

# That Precious Unity

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**Bible Verse:** Psalm 133  
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Tonight our text is found in Psalm 133 and I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms, to this brief but beautiful Psalm 133. We are progressing through and the finish line is in sight; hopefully sometime this summer we'll finish the Psalms and I'm looking forward to what lies between now and then.

Tonight we're at Psalm 133 and I'll read it as we begin.

1 A Song of Ascents, of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brothers to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon  
the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming  
down upon the edge of his robes. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon Coming  
down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the  
blessing life forever.

This beautiful Psalm is speaking about the blessing of spiritual unity among the people of God. The ascription that I read suggest that David wrote this Psalm but it's possible by the grammar, it's possible that it was written for him and not necessarily by him. But whatever the case may be, you'll remember that the Songs of Ascents, Psalms 120-134, were sung by the Jews as they were going up to Jerusalem for their national feasts. This was part of their annual tradition and the Psalm, therefore, is presenting an image of the tribes of Israel gathered together, gathered together around the temple, gathered together for worship that God had appointed for them, and so it's a picture of a spiritual act of worship that is taking place by the people of God in the Old Testament, and the psalmist is rejoicing in the spiritual beauty of that. It's something that he finds great pleasure in, great joy in.

So as you begin in verse 1, let's look at it there together. He says in verse 1,

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together  
in unity!

And that word "Behold" that opens the Psalm is kind of a call to attention. It's a trumpet call to pay attention to what the topic is in this Psalm, emphasizing our need to pay attention to what is said here. And as we're going to see toward the end of tonight's

message, the New Testament places great emphasis on the unity of believers in the New Testament and one of the things that we've tried over the years to develop here at Truth Community Church is a sense that as we gather together, we're not coming together just simply as individuals, we're not individuals coming together for what we can get out of corporate involvement and corporate worship, we're coming together as a body, we're coming together in harmony with one another. As a person enters into the life of a local church, there should be a sense of understanding that, "I'm coming to be a part of something that is bigger than I am." And that means that we come not only to receive ministry and fellowship and teaching, but we come to give as well. We come with a responsibility to participate in the life of the body of Christ and nothing could be more unbiblical than the common idea of a back-row Baptist that comes in five minutes late, sits in the back, and then leaves five minutes early and never involves themselves in the life of the church and just deliberately conducts him or herself in a way to not be involved and, you know, not to have to interact with people. That is not the picture of the body of Christ at all.

Sometime ago, we went through and listed out in the New Testament there are 20-25 different passages that talk about our responsibilities to one another: to love one another; to pray for one another; to serve one another, and on and on it goes. So the environment that God cultivates among his people is one of being together and one of unity when that happens, and the idea of a fractured body of people biting at one another over this or that issues, nothing could be further from the way that God intends it to be. And if you've ever been in a church that has gone through a difficult church split or you've been perhaps in congregational meetings where people are yelling at each other like they were victims of road rage, you know how that just spoils everything about the nature of a church and it's just so very destructive to come in and have a sense that people are not united together. This Psalm is presenting the positive side of these spiritual principles saying it is good and pleasant for the people of God to dwell together in unity, and what we're going to see is that God himself places a very high value on this so that to undermine the unity of his people, to attack it with accusations and things like this is a very very grave matter.

We come together and I've said these things before, you've heard me say these things, that when we come into the local church, when we come into the body of Christ, we're coming into something that does not belong to us. You know, the body of Christ belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's his by right of purchase. He purchased his body with his own blood and that means that we come with a sense of reverence, a sense of respect, a sense of humility. Every one of us as we come together, we're coming to something that belongs to Christ, that belongs to someone higher than us, and the body is his, and so that means that we have responsibility not only to serve and to worship but to protect that body and to sacrifice ourselves for the greater good of the body of Christ. So this Psalm points us in that direction.

It's interesting to note if you glance down at Psalm 134, it opens with the same word "Behold." In verse 1 of Psalm 133, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!" And then in the concluding Psalm of the Songs of Ascent, verse 1, "Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD." And you just see a

verbal link together between those two Psalms. So remembering that these songs were sung during the national feasts, we have the picture of the 12 tribes of Israel gathered together for the worship of Yahweh, and so it's a serious time but it is a joyful time. Worship should be serious but it should also be joyful and that's what we're getting a picture of here in Psalm 133.

