

Psalm 133.¹⁻³

Unity

Background

The 15 'songs of ascent' (Psalms 120-134) provide a manual on discipleship: as you step out in faith to follow Jesus, that 'path of life' ([Ps.16.11](#)) sees you ascending the mountain of the Lord ([Ps.24.3](#)).

You are headed home (as Ps.132 indicated); and now as the 'songs of ascent' near their conclusion, this theme of unity comes into its own. The whole work of the Lord Jesus in salvation is to uniting what has been separated, to making the two one ([Eph.2.14](#)), to reconcile all things to Himself ([Col.1.20](#)), and to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ ([Eph.1.10](#)).

This note of unity is, of course, rooted in who God is. The most basic text for the people of God in Old Testament times was the so called 'Shema' (after the opening word of the text in Hebrew) – *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one"* ([Deut.6.4](#)). Judaism, and in consequence the Christian faith is emphatically and foundationally monotheistic: thus, as emphatically, *"there is **one** body, and **one** Spirit, just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called .."*: because there is *"**one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; **one** God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all"* ([Eph.4.4-6](#)).

The whole created order bears that mark (hence its being described as the '*universe*'): the dust of the ground and the breath of life, combined by God from the outset to form a living being, body and spirit united ([Gen.2.7](#)): the man and the woman, made in the image of God, united to 'become one flesh' ([Gen.2.24](#)).

Sin, however, separates.

Spiritually, the man and the woman were banished from God's presence, separated from their Maker ([Gen.3.23](#)).

Relationally, men and women become separated. Adam, instead of protecting his wife, puts her in the firing line ([Gen.3.12](#)). Cain, instead of being his brother's keeper becomes his brother's killer ([Gen.4.8](#)).

Physically, body and spirit are separated in death ([Gen.5](#) – see the repeated *".. then he died .. then he died .."*).

Politically, peoples are separated. The tower of Babel, so expressive of the defiant spirit of sinful humanity, results in 'the language of the whole world being confused' and its people become 'scattered' ([Gen.11.1-9](#)).

Sin separates what God has joined together: and there's a sense in which the whole gospel enterprise, centred in the ministry of the Son of God, is the 'un-doing' of the damage occasioned by sin, the integrating of what has disintegrated, the coming together of what has been torn apart, the uniting of what has been scattered.

Good Friday signalled the dawning of that new day when *"the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom"* ([Mk.15.38](#)): the barrier between earth and heaven removed, fellowship restored. The day of Pentecost was the harbinger of

where that renewed fellowship with God would lead – “.. *they were all together, in one place ..*” ([Acts 2.1](#)): a day, still future, when “*a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne ..*” ([Rev.7.9](#)) united in their praise of God and exulting in the wonder and the joy of their diverse community!

I suggest that along with ‘**day**’ (1) which centres on the psalm itself, you spend some time on the ‘high priestly’ prayer of Jesus in John 17, and particularly ‘**days**’ (4) and (6).

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1) Monday 4th April – united

Read [Psalm 133.1-3](#)

“.. *there the LORD bestows His blessing, even life for evermore ..*” (Ps.133.3)

Your life may be fraying at the seams. The nations may be at war. The world may be falling apart. But God has come in Jesus to pull things together, to mend what’s broken and to unite what’s been sadly separated. Rejoice when you see it start to happen!

What in particular makes it ‘good and pleasant’ when God’s people live together in unity?

What steps might you take today, with the help of God’s Spirit, to mend a relationship that’s become strained and distant?

Read [Eph.4.1-7](#): unity among God’s people is created by the Spirit, but how are we encouraged to **maintain** that unity?

In what ways does discord hinder the bestowal of God’s blessing?

Does our failure to ‘live in peace with everyone’ ([Heb.12.14](#)) keep us, at least in some measure, from seeing the Lord present and at work among us?

Prayer: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union ([Francis of Assisi](#))

2) Tuesday 5th April – life

Read [John 17.1-5](#)

“*this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ ..*” (Jn.17.3)

Jesus’ passion and prayer, indeed His very purpose in coming into this world, is that you might have life, and life in all its fulness: that life is known in *relationship with* God, rather than in *rebellion against* God. Cultivate *that* relationship always!

