

UNITY IS GOOD AND PLEASANT BUT NOT EASY
January 10, 2016 morning service
Psalm 133

Thank you, Jon. I invite all of you to take your Bible and go to the 133rd Psalm. We continue in our thought about together and we'll be united. I appreciate the music. I was calling guests yesterday and talked to a lady. I said, "Thanks for being our guest." She said, "I'm telling you what, that music was fantastic. I loved the music at Olive last Sunday." I just kind of waited a minute. I didn't get nothing, alright? Boy, you're a fortunate people because I'm telling you, this group helps us and leads us and you're a part of that as we lift praise to the Father week by week by week. Amen. Blessed be the name of the Lord for the great music that we do enjoy in this place.

We are together. Together we can. Just say that word together with me. Yeah, together. That's our theme that we're thinking about for these weeks and into the year in this series of messages about together. This is the greatest passage in the Bible on unity. It is just given to it. Sixty-three words in the 133rd Psalm all about unity. I'm going to ask you to stand with me and read this passage all together out loud in just a moment.

Now most people believe that the background of the 133rd Psalm is the 30th chapter of II Chronicles. Now here's what was going on in II Chronicles. Judah, Israel, Manasseh, Ephraim, they were all separated and King Hezekiah said, "That's enough separation. Let's all come to Jerusalem for the Passover. We've not done this in years and we need to unite for the Passover." So he sent heralds into Israel and Judah, across the river to Manasseh and Ephraim and said, "Come, come, come to the mountain city of Jerusalem."

The Bible says in II Chronicles 30:10 that some laughed and others mocked but many believed with joy and blessing. He gathered the people, Israel, Judah, Manasseh, Ephraim, and they came together for the Passover. Many people believe that Psalm 133 is birthed out of the spirit of that Passover meeting. Let's read together what David says in Psalm 133, out loud, all together just now.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity! 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.
It is like the dew of Hermon
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forever.¹*

¹ Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

He says that unity is a good and a pleasant thing. Then he gives two illustrations of it, the oil and with dew, and then he speaks of the blessed promise of unity. It's that we're looking at today, praying that God would make us one and answer the prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17. "Lord, make Your people one. Unite them together, one people, one people, one people."

Father, I pray today that you would melt us together, keep us together, cause us to repent when we walk away from unity. I pray that you would bind us together as you did Judah and Israel around the Passover feast. Unite us around the blessed Lamb of God today. For that one that's lost in this room, save him. For that one needing a church, unite them. For that one needing to be obedient in baptism, draw them. I ask now that you would take my lips of clay and impart a good word to all of us and I pray and ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Notice what the psalmist says. Behold. Look here. Look. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity. There is the heralding truth. Look. It's good and pleasant for brothers, brethren, sisters, to dwell together in unity. Now never forget that everything that is good is not necessarily pleasant and everything that is pleasant is not necessarily good but unity is both good and pleasant.

If you've been to the doctor for a shot of penicillin that was good but it probably was not pleasant. You've had other things that were pleasant but not necessarily good. I read this week where one man said the reason he does not go to happy hour is because he wants to be happy longer than an hour. You can do some things that may seem to be pleasant but they are not always good, but unity is good and it's pleasant.

Now don't miss this. Unity is not uniformity. It does not mean that we all do the same thing the same way and that we are just alike, like cookie cutters. No, no. We are individuals but we are united together. It doesn't mean we even all believe the same thing about everything. Not everyone agrees about the Holy Spirit and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the same way in the church. Not everyone believes the same thing about the Parousia, the second coming of our Lord of when He's coming, how He's coming, and all of those things that will work together.

This is not speaking about a requirement of intellectual agreement in all things. Now there are some things in order to be united you must agree on in the church. The deity of Christ, the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross, His physical resurrection from the grave, and His regenerating grace I think are essentials that are non-negotiable if you're going to come together in the body of Christ.

I was reading this morning in my quiet time in Isaiah 40 this morning. I got over to that great old verse in verses 6, 7, and 8. You get down to verse 8 where it says that the flower fades and the grass withers but the word of our Lord will stand forever. You have to come together around the truth of the word of God. Well those that come to the truth of scripture and see the deity of Christ and His atoning death and His empty tomb and His regenerating grace, they are united together as brothers, it says. The brethren,

the brothers dwell in good and pleasant unity. So we should be together, together as a church. Well I want to show you, as he does, two illustrations. One of oil, one of dew, and then he talks about a great promise that we usually leave out when we read this but I think it is the cornerstone, it is the key stone to this particular Psalm.