Now in the Old Testament context here, unlike today in the New Testament church, the worship of the assembly was based on national ethnic ties. They were descended from Jacob, from the one also known as Israel, the children of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob. And so they're coming together in national ethnic ties but here in this Psalm, almost unique to the Old Testament, there is this emphasis on the spiritual component. They are gathered together for worship and the psalmist loves the principle of worship, he loves the act of worship, he loves being with the people of God, and to be gathered together – watch this – to be gathered together with common ethnic ties, gathered together in a common place, all gathered together to worship the same God in the same way based on the same revelation, by the same kind of sacrifice that God had instituted, there is this profound sense of spiritual unity that is taking place. The 12 tribes were gathered together as one, gathered together united in worship around the one true God.

Now listen, beloved, if that was true in the Old Testament, then how much more so for us as we gather together for New Testament worship gathered around the person of Christ, the Incarnate God, gathered around in remembrance of his sacrifice on the cross for our sins and his burial and his resurrection and his ascension on high, and knowing that we have an elder brother in heaven who loves us and we have all been born again by the same Spirit, by the same faith. You know, these were realities that were not revealed yet in the Old Testament and yet here we are benefiting from them. You know, and we gather together and we share life together in a local body and as we gather together consistently with one another and share life together, the unity of that is something that should be even more precious to us.

So as you look at verse 1, there's this emphatic sense, "Behold! Take note of this. Look around," as it were, "at what you have in worship and appreciate it for how good and how pleasant it is." Especially in days like this where war is dominating the news that we read, knowing that we have...and there are some mighty precious believers in Ukraine. I've been there. I was in Kiev one time many years ago. I don't claim, you know, deep ties there but precious believers there and they're being wracked by bombs and some of them are living in the garage of their church in order to have a place of protection while bombs are raining down on their homes, you know, and here we are in the comfort of a quiet place gathered together. They having enjoyed that until recently, that kind of worship in times of peace together, now gathering together and huddling together for their lives, well, how much more should we be able to look around this evening, look at the person, you don't have to do this literally, but just being mindful of the people around us as we gather together around the word of God, around the person of the Son of God shared by common bond to the Spirit with a like precious faith, one Lord, one baptism, one faith, to realize that we have something very very precious here. And you know, we don't have

any promises that it will always be this way and so as we gather together, we come in a sense of appreciation for the gift that God has given us of common worship together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust that every one of you has a sense that it is good and it is pleasant to be gathered together like this. Sunday morning, Tuesday evening in Truth Community Church should be among the highlights of your week, and I trust that it is. And the fact that you view it that way is a sense that you're entering into the spirit of this Psalm and what God intends worship to be. It's agreeable. It's lovely. I can remember, by contrast, you know, and these things just kind of give us a barometer of the spiritual state of our souls and that's why I dwell on it and emphasize this. I can remember going to church as a young child, I guess you could say, 8, 10, 12 years old before I stopped doing that and I had figured out that, you know, by the time I was 12 or 13 I had figured out from watching my dad that religion was for women and young children and now that I'm becoming a man, I can, you know, put those childish things aside. But I remember that, you know, going and it was just, you know, it was just, it was nothing that I enjoyed. It was just kind of an irksome thing and, you know, I didn't want to be there, the things were weird to me and all of that, and I had no appreciation for it. But you know, the Lord saves you and puts a new spirit in you and makes you a new creation and you see all of these things from a different point of view. For the true Christian what I'm saying is this, for the true Christian the sense of gathering together with the true people of God and to hear the word of God taught and to sing hymns together, this is among the sweetest things of all of life to happen and someone who doesn't have some kind of appreciation for that, some kind of enjoyment in worship, really needs to step back and ask themselves whether they're a Christian or not because Scripture declares worship to be good and pleasant, agreeable, something lovely to be enjoyed and to be enjoyed together and not simply as a spectator sport watched from a distance.

