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Wednesday, July 15, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

EBC Update



News Brief

- ❖ Meg Tobert, Charissa Ratum, and Sharon Tobert are leading a small evening VBS this week at the church for Ebenezer children. Please pray for them and for all involved in this exciting ministry.
- ❖ **Online:** Our services are all available here on YouTube. They can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next will be July 19 at 10:30 a.m. Pastor John will be speaking on “The Problem of Divorce” (Mark 10:1–12). We resume public worship on September 13. Please watch this space for further details.
- ❖ **Prayer Chain:** Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).
- ❖ **Pastoral Care:** Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is: seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com.
- ❖ **Devotionals:** Copies of Our Daily Bread are freely available by request from the church office.

“That All . . . May Be One”

“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

(John 17:20–21)

When I first became a Christian in my 20s, I had this naive dream that many of the problems which I had come to expect in other areas of life would somehow not trouble the church. I was soon disabused of the notions that Christian communities could be without conflict, that leaders were above politics, or that division and disunity would be absent.

But the question which has continued to trouble me is whether things have to be that way. And when I read a passage like John 17:20–26. I am reminded that Jesus had quite different ideals in mind.

It is important to remember that these verses form part of the famous “high-priestly” prayer of John 17, in which Jesus prays for the church before his arrest and crucifixion. And what is one of Jesus’ main wishes? It is very simple: “that all of them may be one” (v. 21). In fact, so important is this theme that Jesus repeats it three times.

So why all this emphasis on unity? The theological rationale for Jesus’ prayer seems clear in verses 21 and 22. “That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you,” he prays, and again, “that they may be one, as we are one.”

In other words, Jesus is clearly asking that the unity of his church will reflect the perfect union of God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity. Like a loving parent who wants to see his children reflect the best of his qualities, Jesus wishes the church, which he prays in verse 21 will be grounded and rooted in God, to be perfectly united in divine love.

The idea is that Christian community should be true to its origins and parentage, and so offer the world a foretaste of heaven. That is the main theological basis for unity, as Jesus presents it.

The trouble, of course, is that far from seeing perfect communion in the contemporary church, we often find radical disunity and division. What is more, the tragedy of this failure becomes all the more striking when we consider the second point which I want to highlight, which is the major ministry purpose of Christian unity.

Jesus makes this clear in his prayer. Why should we be united? What is the ultimate practical purpose? "May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me," Jesus says in verse 21. Another way that he makes the same point in verse 23 is to argue that the church's complete unity is designed to show that "you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

"The quality of our life together is intended to show others that Jesus has made a difference in our lives. And the love which he has enabled us to show towards others comes from a loving God who cares deeply for us all."

Again, those of us who are parents may appreciate some of the dynamics here. Just as we like our children to mirror our best qualities, we also want them to make a good impression on others. We would like them to represent the strengths of our families and not the weaknesses. But there are also more pragmatic concerns at stake here, I think.

For the fact is that in what is often a very fragmented and broken human society, harmonious relationships and genuine communion can speak volumes to people. After all, who wants to join a group of people who are constantly arguing and fighting among themselves or who cannot seem to agree about things? And what kind of testimony is that sort of community to a gospel which is supposed to be a gospel of peace and love?



So what is the major ministry value of Christian unity, according to Jesus' prayer? The quality of our life together is intended to show others that Jesus has made a difference in our lives. And the love which he has enabled us to show towards others comes from a loving God who cares deeply for us all.

Jesus prayed "that all of [us] might be one." He asked that we might "be brought to complete unity, so that the world may know that [God the Father] sent [him] and [has] loved them." May this be so at this challenging time, and may we do all in our power to help bring it to pass!

Pastor John Oakes

Major Prayer Needs

1. Our VBS, including all children and leaders
2. Our sick & shut-ins
3. Our online services and Zoom outreach
4. All who are anxious, depressed, or lonely
5. Government leaders
6. Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
7. The complete defeat of COVID-19



1. Pastor John and Kirsten invite all Ebenezer youth and young adults to a weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. Every evening includes games and quizzes. For access, go to this link and enter Meeting ID: 851 704 4556.
2. The Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is studying Paul's letter to the Galatians. This week's passage is Gal. 6:11-18. To participate, please go to this link on your computer. The meeting ID is: 851 704 4556. You can also call in by phone to 778-907-2071, using the same meeting ID when requested.
3. The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, generally meets Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. For further info, please contact Rhea (604-537-0738). Access is through this link, using meeting ID 349 890 420, or call 778 907 2071.