

Living as a Church: Unity in Diversity

So far in our class we have looked at the life of the church regarding its identity, purpose, and last week we started looking at some priorities. Pastor Stu helpfully showed last week the primary place of preaching and prayer in the church. This week we turn to the subject of unity. And specifically our topic today is “unity in diversity”.

There have always been calls for unity in the world. We are on the hunt for a utopian society and yet it ever eludes us. A prime example of this is the John Lennon song “Imagine”, which imagines and in a sense calls people to pursue a world of peace where there is no heaven, hell, religion, countries, possessions and instead a mutual sharing of everything. That dream continues today, with people longing for world peace. However, Jesus’ sure word says that we “will hear of wars and rumors of wars”. In

Matthew 24:7-8 He says:

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”

That’s just the start. He says things will continue to get worse, not better. Religious persecution will intensify as people try to fulfill that dream of no hell or religion. The world simply does not have the answer for peace. We can continue to dream but that’s all it is – a dream.

Now, that’s pretty hopeless. But I say all that to say this in contrast: the church of Jesus Christ is meant to display an otherworldly, Gospel-created unity, one that cannot be achieved by human means, in order to display the folly of human effort and the glory of our majestic God. (repeat)

This is God’s plan for the local church – that in each place there would be an aroma of otherworldly unity that is inexplicable apart from the work of God.

In our life together as a local church we are to live not just aimlessly but with a purpose. Our main objective is to bring glory to God by honoring him in our words and actions, by His grace, so that through our lives others may see the powerful grace of God to transform *and* reconcile.

This is a high privilege and really amazing when you stop to think about it. God has chosen to make visible His invisible attributes; to magnify His glory; to showcase His perfect character through very imperfect people.

Okay, so a very simple and loosely structured outline today. First, I want to examine “God-Created Unity”. What is it? What is it not? What are some counterfeits of it? Then, I want to turn our attention to “God-Ordained Diversity”. What is the purpose of diversity in God’s saving plan? How do we embrace and cultivate diversity God’s way? Finally, I want to end with some applications. As we go through, our points on unity and diversity will intersect at times. They go together and so while we look at them side by side we are also in a sense always meant to see them together.

I. **God-Created Unity**

Biblical New Testament Unity

Unity is a definite feature of the early church in the apostolic era. As Pastor Jones has been preaching through Acts we have seen the huge part unity plays in the narrative. Lets briefly look at three examples.

a. **Three Examples of Unity in Acts**

➤ **Acts 1:14**

Here we have all the disciples gathered together, and they are all listed in verse 13. And then in verse 14 we read:

“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”

These early believers of all sorts: fishermen, tax collectors, educated and uneducated, relatives of Jesus, men and women. And they are all together unified in the pursuit of God in prayer. It is in this posture that the Holy Spirit comes and the church is born.

➤ **Acts 2:42-47**

Here is a very famous summary statement of early church life.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many signs and wonders were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Here, just as in our Acts 1 passage, the believers are devoted. Definition of “devote”: *give all or a large part of one's time or resources to (a person, activity, or cause)*. All of them gave their time and energy and focus to the same great Person and cause – following the Lord Jesus. They were devoted to doctrine, assembling together for worship, fellowshiping together and to prayer. This devotion led to radical expressions of solidarity and generosity. They sold their possessions and gave to their brothers and sisters in need. And God blessed them with growth. But it was obvious that this was God’s work. No human cause could produce such an otherworldly response. This was not natural. We are attached to our stuff. People work hard to buy property and accrue assets. And yet this was God-created unity. This

was faith working through love. Created by grace. Amazing grace that changed their hearts and proved to a watching world the omnipotence of God.

➤ **Acts 4:32**

Our third example is another summary statement, and we'll look at just one verse, **Acts 4:32** –

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.”