We could put it this way, I'm trying to say these things in multiple multiple ways to impress it upon your heart with the help of the Holy Spirit. God does not intend worship to be mechanical and lifeless. That's not worship. It's good. It's pleasant. Our heart is engaged in it. And one of the things that I have really come to appreciate about our church, about Truth Community Church, you know, it's something that I would be delighted to boast about with other pastors about our church and I know that David and Larry would testify to this, that the longer we go, year after year, the singing just becomes fuller and it just becomes more, you know, it becomes more expressive, it's more joyful, it's louder, and that's an indication of a congregation responding to the word of God talking about you, a congregation responding to the word of God and singing from a fullness of heart that echoes what this psalmist says. It's good to be here. It's pleasant to be here. It is a joy to worship my Lord Jesus Christ and my heart can't help but sing it out. And you know, and that's just, you know, it's not like that everywhere and so it's one of the things that we try to emphasize here. We have wonderful leadership and performance in our music ministry and I'm just grateful for those that participate in leadership that way, and grateful for a church that wants to sing. Show me a church that is responding to the word of God and I'll show you a church that loves to sing his praise, not from a manufactured thing of high wattage amplifiers just booming out noise, it's not

volume for the sake of volume, the energy comes from hearts that find it to be agreeable and pleasant to be in worship and find it a joy and privilege to sing out praise to the Lord who saved us.

This is the mark of a healthy congregation and I want you to know, standing here and I know I speak for the other elders as well, but certainly as the teaching pastor, you know, I believe that Truth Community Church is a healthy church and I am grateful to God for the work of the Spirit in all of your hearts. I'm grateful for your faithfulness to be with us, grateful for the sweetness of your spirits, and I know that the wonderful thing about it is that every one of you, you're just so unassuming that you wouldn't even think about yourself in those terms. You know, that's one of the things that make our gathering together so sweet is that we're just gathered together with sweet unassuming people who aren't angry about things, who aren't complaining about things but are just coming together out of a common love for the word written and Incarnate, and that is a special unusual thing to find in the world today and I'm grateful to God that we get to share it together. It is good and it is pleasant for brothers to dwell together in unity and, you know, and I'm just grateful to be a part of it. The Lord gets all the praise and the glory, right, because he's the one who produces this in us. You know, we couldn't be more different in our backgrounds. You know, we come together from different geographies and different giftedness and different interests and all of that, and yet here we come together in the name of Christ and we find something in common that is more precious to us than blood relations in many cases. You know, it's nice to have family that are Christians but compared to family that are not Christians, blood yields to the unity of the Spirit and we get to enjoy that together for as long as the Lord blesses us in this way.

So I encourage you, I encourage you to join with us as elders to be among those who are eager to protect and develop the unity of the body. It's a good and pleasant thing. You know, if there are voices of complaint or division that come in, that should sound wrong to our ears. It's like listening to a piano that's out of tune, saying, "That's not the note that we play in here. That's not the note that belongs to this symphony. That's not the sound of a well-tuned harp or a clear trumpet being sounded." That's out of place in the midst of the unity of the people of God, and so we just want to be jealous of that, we want to protect that, and as I said years ago to some of our men, some of our deacons who stepped up and did this, you know, the truth of the matter is that it's individuals like you, individual members like you that are going to be on the front lines of protecting the unity of the church. I know that may sound a little bit surprising to you but the truth of the matter is that as a church grows, the elders are sometimes the last to know what's happening but it's you that will hear the whispers of discontent, it's you that will hear the whispers of complaint, and when that happens you have an opportunity to serve the Lord by being a calming gentle influence and saying things like, "But you know, I'm happy with our church. I love our church and I love being here. You know, brother, sister, rethink your complaint, rethink what you're saying because I want to protect the unity and not be a part of something that would undermine it." And you honestly, you know, I don't even need to say that word "honestly," you know, the Lord says, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no," but just trying to emphasize it here. The truth of the matter is that it's the individual members of the church that are in the front line of protecting the unity of the

church, first of all, with your own attitude toward things, not allowing bitterness to take root in your heart over anything that may have upset you, and also in just being gently correcting those who might be speaking things that would be against it. And the reason that we do this is not for the sake of uniformity, it's for the sake of unity, it's for the sake of protecting that which God has declared in his word to be good and pleasant, and if it is important to the Lord, then it's important to us as we serve him and extend what he wants in the place that belongs to him. So these things are just very very important for us to consider.

