

Scripture Reading: Psalm 133

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there Jehovah commanded the blessing— Life forevermore.”

# “Brothers United”

So with my reading and sermon title, how many have guessed that I will be speaking about unity today?

I am, but not because I am concerned about the health of our fellowship here at Church of the King!

The reason is that as we continue our journey through the Book of Genesis that is the theme we come to as Jacob and Esau are reunited.

- Those who parted amidst anger & deceit are now reunited as brothers!
- It is a story of redemption and healing that should give us much hope and encouragement as we serve in the Body of Christ in a fallen world.

Our text this morning will be most of the 33<sup>rd</sup> chapter in the Book of Beginning and it comes right after Jacob’s night of wrestling with God and his being given a new name: Israel. Jacob on the day before had heard that Esau was coming with four hundred men and the text told us he “was greatly afraid and distressed!” He at first divided his camp to ensure that some would survey, then he turned to God in prayer and later sent gifts ahead to appease his brother. In the morning after wrestling with God & receiving a new name, the fear and distress are gone and Jacob makes preparations to meet his brother leaving the results in God’s hands.

Chapter 33 begins with: “Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, & the two maidservants. 2 And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.”

Some see this as continued desperation as he puts his favored wife and child in the rear, but as we shall see in a moment this is how they are to be presented to Esau.

- We then see the evidence of how Jacob now comes as the humble servant he should be as a leader of God’s people!

3 “Then [Jacob] crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.” *[demonstrate the bowing]*

Then just as we see in the famous parable of the prodigal son, the love of family overcomes the tensions and sins of the past...

4 “But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.”

Both of these men are changed men at this critical point in the history of God’s people...

- Jacob is now the humble servant leader that he should be and Esau is no longer the angry brother!

It is good to remember just how angry he was when Jacob fled from his presence some twenty years before:

**Genesis 27: “41 So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”**

- **Now the angry brother is embracing and kissing the deceptive brother who is ready to acknowledge him as the elder brother.**
- **This is certainly a powerful answer to the prayers of Jacob.**

**Their initial embrace then becomes a long exchange:**

**5 “And [Esau] lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, “Who are these with you?”**

**So [Jacob] said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.”**

- **Note the Jacob continues to present himself as the servant of Esau as we discussed at length in the last message.**

**6 “Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.”**

- **They come in the order which Jacob had arranged for them to meet his brother Esau.**
- **The discussion then turns to the gifts that Jacob had sent ahead with his servants...**

**8 “Then Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company which I met?”**

**And he said, “These are to find favor in the sight of my lord.”**

- **Again we see Jacob putting Esau in the position of headship...**

**9 “But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” 10 And Jacob said, “No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. 11 Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” So he urged him, & he took it.”**

- **As we shall see in a few weeks, Esau has become a rich man as well, with many children and riches in the land of Seir to the south & east of Canaan.**

**The geography is important because Jacob is returning from the North and east and will end up at Shechem in the northern part of the Promised Land. Their father Isaac had settled at Hebron in the south and Esau had gone off to the south & east where the Edomites will be found at the time of the Exodus. In a few years, when Isaac dies, we will see Jacob and Esau coming together again in the southern part of Canaan.**

**12 Then Esau said, “Let us take our journey; let us go, & I will go before you.” 13 But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. 14 Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.”**

- **Some see this as the old deceptive Jacob rearing his ugly head again: Not trusting his brother and never intending to go to Seir.**

**However, what he says is true and there is no reason to question that they both knew that Canaan, the Promised Land, was where Jacob was going.**

**15 “And Esau said, “Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” Jacob puts his trust in God!**

**16 “So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.”**

**So Jacob is back in the promised Land but still east of the Jordan. He settles here for an unknown period of time and when we return in a few weeks:**

- **We will see he and his family come safely to the city of Shechem, where trouble brews once again.**

**But for today we need to see what a glorious reunion we have before us where two brothers and two nations have been reunited. Within this event we have both the challenge to remember our duties to our brothers and sisters in the Lord, and our duties to even our enemies!**

- **As I mentioned the reunion here reminds us of one of the most famous parables told by Jesus in His earthly ministry.**