Here again we see the phrase “all or everything in common.” Now obviously they weren't clones. They had different personalities, temperaments, social status, some were men, some were women and yet they were “of one heart and soul.” When it came to what was most important they had those things in common. They were submitted to Christ and transformed by the gospel. And so they were tightly bound together by a God-created love which did not let superficial differences divide them.

We can see how integral unity was to the life of the early church. This was not something that was conjured up by a “unity building program”, but produced by the Holy Spirit as a result of the transforming power of the gospel.

b. The Objective Work of Christ in Establishing Unity

One of the repeated themes in Paul's letter to the Ephesians is God-created unity. Let's turn there and investigate a little. Lets look at Ephesians 2 starting in verse 1. Here we have the glorious gospel of our salvation detailed for us. As I read through verse 10, just remember afresh what God has done in your life if you sit here as a believer this morning.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

O what grace! Paul then goes on to talk about the reconciliation of Gentiles and Jews into one body. A reconciliation enabled by faith in the gospel we just read about. God creates faith, amen? It's a gift. And so the God-created faith leads to God-created reconciliation with God and with others. Listen to this in **verses 13-19**:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

Look at what the gospel did to the Jew/Gentile dynamic. They were different culturally, ethnically, and religiously and yet Paul says that Christ has completely "broken down the wall of hostility" between these two groups. This is the glorious reality of what Christ has done *objectively* to accomplish unity among his people. Listen to what God accomplished:

- We, the Gentiles, have been brought near by the blood of Christ
- He made Jews and Gentiles one, breaking down the wall of hostility
- He created one new man (humanity) instead of two
- He reconciled us to both to God
- He killed the hostility
- He preached peace
- He granted us mutual access to the Father by the Spirit

- He made us fellow citizens and brothers and sisters in God's family

Otherworldly. God accomplished what no human institution ever could. Jew and Gentile distinctions and differences seemed insurmountable in their day. And so today we have our own cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender, social distinctions that seem challenging at times to interact with peaceably. And yet, God continues to unify believers supernaturally for His glory.

c. Two Aspects of God-Created Unity

Let's consider two aspects of God-created unity. Breadth and depth.

1) Breadth

It includes people of all kinds. From every tribe, language, people, and nation. As we read in Ephesians, the gospel is not for one nation, culture, language, or class of person. It's borders are open for all to come. It is for any and every person who calls upon the name of the Lord to be saved. The great promise of **Romans 10:11-13** is this:

"For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

We see here both the exclusivity and inclusivity of the gospel here. Salvation is limited only to those who would believe in Christ and call upon the Lord. He is the one way. And yet, the gospel is wonderfully inclusive – including *all* and *everyone* who would come through Christ. No matter their background; there is no distinction. The Lord bestows the same riches on anyone who would come.

2) Depth

God-created unity is truly familial. If we see church simply as an event once a week in which other people just happen to be there as well we are totally missing the point. If we see “loving the brethren” as simply trying to tolerate people different than us for short spurts of time we are missing the point. We have been made one. We are adopted brothers and sisters, together children of God. Our tie together is not superficial, held together by common interests like hiking, sports, food or the like. Rather we have a deep connection. We are family bound together by blood; Christ’s blood.

d. The Experiential Nature of Unity

We have looked at what Christ has done objectively to bring about the reconciliation of diverse groups. We now want to look at what that unity looks like lived out. We move further into Ephesians to see that. Let’s turn to Ephesians 4:1-6 –

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

Paul highlights all the things that believers have in common – they are part of one body, one Spirit, one hope in Christ, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all believers. He urges us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. To interact with our brothers and sisters who are different than us with humility, gentleness, patience, with love, thinking the best of them, and (I love this phrase) “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Our disposition is to be one inclined towards maintaining unity and peace. To deliberately work at it. If we skip down in Ephesians 4 we see what Christ has done to equip his church for living out a life of unity. Let’s read starting in verse 11:

Read Ephesians 4:11-16

Let’s follow the logic. Christ gave the church teachers and leaders to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” “for building up the body of Christ” and listen to this next part “until we all attain to the unity of the faith.” I like the way the NLT renders verse 13:

“This will continue (the equipping) until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.”

