



“One”
Rev. Bradley L. DeHaven
St. Andrew’s United Methodist Church
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Ephesians 4:1-16

Well I don’t know, it was about as subtle as a sledgehammer across the nose. Paul, I think, is pretty adamant about unity here, don’t you think? Oneness! You know we can think about oneness in all sorts of different ways but in reality the oneness that Paul is talking about is a oneness that comes from everyone understanding beyond the shadow of a doubt how we are all tied together to God in Christ Jesus. We have so many different things. We’ve grown up in different places; we went to different schools, most of us; we’ve seen different experiences in life; we’ve had different jobs; we have different tastes; we have different likes; we have different dislikes, but there is one thing we have in common – Christ Jesus. One faith!

Paul says there is more than that that we have in common. It’s not just our faith. We have one baptism. We were baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, all of us, each and every one of us in here, I hope. If you haven’t been, I want to talk to you. We’ve all been baptized into the Trinity, the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and in that baptism there is unity because the baptism doesn’t come from a denomination. It doesn’t come from the brand of water. It doesn’t come from the liturgy that is spoken. It comes from the Holy Spirit, one baptism – **ONE** baptism, we are united.

And Paul then says that we have one hope, one hope – salvation, life eternal, everlasting, abundant, full in Christ Jesus. One hope, one faith, one baptism all because there is one Lord, one God and Father of all. If we have so much in common, what difference do the differences make? That’s Paul’s point if you really want to get down to it, that’s it, that’s very much it.

You know we’ve had so many things happen in our church over the last 2,000 years. We’ve had so many things happen in this church in the last fifty-four years. We’ve had so many things happen in the Christian denomination in the last ten years. We’ve had so many things happen in the faith of our nation in the last five years, but one thing unites us together, one thing brings us together and that’s Christ. And you know it doesn’t matter if you’re on the spectrum of the Pat Robertson’s who believe that we ought to get into the assassination business or if you’re on the other extreme way over here and you believe that what we ought to be doing is buying ranches up in Crawford, Texas, and protesting. It doesn’t matter where you are in that extreme or anywhere on that spectrum if you have Christ in your heart, if you have the Holy Spirit’s baptism, we have that in common.

John Wesley even talked about that. He said, it makes no difference what our differences are if your heart is as my heart, take my hand. Unity! Unity! Why is that so hard for us today? I think it is because we have this individuality thing going, don’t we? What is it Pepsi has this new drink that came out four or five, six years ago called **“One?”** You know, one is a lonely number according to Three Dog Night. One is a difficult number because well one is a very solitary digit. Some people have a one-track mind. They can only focus on one thing at a time. Oneness is not always what it is cracked up to be, especially if my one is different than your one and we don’t agree. But in the church unity is essential.

There’s another point that Paul is trying to make here and it’s about leadership in the church, too. You know, he gets into that list, that litany of folks who are the leaders in the church and they have all been gifted. Some would be apostles, some would be prophets, and some would be pastors and teachers. I think another issue that we struggle with in our church today is that we somehow believe that those folks that Paul lists there are paid staff of the local congregation, and that’s the farthest thing from the truth from what Paul was trying to say. Paul said that every one of us have

gifts, every single one of us have gifts and you know how we know that is because the very first statement he says here in this chapter. He says, "I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you were called." For Paul, a vocation, a calling is not something that just George and I have. It's not something that just ordained clergy get. If you have ever known Christ, if you have ever experienced the love of God in the Holy Spirit, if you have ever experienced the touch of God in your life, you've been called. Every single one of us has a calling. Every single one of us have been called not only to Christ, but to be a part of the Church, to be a part of the community of believers, to be a part of ecclesia, to be a part of what it means to be the community, the body of Christ in the world to help transform the world. You have a calling. You may not get paid for it, but you have a calling, you have a calling. How are you living it out?

Paul comes forth and he says, "I beg you, I plead with you..." In the New International Version he says, "I urge you..." That's kind of like a prodding. I'm urging you. I'm reminding you constantly because this is who you are. If you are a Christian you are called to live that life that is worthy of the calling. Do everything in your power to live life to make it a worthy calling so that the world may know who you are by knowing who Christ is in you. Make yourself known to the world because you are of Christ. Lead your life worthy of that calling.

So leadership is a big issue because what Paul is talking about in the church in Ephesus is very much that issue, isn't it, that every person in the church should take their responsibility and their accountability seriously? If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, if you are a member of the church, follow through. Take part in the church. Take part in the life of bringing someone to Christ. That's what an apostle is. That's what a prophet is. That's what a pastor is. That's what a teacher is. Whatever your gifts are, God has given them to you for a reason. We are encouraged, urged, begged, and pleaded with to follow through and to lead that life. That's the church and that's what it means to be disciples.

So our discipleship is called by Christ and we are called not only into leadership but into oneness, into unity together, putting aside all the differences that we have and walking together because our hearts are one. If your heart is as my heart, take my hand. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!