Let's look at unity this morning. Together, together, together we are to be, number one, we see that unity is released. It is released. Look at it. He says, when he talks about unity, that it is, that the unity of the brothers is like the precious oil in verse 2 upon the head, coming down upon the beard. Even Aaron, the High Priest, out on Aaron's beard, even coming down on the edges of his robes, on his collar and down the front and all the way to the floor.

When you would anoint a priest, the high priest, you would take the horn of oil and you would pour that oil on his head and that oil would run down over his ears and into his beard and drip onto His priestly garments and it would run down. Unity is like that. Unity is like oil. It does not flow from the bottom up. Oil flows from the top down. It begins with the priest. It begins with the servant leader. It's on his head, then flows down, and unity is released. Unity comes from authority and the head of every structure must be anointed. Pastors. There are some pastors that are in this room today including the one speaking. There are others who watch us on Internet and television. Pastors, hear me. I plead with you. You must know the anointing. Your church will never be united until the pastor knows the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God in his life.

Deacons. We're going to ordain some deacons here in just a couple of weeks. We'll be ordaining them. We'll lay our hands on them. We'll pray for them. Deacons, elders, we do not have the position of elder in our church but we have the function of elder all across this church. Those that lead a connection group, they are elders. Those that lead ministries are elders. They lead and step out front and the oil of God must be on the pastor and flow down. It must be on the deacon and flow down. It must be on the elder and flow down. It comes from the head. Fathers, daddy, you're to be the head of your home. Your home will never know the touch of God until the oil of God is on the leading functioning person in that home.

If I said out here, "We're having a ladies gathering and charging \$15 for a great meal," there would be a stampede out there. Men I have to cajole. Do you know that's the problem in the church? Because more women step out and they want to go where the men won't go. Do you know why churches get divisive? It's because those that are in a leading position, the pastor and the deacon and the elder and the daddy, they won't do what God's called them to do so others begin to pick up pieces and go and try to keep things going when those that are called to do it neglect to do it.

Father, your home's not going any farther than you. Pastor, your church is not going any farther than you. Deacons, our church is not going any farther than you're going. You see, unity is like the oil on the head of that priest. That anointing flows down. Oil always flows down. Unity always flows down into the church. You see, every pastor and every deacon, every elder, every father, every leader needs to have

the oil of God in their life. They need to be spirit-filled. "How are you spirit-filled, pastor?" Well there's some things that have to happen.

Number one, you'll never be spirit-filled unless you're sure of your salvation. You must be sure that you're sure you're sure that you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Secondly, you must be surrendered to Christ's lordship. After you're sure that you're saved, you must certainly be surrendered unto the lordship of Christ. Thirdly, you must be dead to your own selfish ambition. Dead to what you want but alive to what God wants. You die to your ambition.

Then, number four, if you're going to be filled with the spirit, not only are you sure of your salvation and surrendered to Christ's lordship and dead to your own selfish ambition, you must be committed to radical obedience doing right now what God says do in His time. When God says, "Speak," you speak. When God says, "Be quiet," you're quiet. When God says, "Go," you go. When God says, "Stay," you stay. When God says, "Come forward and be baptized," you come forward. When God says, "Join this church," you come. When God says to reach out to that person over there and love them, then you do it. You get radical in your obedience. It always calls for obedience.

My wife came to me a few days ago and she said, "I've got a book here and I need a couple more. Do you have them?" I said, "I do. I have a case in the office." I brought them to her. I said, "What is this about?" She said, "I have five people in my life, five people that God will not let me get away from every time I pray. I've got to share the gospel with these five people." Now you have to know my wife. She can stand up here in front of 10,000 people and teach and it would be no problem but when it comes to one on one, that's not the easiest thing she ever does. She came in yesterday. She said, "I got number one. I shared. I took the information." I said, "Amen." She wasn't being obedient to me. She was being obedient to God. What is it God's telling you to do? When God speaks then you've got to react.

You see, the way we unify the church is when the oil of God comes in your life and in mine and as a father and as an elder, as a deacon, as a leader, as a pastor, then the unity is released. You see, when the people of God see the leadership of God united, they love it but when they see leaders splintered, they splinter as well. Unity is released. Secondly, there is a second illustration he uses here and not only do we see unity is released but unity is refreshing. Now notice in verse 3. He said first in verse 2 that this unity's like oil but now secondly he said, "It's like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion."