It is often said that doctrine divides, but Paul has a very different view here. Paul is saying that doctrine done in the context of discipleship (equipping) is used of God to grow a local church in knowledge, unity, and maturity. For what purpose? “that we may not be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” So that we are confident and resolute, and having the truth, to act on it in love. The local assembly is to be growing and building up one another in love.

The overflow of the gospel in the life of a believer is new character that is meant to draw the local assembly together in a community of demonstrable affection and care. It leads to truthfulness (v.25), resolving anger with one another in a reasonable way (v.26), unselfishness and care and concern for other’s needs (v.28), edifying speech (a check on how we communicate) (v.29), putting away bitterness, slander, and harshness (v.31), leads to tenderhearted kindness, and willing forgiveness (v.32). All of this renewed character stirs up unity among the body to demonstrate God’s power.

e. Unity: Action, Purpose, Source, Context

Before we move on I want to share a concise summary definition of biblical unity. I owe this definition to one of the 9Marks Core Seminars. Unity can be explained as having an action, purpose, source, and context.

- 1) Action: love
- 2) Purpose: To display an otherworldly, Gospel-created unity, one that cannot be achieved by human means, in order to display the folly of human effort and the glory of our majestic God.

- 3) Source: the love of Christ. “We love because He first loved us.” This is a supernatural love that we cannot muster up in our own strength. This is why it magnifies Christ. If we try to achieve unity through relying on our own wisdom, we will not be bringing glory to God. We are to love in light of the staggering way that we have been forgiven and loved of the Lord.
- 4) Context: the local church. Not exclusive to the local church, but it shows itself most clearly and practically through our assembly and life together.

Biblical, God-created unity is God-glorifying, gospel-displaying love towards brothers and sisters in Christ that is empowered by the supernatural love and forgiveness of Christ towards us, which is expressed most clearly in the local church.

Counterfeit Unity

If I haven't stressed it already, we should note that biblical unity cannot be conjured up through mere human efforts. To be biblical, and God-honoring, it must be authentically created by God through the power of the gospel. This is the only way He will receive glory through the testimony of our life together. To try to manipulate or fabricate God's vision of unity is to drain the lifeblood from our witness. A fabricated unity cannot fulfill the purpose God intends. To be unified around something other than the gospel is also not biblical unity.

- **Organizational unity** that seeks to unite everyone who claims the label “Christian” is not necessarily in view. We should be clear in articulating the gospel we believe and hold fast to it. There are many who would call themselves Christians who do not have a biblical understanding of who God is, who we are, what salvation is or why it is even necessary. We are not called to unify with such people in a local-church dynamic.
- **Gospel-plus unity** is a term I am borrowing from a 9Marks seminar which means that the relationship is founded on the gospel *plus* something else. Example. We've got Mark and Jim,

who are both Christians, who form a fast friendship, both being in their mid 30's, working as nurses, and who both enjoy cheering on the Tarheels in all sports. If we use these similarities to bring like minded together into the church, we are subtly undermining the power of the gospel. This is a demographic phenomenon – Mark and Jim would probably be friends whether or not they were Christians because of their similar lifestyles and interests. This may seem and in fact may at times be harmless, but we should beware that we do not ever market ourselves as for a specific type of person. What should draw people together is the gospel of Christ. In a **God-created unity and community** there are many relationships that would never exist apart from the gospel. The people have little else in common and yet are closely knit in heart. This puts the supernatural power of the gospel on display. This does not mean that there won't or shouldn't be friends with those who are similar to us. God uses these natural similarities. It is fine to feel comfortable and natural to gravitate to the familiar. However, we should not stay there. We should be willing to step outside our comfort zone.

While we recognize our tendency toward similarity, we should be willing to cultivate a unity where similarity is not necessary.