Now coming back to Psalm 133 after that little word of application, I guess. Having looked at verse 1, what we see now in the following two verses is the psalmist is going to illustrate the blessing. He's giving two illustrations of the blessing of the unity that believers enjoy together, that brothers dwelling together in unity, what they enjoy. So what follows are now illustrations of the blessing and there's so much packed into these three verses. It's really just a beautiful beautiful Psalm. And so he says in verse 2, we'll spend a little bit of time here, he says, "It is like." What is like? This dwelling together in unity is what the antecedent of the "it" is. Dwelling together in unity is like something. It's a simile that he is giving us. He says,

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Coming down upon the beard,  
Aaron's beard,  
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

Now to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that might not sound like such an appealing figure of speech. You know, if I get, you're like me, if you get anything on your head, you know, you're kind of wanting to brush it off. You know, a fly lands on your head or something like that, you know, and we don't think in those terms. So what we need to do here is we need to take a moment to understand the background of this simile so that we can appreciate it for its beauty in the way that the original reader would have understood, and we can find something of the background of this in the book of Exodus. I'm going to take you to a couple of rather obscure passages that are going to help us understand what is being said here.

In Exodus 29 and chapter 30, we're going to, you know, if you've read through the Bible, you know, on a reading plan or something and your eyes kind of glazed over as you got into the details of the law in the latter part of the book of Exodus, all of a sudden this is going to have a new life and a new significance to you. And let me just read a couple of passages and we'll comment on them later.

In Exodus 29:4, God told Moses, "you shall bring Aaron," oh, that's interesting, Aaron's the guy that was mentioned in Psalm 133, "you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban." Getting ready to anoint Aaron into the office of high priest and his high priestly garments are being described there, and they were exquisitely made with beauty, with detail, with fine jewels, and then something

happened in order to symbolize him being set apart to his office as high priest. Verse 7, "you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him." Ah, the oil on Aaron's head signifying that Aaron was being set apart to the office of high priest, set apart to serve in that mediatorial role between God and the people, the appointed high priest. This is what Psalm 133 is pointing back as being precious and lovely. This is the man who was going to stand, as it were, between God and the people.

Well, go over, keep that in mind and go over to chapter 30, verse 22 and we're going to read about a dozen verses here that I'm pretty sure I've never read from a pulpit in many years of ministry but I'm going to today, and there's a point to taking the time to do this. It would have been easy to just pass over this and allude to it briefly but I want you to see it. This is the formula for the anointing oil. In verse 22, "the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin. You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand. You shall also consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy,'" meaning they're set apart. "'You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister as priests to Me. You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on anyone's body, nor shall you make any like it in the same proportions; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever shall mix any like it or whoever puts any of it on a layman shall be cut off from his people.'"' This was an exquisite mixture made according to a very precise formula. It was a unique fragrant oil used for the anointing ceremony and here's what you need to see about this. This rare oil, this unique oil and the unique event in which it was used represented the special presence and blessing of God. It is set apart for holy purposes. It is a picture of exquisite intimacy done under the direct instructions of God that this is how it is to be.

Then with one other passage in Leviticus 8 where Aaron is actually installed, this is all preparatory instruction in Exodus, now in Leviticus 8 we'll read a few passages here. Leviticus 8:1, "the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread, and assemble all the congregation at the doorway of the tent of meeting.' So Moses did just as the LORD commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the tent of meeting, Moses said to the congregation, 'This is the thing which the LORD has commanded to do.'" So in verse 6, "Moses had Aaron and his sons come near and washed them with water. He put the tunic on him and girded him with the sash, and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the artistic band of the ephod, with which he tied it to him." You see the tie to those passages from Exodus that we had just read. "He then placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim. He also placed the turban on his head, and on the turban, at its front, he placed the golden plate,

the holy crown, just as the LORD had commanded Moses." Now watch this, all of that preliminary to this. "Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him." This meticulous ceremony of which the anointing oil was a central part as God set apart Aaron to his high priestly office and with the wonderful aroma filling the room, the people were prepared and God had established the conditions for Old Testament worship to take place in the nation of Israel. Amazing. Wonderful to contemplate.

