

**THE UNITED SAINTS OF THE ALMIGHTY**  
**January 28, 2018 Morning Service**  
**John 17:20-26**

Titus 3, verse 8, our key text for the year. That we would learn to engage. Engage. *This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.*<sup>1</sup>

Engage. To engage in good deeds. We must first engage with the Father, last Sunday. Today we engage one another. There must be great fellowship. Then we engage the culture.

On my right arm I have a little string bracelet today. I don't wear stuff like this very often. This came in the mail to me this week. A member of our church had it made. There's a little gold washer that's here. Engraved on it is the word engage. That individual, I don't know, man, woman wrote me a letter. They didn't sign it. They just said, "Pastor, I wanted to share this with you. If you want to wear it from time through the year to encourage us." We'll see that red like the blood of Christ and that little washer that just simply has the word of the year on it. Engage. That person went on to say, "At one time our family was deeply involved in our church but we strayed away. Now we've come back and we're just involved in worship." That individual said, "Pray for us that we might reengage in a small group and in service."

You know, if you're not careful you can just kind of drift away if you don't stay plugged in and stay engaged. So whoever that person is, I don't know them. I may know them but I don't know who it was. I'm praying that they would reengage. I'm praying that you will engage with the Lord, with the culture, but this morning I want you to engage one with another because the fellowship is so important.

Some of you need to be a part of this church. Come today and engage. Be a part. Jesus prayed for that engagement. In the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, Jesus prays what most call the high priestly prayer. As He prayed, He prayed for many things but when He gets down to verse 20 through the end of the chapter He's praying about unity, about one, oneness, about fellowship among His followers. In John 17 we begin reading in verse 20 where Jesus prayed and John recorded these words.

*"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 [say it] one; even as You, Father, are in Me and*

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*I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be [say it again] one, just as We are [say it again] 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. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

The Lord Jesus is praying for the people given to Him by the Father to be unified, to be united, to be one. Paul prayed about this in Ephesians 4 when he said, "We must be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace because there is one body and one Spirit. You were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." One. One. One. That God would make us one together.

Now in Titus chapter 3. We see verse 8 and that's our text but when you drop down two verses to verse number 10, Paul says to Titus: Reject a factious man. A factious man. I had an interesting study this week looking at the word factious. The root of the Greek word factious is party. A party. What a factious man does is that he gathers people around himself for what he likes and he divides the family or the body. Paul says, "After you rebuke him two or three times, reject a factious man." He's not in for the whole body. He's just in for the party, for his party, for his group coming together.

Now when I say party I don't just mean they're a good time. I mean that we have parties like we have Republican parties and Democratic parties and independent parties. We have Baptist parties and Methodist parties. God says that factious man will divide and break up but God's drawing us together. In our text Jesus prays for unity. If you've got your Bible open there to the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter – and I hope you'll keep it open while I'm talking to you this morning – look in verse 11. He prays first of all that the Father will keep us in His name. *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.* There's the oneness. The oneness is in the name of Jesus. Not in the name of Olive but in the name of Jesus. Lord, keep them in Your name.

In verse 15 He says, "I'm praying you keep them, keep them from the evil one," because the evil one didn't come to make us one. He comes to divide us. He comes to break us up and cause us to get into groups and factions. Then when you get down to verse 23 He prays, "O God, keep them together, perfect them, and make them one."

Hey, beloved, we've got to engage other believers. We've got to be engaged with one another. I Corinthians 12:13 says you've all been baptized into one body. That's not talking about water baptism like we saw this morning though we ought to all do that when we get saved. He's talking about Spirit baptism. When we got saved everybody was immersed in the Holy Ghost of God. We are baptized into one body. Ephesians 2:19 says that you are fellow citizens. We're all of one country. I'm not talking about America. I'm talking about the heavenly country. We're going to another place, to a new world. We're a part. We're fellow citizens. We've taken our pledge and our oath and we've pledged it to Christ. We are His citizenry.

