



THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

August 19, 2012

“PERFECTLY JOINED TOGETHER IN GOD PLEASING UNITY”

Sermon Text: First Corinthians 1:10

"Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Beloved of God,

We live at a time when we hear more and more people complain about how Christians should stop all this silly fighting over what most "normal" people consider to be rather trivial matters of doctrine. They declare all Christians should join together – regardless of differences – united for the "good of the church".

We read and hear about this call for unity in the media's coverage of the Romanish pope's visits to third world countries, and we can read in our local newspapers and on the internet the latest news how some Lutheran churches are actually joining together with other so-called 'Christian' denominations in order to accomplish more than they could on their own.

Many of our friends, neighbors, and, yes, even members of our own families seem to have a genuine disgust for anyone who disagrees with this push for unity. After all, they say, wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone would set aside their differences, and get on with the work of the church? Can such a goal of breaking down the barriers and divisions between Christian churches really be such a bad thing?

Where should we go for the answer to these questions?

As true Christians, we hold God's Word as the only source and norm of Christian life. So on the basis of God's Holy Word, let us examine:

- I. What does God say about joining together with those who teach and practice that which is contrary to Holy Scripture,
- II. What is God's definition of "true unity", and
- III. How do we obtain and retain true God pleasing unity.

{Prayer:} Heavenly Father, sanctify us through Thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth. Amen.

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

Our text admonishes us as Christians to *"speak the same thing, that there should be no division among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment."*

This certainly sounds a little like what we've been hearing in the media and from our friends and some family members – doesn't it?

Religious unity with all people certainly sounds wonderful, and it sure appears, at least on the surface to be a good thing – doesn't it?

I mean, if something looks so good, makes you feel good, and from what so many people of good intentions say, that it can help us accomplish *so much* good in a world so rife with economic and social injustice as ours, well, it's just got to be a good thing – right?

But wait a minute!

Remember the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil growing in the Garden of Eden, which God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat?

God's Word in Genesis 3:6 tells us that the fruit "was pleasant to the eyes". It looked good. It looked *real good* to Eve.

And didn't the Devil make sure the consequences of eating that which was forbidden by God sound good too? He said: "*God doth know that in the day you eat thereof, then shall your eyes be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*"

Yes, the fruit *looked* good and the whole idea *sounded* good as well. You can imagine what grandiose ideas Eve must have had going through her mind at this point. Perhaps it was something like this: "*Just think, if my husband, Adam and I could be "as gods", we could make things so much better for ourselves. Why we wouldn't have to work in this garden anymore...we could shape our own world to our liking! Surely it would be worth it to disobey God just this once.*"

Yet what was the horrible result of their disobedience to God's command not to eat of the forbidden fruit? We know from Holy Scripture that because of Eve's doubt and Adam's both knowing and willing disobedience to what God had commanded concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, Sin entered into the world and infected us all. The result was the immediate pronouncement of the sentence of spiritual death upon each and every one of us, condemning us before God, our Creator, to everlasting punishment in Hell, just as God had promised.

What, you ask is the connection here?

Well, let's take a closer look at what the world considers 'unity' and what God's Word says is true *God pleasing unity*.

Some churches are using the exact same words of our text to promote a superficial religious unity. They say we could do so much more for the church at large if we would only "agree to disagree" about certain matters of doctrine and faith.

They want a unity that like the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: pleasing to the eyes, but with no concern for the spiritual poison such 'unity' carries with it.

A spiritual relationship based on ‘agreeing to disagree’ on matters of doctrine and calling it ‘unity’ is not at all God pleasing! It is, rather, a mockery of true unity, designed and encouraged by the Father of Lies (the Devil) to bring spiritual death and destruction upon those of simple faith. In reality, those who urge exercising this type of ‘religious unity’ – ‘agreeing to disagree’ – among those who teach and practice contrary to God's Word and the true Christian, who holds fast to the Word of God as the Truth and the only source and norm of Christian Life, are saying we should *tolerate* false doctrine and unscriptural practice.

And don't we often these days hear so much of the worldly ‘correctness’ of the much-touted modern attitude of ‘tolerance’ these days! And where does it all leave us? History demonstrates tolerance of false doctrine and unscriptural practice leaves us hurrying headlong right along with them down the broad and easy highway of immorality and spiritual wickedness into the very bowels of hell.

Some modern rationalists posing as Christians insisted that on the basis of human reason Christians must reject infant baptism and ignore the command of God to “*suffer the little children to come unto Me...*”. Ultimately, many that tolerated this error came to deny the power of Holy Baptism to save *anyone*. Thus, they now call God a liar when He says in First Peter 3:21: “*...even baptism doth now save us.*”

Sadly, many who once called themselves ‘conservative Lutherans’ and who once held to the Scriptural teaching on the matter, became ‘weary of all the fighting’ for doctrinal purity. And they themselves have now departed from the Truth, some for the sake of financial gain, high-ranking posts within prominent circles of academia, or simply for outward peace and ‘unity’ with those who have perverted the Truth of God's Word to satisfy their own bellies.