So what you see this allusion in Psalm 133, you can turn back there now with me, Psalm 133, this allusion is to something particularly unique and precious in the worship that is precious to God as shown by the meticulous instructions for the formula of the anointing oil and the fact that it was to be used in no other way. This was set apart for a glorious purpose and what we get the picture of here in Psalm 133 is that that physical reality is now being used as a spiritual picture of how precious unity is and how important it is to God. That anointing oil should never be violated. It should never be used for any other purpose. It had a particular aspect and role to play in the worship as the high priest was set apart. Unity in the body, unity among brothers has that same kind of effect, only it's in a spiritual not a physical dimension. It is exquisite. It is crucial to worship. It is that which gives it its lovely fragrance.

So in verse 2, coming back to verse 2 with all of that background in mind now, now it doesn't sound like such an odd illustration to use, now it makes perfect sense. This is at the heart of true worship, the unity among brothers is at the heart of genuine true worship that is good and pleasant not only horizontally but vertically. This is what pleases God. This is what pleases God. And so the rare oil and the unique event represent the special presence and blessing of God.

Now what he's saying here as the oil is poured onto Aaron's head, the oil would not just stay in a puddle on the crown of his head. It would come down. It would drain down, as it were, and spread down his beard and start to drip upon his priestly garments indicating that Aaron was being consecrated in his entirety; not just his head but it spread down onto his body as well. And so the picture here is this: the oil didn't simply stay on his head, it spread down, the same way this kind of spiritual unity spreads beyond its initial sphere. It spreads, the unity spreads and produces a fragrant blessing upon the people of God. This unity is designed to be that which gives a sweet spiritual aroma to the entire act of worship.

Remember the oil, the literal anointing oil was precious and it was costly. What does that say, then, about unity among the people of God? What does that say about that spiritual dynamic among the people of God? It says this: the oil, the literal anointing oil exquisite and precious; unity in like manner exquisite and precious, not to be violated, not to be polluted but to be kept pure and precious in the sight of God so that the blessing would spread to the people of God as well. The anointing started with Aaron but as he exercised his priestly role, his ministry spread to benefit the people. It carried its blessing to the



others as well. And on his breastplate were the 12 precious stones that were engraved with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. As that oil came down, it splashed onto the 12 and the stones which represented the 12 tribes were receiving the symbol of the blessing of the anointing. And so that blessing carried to others and wasn't just for Aaron. The oil symbolized the unity of the nation in worship under their consecrated priest.

And now here's what we need to see. I'm laboring to make this point and it's a point worthy laboring to make. As the oil set Aaron apart for his ministry, beloved, the unity of worshipers consecrated the nation unto God. Their unity together set apart their worship as something that was precious and exquisite as they gathered together and offered their worship up to God. Precious picture and one that carries over, the spiritual significance of unity carries forth into New Testament worship today as, again, we'll see a little bit later this evening.

Now look there again at verse 2. It's striking, the phrase "coming down." Three short verses and this phrase "coming down" occurs three times in the last two verses. "It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes." Then in verse 3 with a different simile being used, "Coming down upon the mountains of Zion." It's coming down. It's coming down. It's coming down. And he's talking about more than simply gravity bringing the oil down from Aaron's head, it's about so much more than gravity. "Coming down" does this, it pictures the blessing coming down from God himself. This is God sending down, the blessing coming down from God upon his people. As the oil came down Aaron, so the blessing of unity is coming down as a blessing from God above upon his people, stated three times in order to present the emphasis of it.

It reminds me of perhaps a more familiar text from the book of James in the New Testament. You don't need to turn there, I'll just read it briefly. James 1:17 where it says, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Every good thing given is coming down, a picture of God in heaven sending his blessings and they're coming down in order to be a blessing to his people.

So with this understated language, you might say, if I can say it's an emphatic point being made in an understated way, that almost seems contradictory, in a picturesque way he is picturing the blessing coming down from God, that unity – watch this – unity is a gift to the people of God from him. It comes down from God. It's not something that we can manufacture on our own. It's something that comes down from God.