John chapter 10, verse 16, Jesus said, "We're one flock. We're one flock together." That He's put us all together in one flock. You could go on to Ephesians and find we're one family. There are a lot of pictures of this. Oneness. Oneness. Oneness. Just say the word unity out loud with me. Say it together. Unity. We're to be one. One. That's what God's called us to and in order for that to happen, you must engage with one another.

So this morning I want to look at this text and show you three things. I want to show you the enemy of unity. Then I want to show you the environment of unity. Then I want to show you the evangelism of unity. First of all is the enemy of unity.

Look in verses 11 and 12 of our text. Jesus said: *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.* [Verse 12. Now don't miss this.] *While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.*

Jesus said, "I had all the believers, all my twelve. I had them together and they all unified except one." You want to know the enemy of the church today? It is the Spirit of Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition. The spirit of Judas gets in the church and when the Spirit of Judas begins to prevail then we'll have division rather than unity. Old Judas, he loved nostalgia. He didn't want anything to change. They got together and when the Lord began to talk about doing a new thing or dying – no sir.

Let me tell you, that that will divide a church and the Spirit of Judas is nostalgia, when people that are in the church are only looking back rather than looking forward. We have to fight it every day at a place called Olive in a church that's over 120 years old. We have to fight it down at our Warrington campus because they'll tend to look back and see how that church was and we want to bring it back to like it was.

Let me tell you, friend, we're not trying to make Warrington what it was. We're trying to make Warrington what it ought to be. We're not trying to make Olive what it

used to be. We're trying to make Olive what it ought to be today. Judas loves nostalgia. Oh I remember how it was in 1953. Well, bless God, it's not 1953. That's 64 years ago. I know because I was born in 1953. Oh if we could just go back to the 60s. Do ya'll really remember? Who'd want to go back to that? Oh if we could just get back to the 70s. Oh my Lord.

Let me tell you, friend, that that'll divide the church is the spirit of Judas that's nostalgia. It's always looking back and never looking forward to what God wants to do today and beyond. We don't forget our history. That's why we write books. We look back. That's why we celebrate items, milestones.

I'm going to ask you on the last Sunday of March to give me a special offering. I'm going to try to raise \$10,000.00 in one day over and above our offering. Because on the last day of March marks the 10,000<sup>th</sup> day I've been the pastor of this church. You say, "How do you know that?" I was just fiddling around the other day and counting and it fell on a Sunday and I said, "Let's raise money." What I want to raise money for is for the television ministry. It's gone up through the last few years and it's always increasing our budget and we've never asked the viewing audience to give us a dime. We've never done that. We can do it without them but we ought to give them an opportunity to buy in and for some of you to buy in. So we look back and we thank God for our history and we remember days but let me tell you, we do not live there. That's the spirit of Judas. Forget it. Go forward with what God wants to do today.

Not only did Judas love nostalgia, Judas loved silver. Let me tell you, what'll divide a church is money. People start saying, "Well, they're paying over here. They're giving there all they want." For 30 pieces of silver he denied our Lord. Friend, when you begin to love money more than you love the Master, you'll divide a church. I've been in meetings where they've argued over the color of the carpet.

I remember when we built this building. We had a committee and they were going to choose the colors. What you're sitting on now was not the color scheme that we first chose. My wife was on that group. She got voted down. She didn't like what they picked. She said, "If that's what the majority says we'll go for it." But there was another church that had just been built in our city and they picked the same colors that our group picked. The architect said, "I will not put the same color in this church as they just put in another one right here." They said, "What can we do?" Liz said, "I've got an idea." The reason we're on carpet like this and pews like that, because she wanted neutrality so that when brides come in or we put different things up that neutrality would let us do it. So that's how we came to that.

I've known churches that split over whether they're going to put a Coke box or a Pepsi box in the fellowship hall. That's a true story. They had a special business meeting to vote Coke or Pepsi. The folks that lost got mad and left. My Lord and God,

help us in Jesus' name. Silver. Silver. It'll kill you when you begin to argue over the monetary background. How are you going to spend and how are you going....? Friend, you're going to have to trust somebody and go forward in Jesus' name.