**The climax is a joyous reunion of a father and son...**

**Luke 15: “20 “And [the son] arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 “But the father said to his servants,**

**‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead & is alive again; he was lost & is found.’ And they began to be merry.”**

- **As those in Christ who make up the family of God, these are the examples that we should rejoice in as we see relationships healed, struggles overcome and our sins forgiven in this fallen world!**

**We should avoid being like the older brother who took offense arguing against such a joyful reunion.**

**The writer of the Hebrews picks up this theme after reviewing the great hall of faith and carries it through the next two chapters...**

**Reading portions of Hebrews 12:**

**“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us,  
*[just as Jacob & Esau had done!]***

**... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”**

- **Jesus looked forward to the joy that lay on the other side of reconciliation, which of course came at a great cost to Him!**

**12 “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”**

- Yes, we see here what Esau had to set aside in order to be reconciled with his brother, which again should be our example!

And the writer of Hebrews gives us an even higher calling when he goes on to remind his readers that we are no longer under the Old Testament shadows...

22 “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.” 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.”

Hebrews 13: “Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. 3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.”

- Our brotherly love begins with the family of God and then extends to even prisoners and strangers!

With our text that I read this morning from Psalm 133 we have a stunning illustration of what this should look like and of course it points to Jesus as our great example.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.”

Now it is interesting to see how the Psalmist describes this event... He is of course referring back to Leviticus 8 where Moses anoints Aaron and his sons as the first priests of Israel, but there the description is simply this:

“12 And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to consecrate him.”

This was not just a touch of oil to anoint them, but rather a quantity that ran down his head to his beard and then down on His garments.

And the Psalmist says this is what our dwelling together in unity should look like...

- NOT some causal contacts but rich relationships that run deep and wide just as that oil did on Aaron.

We must also remember that Aaron and his sons were washed before they were dressed and anointed and we see this fulfilled in Jesus at His baptism at the age of thirty... The age that a man could become a priest!

- What happens to Jesus after He comes up out of the water?

Yes, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him just as the oil did on Aaron!

And of course we know that as those who are in Christ we too have been baptized with water and filled with the Holy Spirit as He descends upon each of us, like that oil or that Dove.

This is why the Apostle Paul could declare to the Saints at Corinth:

II Corinthians 5 “17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

- **And just as this work of reconciliation was foreshadowed in the Priests and sacrifices it was in the Law as well:**

**Leviticus 19: “15 ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.**

**16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am Jehovah.**

**17 ‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Jehovah.”**

- **So yes, unity is important and I would argue is central to the Christian faith!**

**We are in union with God because of the work of Jesus and this truth should work itself out in our relationships through the work of the Spirit!**

**Now of course we have ALL kinds of reasons why it is not possible; Just as Jacob or Esau could have done in their time...**

- **Jacob did not have to repent of his proud and deceptive ways!**
- **Jacob did not have to humble himself before the brother that wanted him dead!**
- **Esau did not have to forgive his brother but could have held on to a major root of bitterness.**
- **Esau could easily have conquered Jacob and taken the vengeance he swore to take rather than hug and kiss him!**

**And I hope we can see with all of this in mind that from a human perspective this reconciliation was impossible!**

**And yet here they are brothers again!**

**As Proverbs teaches us, it could have gone either way...**

**Proverbs 17: “He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.**

**10 Rebuke is more effective for a wise man Than a hundred blows on a fool.**

**17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.”**

**And of course Jesus brings all of this forward in His sermon on the mount:**

**Matthew 5: “21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way.**

**First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”**

**The Christian walk is a practical walk as we see in John’s 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle:**

**I John 4: “20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?**

**21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”**

**But peace making has its limits in our fallen world which the Word of God also acknowledges:**

**Matthew 10:34-36**

**“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’**

- **Yes, the Good News is offensive!**
- **But we are responsible for our own interactions with others...**

**Rom 12: “17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”**

- **This truth will change not only how we treat our brothers & sisters, but also how we treat our enemies...**

**20 Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

- **And so let Jacob and Esau be good examples for us of unity!**

**We are to love those in the household of faith! We are to love our enemies!**

- **And we are to be at peace with all men, as much as possible, & trusting God when we cannot find such peace.**

**Communion Meditation: Psalm 133**

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