So it says there in verse 2, "Coming down upon the beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes," the picture is this: Aaron's lengthy beard would reach to his priestly robe showing that the oil was abundant, there was enough to flow down his beard and to reach his robe, the edge of his robe that is described there at the end of verse 2 isn't referring to the bottom hem of his garment but rather to the collar of the priestly garment, not the bottom hem near the floor. So the oil would run down from his head to his beard and onto the upper edge of his priestly garment and the whole picture here is that unity in worship

is a precious gift that has come down from God himself, central to the act of worship itself.

Now as he goes on in Psalm 133, he moves onto a second comparison to show how good this unity is there in verse 3. And again it's an explanation that needs some explanation in our day, at least on this side of the ocean. Look at it there in verse 3 with me.

3 It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the LORD commanded the blessing life forever.

He's referring to a couple of different mountain peaks over in the lands of Israel. Mount Hermon was the highest and northernmost point in all of Israel. Those who know these things say that it stands over 9,000 feet, the peak stands over 9,000 feet above sea level compared to Mount Zion further south which is less than 3,000 feet above sea level. So you have a high point and a lower point. And Mount Hermon is known for its moisture. There is heavy dew that comes upon it that makes it a lush area. It's green. It's lush. There's agriculture there, especially compared to the dry regions around Jerusalem. So the summer crops that are planted up there depend on that heavy dew in order to reach maturity. The moisture is crucial to the successful agriculture, it's important for the refreshment of the crops in order that they might flourish and become all that they could be in their fruitfulness. What a beautiful picture of what unity does. The unity among brothers is like that which refreshes the people of God and helps them to reach their fruitfulness, helps them to accomplish what God wants them to do.

The moisture, the literal moisture on the mountain peak was God's gift to a dry land and so just as the dew fell on the head, to the beard, to the garment, so the dew comes down from God falling on the higher mountain and picturing it as extending to the lower peaks as well. The blessing wasn't simply for the highest peak but also would spread to the lowest and thus, beloved, and here's where this just becomes so crucial to us and involves every one of us, involves everyone that names the name of Truth Community Church as their home church, and certainly everyone that's a member of Truth Community Church. When a worshiping body experiences unity, everyone benefits from it. Everyone benefits from unity. When any one person violates that unity, everyone suffers for it. And this unity, as we have already seen, is something precious in the sight of God, something that he gives to his people that comes down from God in order to be a blessing to his people.

So I just don't know how else, what else I can say to help us all collectively understand what a blessing we have in the unity of the people of God, and what a responsibility we have to maintain it and to protect it, and how high and how great is the responsibility and how deep the sin of someone who would violate it. These are great and lofty matters. Unity is the gift of God to the worshiping community and, beloved, those of you that come, perhaps you're here alone, you come from difficult family situations or you've, you know, you have difficulties within your home life, difficulties at work, difficulties at school, just the conflict of all of that and just the grind of all of that, of a demanding boss or an incompetent boss or, you know, disgruntled employees, all of that, isn't it a wonderful thing to be able to step out of that and come together with the body of Christ

and experience the sweetness of unity, to have that place of refuge where you can come with like-minded believers who love you and accept you, who share a like precious faith together with you? Isn't that refreshing to have? Well, listen, Scripture calls us to recognize that as a blessing that God gives to us, to give him thanks for it, and to protect it, and to not let petty grudges, petty little injuries grow into resentment that causes you to resent or to, you know, to inject conflict into the body of Christ. No, no, no, no. It's not even about us individually. This is about a gift from God to his people that we are responsible to receive, to protect, to cultivate, to deepen, and to treat as precious.

Now Zion there in verse 3 is a poetic reference to the city of Jerusalem and there at the end of verse 3 with the reference, the poetic reference to Jerusalem there, this is just such a great Psalm. He says, "For there the LORD commanded the blessing." There, meaning there at Zion, there at Jerusalem God commanded the blessing to take place. It was there in Jerusalem that God made his salvation known. It was there where God had the temple built. It was there where God manifested his presence. It was there in Jerusalem where the 12 tribes gathered together to celebrate worship in their national feasts. It was there. It was all centered in Jerusalem. It was at Jerusalem where God made himself known. So this geographic location in the Old Testament symbolized the great blessing of God that is being celebrated in this Psalm. Now he makes himself known in the Lord Jesus Christ and we'll talk about that in a moment as time gets away from me.