When woman suffrage became all the rage in this nation in the early 20th century, many insisted Christians should *tolerate* women voters in the church, for really, what harm could come of it to hear a woman's point of view on spiritual matters? And now, even in some churches that yet claim to be Christian, the woman routinely usurps spiritual authority over the man. In this wicked perversion of God's own order of creation, the woman, created to be the help-meet of the man, is assisted by the erring congregation willfully granting her place in the pulpit and in other leadership positions over the men of the congregation. This is in direct disobedience of God's Word in First Timothy 2:11,12 where the Apostle, by inspiration of God, the Holy Spirit, writes: “*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*”

Years ago some of these same people declared we should simply ‘tolerate’ open homosexuality as an ‘alternative life style’, and called for the condemnation of any Christian who dare condemn it for the “*abomination*” – the sin – that God's Word says it is and warned of it's terrible consequences. (Leviticus 18:22-30) Now the secular governments of many countries (ours included), are one after another mandating by legislative action the outright acceptance of homosexual ‘marriage’ as a legitimate civil rights issue.

These are but a few areas where tolerance of false doctrine and unscriptural practice has led to the destruction of individual faith and the splintering of entire Christian congregations.

In short, those who call for such unity where there is no God-pleasing unity, are urging us to fellowship with a lie, and demand that we grant it equal standing with the Truth of God's Word.

This we cannot do!

In fact we are clearly commanded by God to do otherwise!

As St. Paul writes in Second Corinthians 6:14-16:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols. For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

And in Romans 16:17-18:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

So we can see God's Word is clear on the matter.

Those who urge such a superficial joining together of truth and false doctrine, when there can be no unity whatsoever, are doing the work of the Father of Lies, the Devil!

And we see too, God's Word is clear about becoming spiritually intimate, about partaking of religious fellowship with anyone that teaches and practices anything contrary to the Word of God.

If we take part in this sin of disobedience to the Holy Word of God...

If we tolerate doctrinal error, give comfort through our silence, or give support to any church, which teaches or practices contrary to the Truth, we are guilty of despising the innocent blood of Jesus Christ.

If you have fallen into this sin, the sin of unionism, God's Word clearly tells you what you are to do.

First, confess your sin before God, and repent.

Then, in faith grasp the forgiveness of all your sins offered you in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, and bring forth the fruits of true repentance: *obedience to His Word.*

Second Corinthians 6:17&18

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

God here is commanding that we separate ourselves from the spiritual intimacy, from religious fellowship with those who teach or practice any thing contrary to His Word.

This we are able to do *only* through faith in Christ and complete trust in God.

God, here also, gives a promise to those who obey His command. He promises to "*receive us*"; that "*He will be a Father to us, and that we will be His sons and daughters.*" This means that He will bless us. And that *most richly*! And this He does, not on account of anything we have done or could do, but for the sake of the innocent suffering and death of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

What a wonderful blessing of comfort and peace this promise of God gives to us!

Though we be sorely despised and hated by the world, forsaken by once-dear friends, and even, perhaps, disowned by members of our own family for the sake of God's Truth; yet we have as our sure possession the promise of God, Himself, who *never* lies. We WILL be received by God the Father and most SURELY blessed as His dear sons and daughters, for Christ's sake.

What then, *according to the Word of God* is the true unity or "perfect joining together" of which our text speaks?

First of all, we see that we are to "*speak the same thing*" and "*have no divisions among us*".

But how is this possible, especially in these times, in this sinful world?

The answer is in God's Word.

In our sermon text, St. Paul tells us that we are to be "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

To be perfectly joined together, we must with all of our hearts, our souls, and our minds completely rely ONLY on that ALONE which is *truly perfect*. That is of course, the Word of God.

We dare not rely on the wisdom of this world or vain philosophies of men when it comes to matters of Christian doctrine and life. Nor are we to place our hope in the empty promises of men. Rather, if we are to be of the same mind and of the same judgment, we must have our faith and life, as individual Christians *and* as a congregation of believers, set firmly upon the solid foundation of the WHOLE Truth of God's Word.

We dare not "pick and choose" what parts of God's Word we will accept, or how much error we will tolerate; as though a little poison or a small bit of cancer will do us and our children no harm.

It is through idolatry; the valuing of anything over and above the Truth, whether it be peace within our own families, peace with the world, or the desire for a unity "pleasing to the eye" that can naught but condemn the arrogant foolishness of mankind to a devilishly false unity, and lead you and your children down the path to your souls' destruction.

It is only through faith in Christ Jesus and adherence to the WHOLE Truth of God's Word that we can truly be, as our text exhorts us to be, "*the same in mind and the same in judgment*".

This is how we *obtain* true God pleasing unity of faith with others who profess to be Christians in this life. It is also how God, the Holy Spirit, *keeps* us in true unity with Him and with each other.

God lives in us and walks among us through the faithful preaching of the Gospel, the diligent reading, hearing, and study of your Bible, in bringing your children to receive the forgiveness of sins and the washing of regeneration in Holy Baptism, and in coming to the Lord's Table to receive from Him the remission of your sins and strengthening of your faith as He has so graciously promised.

So, Dear Friends,

Be grounded in faith and continue in the full Word of Truth; that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you all speak the same thing. So that there will be no divisions among you; but that you will be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, until our Lord comes again to take us to our heavenly home.

And now, may the peace of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all and in you all, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. ... Amen.