Now Hermon is not a person. Hermon is a mountain. If you go to the nation Israel and visit and if you're on the Sea of Galilee in a ship, if you turn due north and you look up the Jordan River you'll see a mighty mountain. That's Hermon, Mount Hermon. Most of the time when you see it, it will be snowcapped. It's got snow on it if you can see it. Most of the time it'll have clouds around it it's so high but on a clear, crystal Israeli day, you look up and most of the time you'll see the snow. When that snow melts it comes in those rivulets, it flows down to the Jordan River, it runs into the

Sea of Galilee, out the bottom of the Galilee, then south going into the Jordan, all the way to the Dead Sea. It begins with the snowcap.

Not only does the river fill up with melted snow, when you see Zephyrs blow across that mountain and the temperature is just right, it also brings the droplets of dew into the Galilee and on the hills of Jerusalem. That is what David is talking about. He said, "Unity is like the dew of Hermon that comes and settles on us."

Now we have dew in Pensacola but now if you go up in the mountains of north Alabama they have dew in the mountains of North Carolina and in the mountains of Alabama and Tennessee. There'll be mornings when everything is just right, if you walk out, your shoes will be sopping wet and it will get the bottoms of your pant legs wet with that dew. You go to bed at night and it's dry. You get up in the morning, you don't hear it, you don't see it. It's just there. It comes and that dew is refreshing. It's invisible. It's silent. It's gentle. So is the unity in the church. Invisible, silent, gentle.

This week I got a note that came in the mail from one of our senior adults that can no longer come. For years and years and years she sat right back here just to the right of this camera in the second or third row on this end. Trudy Owens was her name. I love sweet Trudy. Her husband, Leonard, is a deacon here for, I don't know, maybe 45 or 50 years. She sent me a note. She heard me just talk about together last Sunday at the offering and she sent me this. "January 3, 2016, Brother Ted, I'm together" and she underlined it, "I'm together in caring, in encouraging, in giving, in loving, in praying, in serving, in sharing, in witnessing, worshipping, thanking all for the radio and the television I can see at home. These are just to name a few of the things that I'm together with at Olive."

I'm telling you, that was one of the most refreshing notes I've ever received in all my life. One of our senior adults – I don't see her but I hear from her from time to time – faithful, praying, caring, encouraging, giving, loving, serving, sharing, witnessing, worshipping, and I guarantee you, she sends one of those envelopes because that's part of her giving. It's just refreshing.

You see, a united church produces a gentleness and a softness with a tenderness. It's refreshing. I didn't do it. I started to tell Sharon to get me a big sign to put on the screen that said, "Olive Needs to Do the Dew" but we don't need to do the Dew because it's got a lot of sugar in it, alright? You say, "Well you can get diet." Well but the diet they say makes you drink more sugar. Well that's another sermon for another time.

It's refreshing. It's refreshing. It's like the oil that comes down on Aaron. It's like the dew blowing and coming and crystalizing off of Hermon. It's released. It's refreshing. Thirdly and this is really the most pointed part of this Psalm. We forget it. We leave it out but look at it at the end of verse 3. For there. Where? In a unified body, when the church, the people of God are united, when God's brothers and sisters – for there the Lord commanded the blessing and the blessing He commanded was life

forevermore. When He sees unity, He commands blessing. Bless them. And we are rewarded. Unity is rewarded with the blessing of God. The oil released, the dew refreshing, but the unity also is rewarded. When He sees unity then the Lord commands the blessing.

In II Corinthians 13:11 the Bible tells us: *Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace* [and when you are comforted and like-minded, that is together, and you live in peace]; *and the God of love and peace will be with you.* Hallelujah. God shows up. He's here. When God looks down out of heaven, He sees Olive being united around the things of faith and doing the things of faith. Bless, anoint, move, work. God commands, "Bless those people."

Have you ever been in a church where it was divided? Not much fun, is it? A place where things are torn and people are fighting. Every church has that in it, ours included, but they don't last long because unity rules the day and they fight their way and work their way and pray their way through difficulties and they come back to unity. If they don't, they will splinter, and God removes the blessing. But when He sees a unified church, He commands blessing. I'm telling you, friend, God can do more in a moment than we can do in our whole life. We can work it up and try to do but I'm telling you, when God gets ready to bless, He just bam! He rewards the church and He brings this fresh reward to us.

Jonathan Edwards. People often say he was the smartest man ever to preach the gospel. 1758 and God called him home but before that he was in the first great awakening. Edwards said, "If you're going to have a move of God in the church, three things are essential. Number one, explicit agreement." The church must come together around the truth of the word of God, the cross of Christ, the empty tomb. There must be explicit agreement about the gospel. Secondly, he said there must be visible union. Not invisible, but visible. God must see the church together and the world must see the church together.