But combined between the anointing oil and the dew on the mountains, what are these images teaching us? Well, they both picture something that is rich and luscious which has come down from God as a blessing to his people. These things come down from God. It comes down and it's a blessing to his people. That is designed to help us understand unity among spiritual brothers. It is a rich blessing from God for his people.

Now with that Old Testament picture established in our minds, we come now to the New Testament and we find this theme being emphasized in the New Testament in even more dramatic, even more direct ways. Turn to the gospel of John 17. The Lord Jesus Christ on the night prior to his crucifixion in his great high priestly prayer, what was on his mind as he's praying to his Father in this hour of extremity, as he's praying for his people, what does he pray for? It's not for material blessings of health, wealth and prosperity. It's not about miraculous spiritual gifts that everyone would always experience in the life of the church. No, that's not what was on his sacred lips as he prayed in this great intimate communion with his Father on the eve of redemption. No, quite to the contrary.

In verse 9 of John 17 he says, "I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are." The Trinity, an indivisible essence, one essence with three persons, with three realms of consciousness, and a perfect indivisible essence Jesus says, "I want them to have that kind of unity, that they might be one, that Your people, that Our people, O Father, they

might be one just like We are." How sacred is the unity of God's people? Christ compares it to the indivisible essence of the Godhead.

In verse 20 he goes on and says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." Verse 22, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." As Christ prays for the outworking of the unity of believers, he injects these great eternal themes of the eternal love between the persons of the Trinity and the purpose of God established before the foundation of the world. Trinitarian unity existing before the foundation of the world, it is part of the divine glory and Christ says, "That kind of unity is what I want for My people."

Do you see what's happening here? This divine glory, this divine unity as Christ prays and the Spirit of God works it out, what's happening? It's flowing down, flowing down from Christ our high priest, flowing down through the Spirit to all of the true church. That's how precious this is, far more precious than the anointing oil in the Old Testament even. This unity is something good and pleasant and desirable and holy and we have that unity based on our common participation in Christ, our common union in Christ by faith. What unites us far transcends anything by which there might be differences, and in his prayer Christ says he wants his people to know that. And what you and I have, we get a foretaste of it in the local church. We'll know it fully when we are with him in heaven. I can't grasp what that must be like, an indivisible unity of the people of God around the throne of God worshiping the indivisible essence of the Triune God without all of that which distracts us, without the friction of the fallen world, and frankly the friction that sometimes comes into a local church body even. As we hear these things, it should well up within us a desire to know that, to experience that, to have that. "O our Lord, come that this might become our immediate experience in perfection, not merely the reflection that we see here! O the fullness of it, gathered together in union with the saints of all the ages around the throne of God, now the worship going up, up, up to the majestic throne of God!" Kind of just have to take a moment to contemplate how great that's going to be.

Here in the church, the body of believers, not just the local church but all the people of Christ, the presence of Christ and the Spirit promote harmony and like-mindedness in the people of God. It's no wonder, then, that in Ephesians 4 and Philippians 2 and in other parts of the New Testament you see such a great emphasis being placed on the unity of the people of God. But for tonight we end on this note, having glanced back at the earthly Jerusalem, one day you and I who are in Christ, we are going to reach the heavenly Jerusalem and all that causes disunity will be banished never to be seen again. We will worship together unhindered around the throne and, my friend, I want you to be there. I call you to Christ if you do not know him. If you've lived in rebellion to him,

come out of the world, come to Christ that you might be saved and join in this unified heavenly choir because the glory of it all is not something to be missed.

Let's pray together.

*O Father, as we serve Christ together, I pray that You would prepare us for that greater day yet to come. Develop, cultivate, protect, deepen the unity that we have here in this local body, protect us greatly from all that would harm it both the invisible and the visible forces that would somehow inflict division, Father. We realize that a divided church is something that witnesses so greatly compromise and the joy of worship is so greatly harmed by that. Father, I thank You that You've protected our unity to this point, You've built it over the years. We thank You for it. It's a blessing that has come down, come down, come down from You and is a blessing to us. And so, Father, we send up, send up, send up our worship to You in grateful response to our lovely Lord Jesus Christ. As He prayed, Father, make us all one in the fullness of spiritual unity. Take that which You have already established and have it work out in greater measure in our practice. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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