Relationships are fragile things: have you been neglecting your relationship with the Lord?

How does the knowledge that [Jesus is praying for you](#) help you?

Prayer: *You make known to me the path of life, O Lord: you will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand ([Ps.16.11](#))*

3) Wednesday 6th April – revelation

Read [John 17.6-10](#)

“.. I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them ..” (Jn.17.)

God is known by revelation rather than by reason. He is revealed through the ‘words’ which He has spoken – and through your acceptance of those ‘words’. The Scriptures are vital because they are *His* Word: hear Him speaking to you through them.

The disciples ‘accepting’ the words spoke to them by Jesus found expression in their obeying that ‘Word’: have you been obeying the ‘words’ of God?

The deepest truth about you as a believer is that you are primarily *His*: how will glory come to Him through you today?

Prayer: *In my life, Lord, be glorified. May the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart, and the activities in which I engage be alike pleasing in Your sight today.*

4) Thursday 7th April – protected

Read [John 17.11-12](#)

“.. ‘I protected them and kept them safe by that Name You gave Me’ ..” (Jn.17.12)

Our flawed humanity leaves us always exposed to the disintegrative forces of sin. Jesus’ presence with His disciples preserved them from all that would have otherwise pulled them apart and kept them together as a body of His followers.

Why do we need to be ‘protected’ if as believers we are to be one as God is one?

Are you conscious of strained relationships in your own life today for which the healing and preserving grace of God is required?

What did Jesus mean by relating the protection of God’s people so closely with ‘the power of Your Name’?

What lessons can you learn from the way Jesus ‘protected’ His disciples when it comes to safeguarding your own relationships?

Prayer: *Guard my lips, O Lord, that I may not occasion offence and cause others to stumble and fall. Help me to live at peace with one and all, so far as it lies in my power.*

5) Friday 8th April – sanctified

Read [John 17.13-19](#)

“.. ‘Sanctify them by the truth: Your Word is truth’ ..” (Jn.17.17)

As a believer you are in the world, but not *of* the world. You’re a citizen of the kingdom of God, being fitted by Him for life in that realm; and being thus ‘sanctified’ (set apart for God) through His Word will mean that you’re often vilified by this world.

Why does the world ‘hate’ the followers of Jesus, and in what ways have you experienced that ‘hatred’?

How is the Word of God ‘sanctifying’ you?

Prayer: *Teach me, Lord, the way of Your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep Your law and obey it with all my heart* ([Ps.119](#))

6) Saturday 9th April – reconciled

Read [John 17.20-23](#)

“.. ‘then the world will know that You sent Me’ ..” (Jn.17.23)

The gospel is essentially relational. The ‘one-ness’ of the ‘triune’ God pervades all creation and underpins the whole of His saving work in Christ. Jesus brings together what sin has separated: the ‘one-ness’ of His people bears a powerful witness to that.

“The mark of community is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of a reconciling spirit” (Bill Hybels): how are you displaying such a spirit?

What is ‘the glory’ to which Jesus refers in v.22, and how is the gift of that ‘glory’ so integral to His people’s being, in His words ‘one as we are one’?

In what ways does the relational life of your fellowship help ‘the world’ recognise the powerful truth of the gospel?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for those whose way of relating to those around them has helped me grasp better the gospel. Help me in my relationships to show Jesus to others.*

7) Sunday 10th April – glory

Read [John 17.24-26](#)

“‘I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am and to see My glory ..’” (Jn.17.24)

You delight in Jesus’ presence: He delights in *yours*! Life is found in community – in the ‘community’ of God Himself: and it’s into that community that you’ve been brought by Jesus. Celebrate that privilege as you gather with His people today!

Today is 'Palm Sunday' when the crowd welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as King: how will your praise today help others catch a glimpse of Jesus' glory?

In what ways are you aware of Jesus *continuing* to make God known to you (v.25)?

Prayer: *I will arise and give thanks to You, Lord my God, and Your Name I will bless with all my heart: You have shown mercy, You have shown mercy to me.*