In February, we're going to have a Sunday night here at Olive when we're going to have a prayer meeting. I've already been talking with one of the Assembly of God brothers and we're going to bring churches of different kinds that agree about the gospel together for a Sunday night service of prayer. We're going to host it and like we've done these Sunday mornings around the Lord's Prayer we're going to all come together.

I was with Joey Rogers this week. Wednesday night I was not here. I flew to Atlanta and was in Wednesday night prayer meeting and Thursday morning until 2:00 in the afternoon before I came home. I was called to Atlanta to meet with 200 preachers around America to pray for revival in America. I thought it was just Baptists. When I got there, it was everybody was there. Assemblies of God, Methodists, all kinds of different people. I looked up and my good friend Joey Rogers of Pace Assembly of God was there. Joey walked over and said, "Pastor, isn't it awful we have to go all the way to Atlanta to pray together?" I said, "Well it is." That sparked and we began to talk.

That was on Wednesday. On Thursday, I'm sitting in the meeting and different things are happening and we're praying. I'm telling you – does God ever talk to you? God speaks to my heart sometimes. God just spoke into my heart and said, "The moderator's about to call on you to pray and when he calls on you to come down to the front and lead this prayer, I want you not to pray but I want you to call Joey over to pray. Let him pray in your place." The moderator didn't know him.

It wasn't five minutes and I got up and walked down to the front when I was called on. I called the moderator by name, a good friend of mine, and I said, "I just sense in my heart that I don't need to pray but you've called me down here. I think the Spirit of God's told me to have my brother come over and pray." And I called on Joey. He prayed.

In a little while we took a little break and we're out there and one of the big shots – I didn't even know his name but he's out of the Assemblies of God. He was there. It would be like being the president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He came up and grabbed me with a big bear hug. He said, "I'm telling you, preacher, that's a great thing you did." I said, "What'd I do?" He said, "You acquiesced. That's what we've got to do. We've got to include each other." He said, "When you asked that Assembly of God brother to come down and pray," he said, "that's a good thing. I'm proud of you. Bless God. We've got to have more of that." He said, "If we don't get together, we're going to hang separately." I kind of threw my shoulders out a little bit, you know. Bless God. I mean, when the head man of the Assemblies of God thinks you did good, you must have done something. I was about ready to run.

Hey, we've really got more in common than we sometimes think we do. Some of the peripheral manifestations get – but I'm telling you, we're all preaching the cross, we're preaching an empty tomb, and crying out for the fullness of the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to the ends of the world. We're going to gather all those people together and we're going to try to have a prayer meeting here. I'm going to call for it at the end of the month when they've asked me to preach at the governmental prayer breakfast. We do more breakfast in government than we do praying at that meeting so we're going to call for people to come pray on a Sunday night. Amen. You be here. Some of you may run, Amen, the wrong way. You better run the right way.

Edwards said there must be explicit agreement, then visible union, and thirdly, he said there must be extraordinary prayer. That's two words put together. Extra and ordinary. There must be an extra supply of ordinary praying and that becomes extraordinary. We must begin to pray and fast and call the church together and when we do, when we come together in agreement and union and prayer, God says, "I command the blessing." Bless those people. Hallelujah. Bless those people. God's trying to get us together.

Now this morning I want to show you and then I'm done, I want to show you three great enemies to unity at Olive Baptist Church. There are three great enemies. Number one is the spirit of independence, the spirit of independence. Do you have any little children in your life? We have two little granddaughters now in our life. One is about to

turn three. "I can do it myself." Well let's do – "I can do it myself." Well if you let me help you color, we can stay inside the lines. "I can do it myself." Now when somebody's two that's cute. When they're 42, it's not so much.

Let me tell you, friend, you can't do it yourself. You cannot do as much yourself as we can do together. You say, "I can do it myself." Well yonder's the door. We need each other and a spirit of independence is an enemy to the unity of the bride of Christ. You cannot do it yourself because where two or three are gathered together, there is God in the midst of them. He didn't say where one gets by himself. You need people. The spirit of independence.

Secondly is the spirit of pride. The spirit of pride is an enemy to unity. If we want unity, we must lay the ax to the root of self-love. If you want a church to come together, you've got to lay the ax to the root of self-love and kill pride. It's not about us, not about me, it's about Him. Our watchword at Olive needs to be, "I must decrease and He must increase." I'm telling you, Jon, that's a great mission statement. Let Him increase, let me decrease, and we're well on our way to doing what God wants us to do.