II. God-Ordained Diversity

a. The Purpose of Diversity

Lets now look a little more specifically at diversity – we have considered a bit of this already. The purpose of unity is to highlight the glory of God and the power of the gospel. And unifying people of different backgrounds all devoted together to one person/message is a powerful testimony. God has ordained that this happen in an organic way and be displayed in the local church.

We should remember that when we become a Christian we undergo a massive identity shift. We are transferred from objects of wrath to beloved sons and daughters. From darkness to light. We are,

according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, new creations in Christ. We are united to Christ. Our fundamental identity is that we are *in Christ*. So, being a Christian is more fundamental to my identity and your identity than our family, culture, ethnicity, job/social status, nationality, gender, age, personality etc. You are bound in deeper and more eternal ways with the brother or sister who is sitting in your row than you are with anyone with whom you share only other bonds. This is not to say that family, culture or anything else is not important. But I say this to highlight the amazing reality of what God has done to gather a people together of every tribe, language, and nation and bind them together in love. We looked at what God did to “break down the wall of hostility” in Ephesians 2. Jews and Gentiles were separated by ethnicity, culture, religion and the relationship between them was to some degree “hostile”. And yet Christ tore that wall down.

When I hear that I get an image in my mind of the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. For me I read it in a history book, for most of you ya’ll were alive and surely saw it on the news. It was a physical barrier that literally kept people separate. Now, the situation was much different. People in the Communist East wanted to get over to the West. They didn’t want to be separate and they chipped away at the wall themselves. But if you’ve seen the footage or read about it - just picture a definite barrier between one group of people and another. And back in Ephesians, Jews and Gentiles didn’t want to get to each other. They were happily divided. They would not of themselves have rushed to get to the other side of the wall or tear it down. And yet Christ comes and demolishes that wall and brings peace. Calls for unity. Creates affection one for another.

Or think of how impossible it presently seems for North Korea to reunify with South Korea. Two peoples divided for many reasons. Different cultures and way of life. Or think of the history of our own country with the Civil War. People of the same nation and yet divided in so many ways that we split and were hostile towards one another, actually killing each other. Even when the nation came together again, think of how long that process took and how imperfect at times that unity has been. Christ secured (and

created) a unity far greater than these examples, one that will last forever. And He did it through His life, death, and resurrection. It is a miracle!

The diversity in our unity is secured through the cross work of Christ. And so everywhere the gospel exists, there should be diversity too. This is a trademark of the work of the Spirit.

But here is something very important to remember. Our aim is not diversity as an end to itself. Diversity for the sake of having a diverse church. It is possible to be a church that is diverse in culture, age, and the like and yet be unhealthy, lack love, and have a watered-down understanding of the gospel. This is not our aim. Our diversity should point towards the power of the gospel to unify a people under the banner of the cross, who come from such different walks of life. And that is seen in the way we live life together.

b. The Character of Diversity

Ethnic diversity is often the first thing people think of when they hear the word diversity. That is a major part of it. We live in a world that is so separated, suspicious, fearful, and at times antagonistic when it comes to race and ethnicity. The local church should be a place where that kind of thing does not exist. David White a few weeks ago told us about a church in this area that a couple centuries ago had a separate balcony that was designated for black slaves, to keep them segregated from the white congregation. And that is not an isolated case. That was at some time normal in our country. That should make us mourn. We should recognize the folly of that. How antithetical to the message of reconciliation found in the gospel is that? We rightly decry that, but the fact that it happened should make us realize that we are not infallible in our own judgment. We should always be willing to be taught and corrected by the Lord and His Word toward a greater sense of unity in the body. So, ethnic diversity is a big deal but its not the only kind. I'll list a few:

i. The Diversity of Age

We are blessed here at Grace to have members both young and old. There is a great richness to having both. The young bring fresh zeal, excitement, flurry of activity, seemingly unhindered energy and eagerness. It's encouraging to see those who are young longing for the "pure spiritual milk" that will make them grow up into salvation (1 Peter 2:2). The old bring experience, practical wisdom, a faith that has weathered the elements of life. It is encouraging as a young person to hear these older saints share what God has done in their lives and receive counsel that is rooted in wisdom. We have Kingdom Men that Joe Byrd and Kent Thompson pioneered that intentionally puts young men and older men together to take advantage of that age difference. For the young guys to glean pearls of wisdom. And then, in Titus 2 Paul urges the older women to teach the younger women. He envisions there being all ages represented in the church and as that being an integral part of growth and discipleship. But where else are you going to regularly see guys in their 20's spending time with men in their 60's and 70's who they are not related to? This kind of thing is a testament to the otherworldly power of the gospel.

ii. The Diversity of Economics

While the world is familiar with philanthropy – the rich giving things to the poor – what it is not as familiar with, is those with a lot of possessions hanging out with those with little possessions. Rather the rich tend to go back to their community of other affluent people, and then only dip into helping those less fortunate in spurts. James calls this attitude out in James 2 talking about partiality. He says we're committing sin if we show partiality to the rich over the poor. We are called to "love our neighbor (all) as ourselves". And so we testify to the otherworldly power of the gospel when those who have hang out with and enjoy the company of those who don't. Not only in acting as a benefactor, but as a friend who is in the trenches with you.

iii. The Diversity of Personality

Extroverted, outgoing, and gregarious or introverted, hesitant and quiet and everything in between. Every person in the local church who is a believer is an integral part of the body. We are given gifts peculiar to each of us with which we are to serve the body. Some may be great at reaching out and making connections and quick friendships while others may be suited to listen long, love deeply, and strengthen struggling souls. We are all different in personality. And sometimes that can be hard to overcome! We must realize that as far as it is not sinful, our personalities are part of who we are and we must accept that. And we are to learn to not only tolerate but in some sense appreciate our brothers and sister's personalities that are different than us, and the contribution that that brings to the whole assembly. This bearing with one another in love, not in slander, gossip, or complaining is another testimony of the power of the gospel.

iv. Diversity of Cultural Background

We are all coming from many different cultural backgrounds. That includes me that came from a Southern context, with some Hispanic elements thrown in, coming to GRBC out of a Pentecostal upbringing for 20+ years of my life. Now, that description probably doesn't match many of you. You all have your background that you bring with you here. Some of us were raised in the South like Atlanta, in the North like New Jersey, some on the West Coast, some from the Midwest. Some of us from other countries like the DR, Holland, the Philippines, Camaroon and more. Some of us come from a Roman Catholic background, or Presbyterian, or Southern Baptist, like I mentioned Pentecostal, Mormon and on and on. We all come together here and our church has a culture in itself. We have a certain way we do things. And yet we can always benefit from letting the culture of those who make up the local church give life and vitality to our services and life together. We all have a perspective that we seek to submit to God's Word – but the result can look different based on the context and be just as pleasing to the Lord. The goal is that our embracing of cultural diversity would speak volumes about the glory of God's gospel.

c. Cultivating Diversity (Applications with help from 9Marks)

We have already considered today what God has done objectively to unite diverse groups of people together. He broke down the wall of hostility through the cross. And so, in a sense we don't have to do anything to create unity. God has done the definitive work to unify people. And every purpose of His succeeds. His plan to have one new man, in place of the two, will not be frustrated. And yet, this reality does not mean we have the right to passively sit and do nothing to cultivate unity in diversity. God is the one who creates unity, who creates diversity. He is the source of its life. And yet we are to work to help it grow. Remember Ephesians 4:3? "Eager to *maintain* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." So now let's consider three ways to cultivate diversity:

1. *Recognize the Invisibility of Your Culture*

We can get into this mindset where we believe that everyone thinks like us. So, when I was a student I had the mindset of a student. I faced deadlines and anxieties of exams, I worked, but in a limited capacity (with a flexible schedule), having no real insight into the challenges involved in marriage, raising children, working multiple 12-hour shifts in a row, caring for grandchildren or aging parents, etc. I was limited by my experience. And I still am today. We should be willing to recognize that and give room for the thoughts and opinions of others who don't share our particular perspective as an act of love. And I would hope to receive that same kind of love, because surely I'm short sighted at times! When there is a majority culture in the church, we not be aware of it even. Certainly those who are just coming into the church context feel it, but we may not. I can tell you, not coming from a Reformed Baptist background I felt a different culture here for sure! And yet by God's grace we were so warmly welcomed and shown that love that grows unity. So, get to know people and learn how their culture may differ from yours. Which leads to the second way to cultivate diversity...

2. *Embrace Those Who are Different Than You*

Let's turn to **Galatians 3:26-28**

"For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

What if, after hearing Paul say this, the Galatian church was like "hmm, lets start some small groups. We'll have one for Jews, and then another one just for Greeks, and then one for slaves (because they can relate to each other) and one for freedman, and one for men and one for women. That seems like exactly what Paul would want!" What! That doesn't make sense. And yet we can be tempted to do this by always grouping people together according to similarities.

This does not mean there isn't a place for mens and womens groups or a youth retreat. Friendship with those in similar life situations and with similar interests and backgrounds are wonderful. God can use them for great good. But if they are the only kinds of friendships we have, we run the risk of obscuring the unifying power of the gospel. There are some relationships that may only exist because we are both Christians and for no other natural reason. We should have those kinds of relationships as well.

Diagnostic Questions:

- How often do you have meaningful conversations with someone who is in a different age range than you?
- How often do you talk with those who are at a different educational level/different line of work than you (even if what they do totally goes over your head. There's a lot of people here that are way smarter than me)?
- Who here at Grace with a different ethnic/cultural background than yours do you know well enough that you could pray for their family and job?

3. *Make Sacrifices for the Sake of Unity*

It's possible to like the idea of a diverse church and yet not take the initiative to get to know people who are different than us. We should be those who seek ways to cultivate unity in diversity. In **Romans 12:1** we are told to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is spiritual worship."

Paul then tells us what this sacrifice of life looks like in following verses: "let love be genuine (v.8), love one another with brotherly affection (v.10), contribute to the needs of the saints, and seek to show hospitality (v.13), live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight (v.16), repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all (v.17).

This is how we are to interact with all our brothers and sisters. So let's close with a few application ways we can sacrifice for the sake of unity in diversity.

- We can sacrifice *comfort* by reaching out and associating with someone we're not naturally drawn to.
- We can sacrifice *preferences* – from something like music to something like the type of food that is served in the fellowship meal, or small group meals.
- We can sacrifice *time and resources* by helping fellow members in need, invite them into your home for a meal, give a ride to church, etc. Here **James 2:15-16** is a challenge to us:

"If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

and **John 3:16-18**

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

Our love is motivated by Christ’s love for us.

- We can sacrifice *habits* to get to know people who have different schedules than us or who live farther away from us. While planning is good, we might consider leaving room for spontaneous get together’s, quick meals and meetings.

Remember the point of all this is not just diversity for the sake of being able to say we go to a diverse church. All of this is to point away from ourselves and to our risen Lord Jesus who made the sacrifice and paid the price to secure our unity. As we live as a church unified in diversity, we have the opportunity to display to a watching world the otherworldly power of the gospel and the infinite wisdom of God to break down barriers – so that He gets all the glory.

I praise the Lord for where we are as a church, but we can always grow more in conformity to Christ and more in love for one another. I have prayed the Lord would do that in me and in all of us.

I want to end by reading Revelation 7:9-12, which shows what our diversity will look like around the throne in heaven. What a glorious thing that God has done!

Read Revelation 7:9-12