and peace actually possible or is it simply some sentimental longing? The answer is simpler and more powerful than we imagine.

Episode Breakdown:

00:55 Quick hi-welcome

01:58 THEM

04:00 Not how it's supposed to be

06:10 Trouble brewin'

12:05 EVERY person...


15:30 If you're ready

18:04 No more barriers

20:40 It can actually happen

22:30 Final thoughts

25:45 Qs and Bloops

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▶ Ask your “So, what about...?” Questions!

<https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/ask> or watch last year’s series here:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3wRLN-XrhoEFqmjUhGbwTkWpQiGu8TB4>

▶ #forSalem DECEMBER Opportunity: Christmas FOR Everyone!

Gifts for Church @ The Park, Simonka Place, CASA, neighbors, friends and strangers. Pick one or do a mix! Find out more at: <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/xmas/#xmas>

▶ Suggested Bible Readings:

Matthew 5:38-48

Matthew 7:1-5

John 15:1-17

▶ Other Resources

Aristotle- Politics: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html>

▶ Music we listened to making this episode:

The Beatles- We Can Work It Out: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oyclqo_AV2M

Josh Garrells- Benediction <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpUqBoj2wzk>

Foo Fighters- Come Back: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9Sgvf_vlDc

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