Pride. Then thirdly, not only is there the spirit of independence and the spirit of pride, there's the spirit of the Rabshakeh. For some of you, you don't know what this is. The spirit of the Rabshakeh. The "B" is pronounced as a "V." The Rabshakeh is found in II Kings 18 and Isaiah 36. Here he is. The Rabshakeh was the cupbearer of the king. The king didn't drink anything until the Rabshakeh would drink out of it first just in case somebody poisoned it. How'd you like that job? You know, you drink it and if you don't fall out, he'd take some. This word Rabshakeh is also used as a leader of the king's armies. He was like a secretary of state, so to speak.

When we find II Kings 18 and Isaiah 36 they tell the same story because Isaiah gets involved in Isaiah 36. Sennacherib is the king of Assyria and Sennacherib is coming against Hezekiah and the people of God. Sennacherib himself does not come but he sends the Rabshakeh. The Bible says in II Kings 18 the Rabshakeh came and he stood out by the waterway where they would get water and the Rabshakeh spoke to the people in their native tongue. The leaders later said to him, "Don't speak in the everyday tongue. Speak so only we can understand." But he didn't. He spoke so everybody could understand. He spoke in the Judean language to all of these people and he said two things. "Number one. Your God cannot save you. The God of Hezekiah cannot save you. Look what we've done. Look what Sennacherib's already done." And he named this one and this one and this one and their god and said, "Hezekiah. His God cannot save you and number two, Hezekiah and his army cannot save you. You should broker a deal with Sennacherib right now and we will be kind to you."

He tells them how many horses he'll give them. The spirit of the Rabshakeh always is an enemy of the unity of the church because the spirit of the Rabshakeh tells you, you cannot trust God and you cannot trust your friends. When you cannot trust God and you cannot trust your friends, unity is gone.

You fast forward to Isaiah 36 and Hezekiah says, “Mmm, this is trouble.” He calls in Isaiah. He says, “Old prophet, give me a word.” The Rabshakeh comes back a second visit and he begins to speak and Isaiah says to Hezekiah, “God’s got a remnant.” He said, “God’s got a remnant and God will cause this remnant of His people, He will cause their roots to go downward and their fruit to come upward.” Hallelujah. I’m praying for that at Olive Baptist Church, that a remnant will continue, that their roots will go downward and their fruit will come upward and he said, “As for Sennacherib, I’m going to take a hook and put in his nose and I’m going to take a hook and put in his lip and I’m going to lead him like a horse to his death.”

When you get to the end of Isaiah 36 you find Sennacherib being killed by his two sons where the prophetic word came through Isaiah, “Don’t believe the spirit of the Rabshakeh. If you do, it’ll bust up your fellowship. It’ll kill you as a nation.” It’ll kill us as a church if we believe the spirit of the Rabshakeh. We’ve got to overcome our pride, our independence, and our fear of trusting God and our fear of trusting our fellow brothers. We must trust our brothers and sisters. We’re on the same team together. When you discern that one is not on the team then you’ve got to deal with them but when we are together, we must do that. Be careful of the spirit of the Rabshakeh who comes against the body life of the church. God’s got a remnant. Thank God He does.

That’s why this church has been going together over 120 years and she will remain together as long as we watch the enemies of independence, pride, and we do not let the wicked Rabshakeh’s spirit enter in where we don’t trust God and we don’t trust one another. When we come together, God will say, “I command the blessing on the people of God.” Folks will start getting saved. It’ll break out. Folks will start joining this church. Old time members will begin to repent. People that have gotten tired will not be tired anymore. They’ll have a new vigor. Young people that have never done anything for God will rise up. As a matter of fact, you won’t even have to ask them to sign up for Disciple Now. They’ll just immediately say, “I want to be a part of running the race.” Can I get a witness out of this section? I’m telling you, God can do more in a moment than we can ever do in a whole lifetime in the flesh. He just speaks the blessing and says, “Bam! There it is.”

I see this all the time. I see it in my sermon prep. I work and work and I read and I read and I work and I pray and I work and then all of a sudden it just comes. There it is. You see, God doesn’t give the blessing unless you do the work. When He calls on you, He’ll give you a ready word to say but God just begins to open – He’ll do that in your life if you seek Him, if you hunger and thirst. I’m telling you, He will command the blessing.

Anybody here today that needs to make a public profession of your faith? Anybody here that needs to be saved today? Anybody here that ought to join this church? I want you just to get up and come on down here right now. Anybody? Just come on right here to me. We’re going to stand and sing a minute. Anybody? Come on right now.