Judas took the silver and you know what he did. He kissed Jesus and betrayed Him and when he found out what he had done, he went down to the temple and he threw the money on the floor and the priest said, "We can't keep that. That's blood money." They took it and they bought the potter's field. The potter's field was a field where they dug clay out of the ground to make pottery and it left holes. What they did is they took the potter's field and those holes were easy for people to be buried in and they made it the potter's field for the paupers that died that nobody knew them and they had no family. When somebody just died and they didn't know where to bury them, it didn't cost them anything. They took him to the potter's field and they buried him in those holes where they had dug out the clay.

Let me tell you, a church that gets divided over silver, gold, and material wellbeing, it may look like it's having church but it's nothing but a potter's field, a bunch of holes waiting to bury dead people. The spirit of Judas is the enemy of the unity of the church.

He loved nostalgia. He loved silver. Then he loved himself. It was all about him. Can you imagine? What a worm. What a snake. To walk up to Jesus and kiss Him and say, "That's the one." Jesus has already said, "The one that dips the bread with me," and Judas said, "Surely it is not I." Dear friend, the only way we get unified is when we get over ourselves and it becomes all of us.

I read it this week again. I'm reading a book by R. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Seminary on the Lord's Prayer and something that he said. He said, "There is not one singular pronoun, singular case pronoun in the Lord's Prayer." It is not my Father, it is our Father. Don't forgive me of my debts but forgive our debts. It's all in the plural. Not a singular in it.

When Jesus taught us to pray, He taught us to pray collectively. There's a Spirit there. There's a unity there of the bride of Christ. Our Father all together. Not mine, not yours, ours. Not my debt, not your debt, but our debts. Our trespasses. Give us this day my daily bread? No. Our daily bread. Boy that lit me up this week. I said, "That's what we're to be." It's the church. I'm telling you, the enemy becomes when you love yourself and you thrust yourself out in front of everyone else.

Some people will divide in a church from a fellow believer. Some will divide a local church. Some will divide a denomination and we've got people that are doing that even in our convention right now. Oh may Jesus' truth be our truth. God make us one. One. One. They are the enemy. The enemy is the Spirit of Judas.

Number two. Jesus teaches in this text not only do we find the enemy of unity but secondly the environment, the environment of unity. What makes us one? Verse 21 says first of all it's all about others. We're only going to have unity when it's not about you and it's all about everybody else. Look what Jesus said. That they may all be one. Yeah. It's the allness. It's about others.

Some of you in this service at 9:30 are just like me. You say, "Why did Brother Jon quit printing the order of service in the worship guide? We've had that there for years. Why doesn't he print those songs?" It's so you can't get mad before we do them, just so you get mad while we're doing them. You say, "Preacher, we did Ten Thousand Reasons, Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery. We didn't do not one hymn I knew." We did a new hymn this morning. Do you know that every hymn was new one time? Don't leave me up here by myself now.

My wife used to sing in the choir and some of you wonder where she is. She's down teaching at 9:30 in preschool. She teaches four-year-olds and most of the time she couldn't even get back up here to sing at 11:00 if she wanted to because the pastor preaches so long that the people don't get there in time to get the kids for her to get out and get a robe on and be here. Brother Jon knows where she is. Liz loves music and I love to hear her sing but that's just, you know, her call.

I remember Liz saying to me one time. She said, "You know, some people are going to think I got mad and I went down there to teach kids." She said, "I really don't like most of the new songs that we sing in the church but when I look out and I see my 30-year-old children with their hands raised lifting praise to the Lord I get over myself and I say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord. If they'll reach that generation and come I'll just get happy and learn some new stuff.'" Somebody say Amen. It's not about you. It's about us all. You say, "Pastor, couldn't he just throw us a bone and sing one old one every now and then?" He does most of the time. He didn't today. He taught you a new one that's going to be an old one day.

Boy, you've got to watch that music deal. It's so emotional. Music is so emotional but just remember that or anything else. It's not about you. Some of you say, "Why are they building that building out there?" Because it's the next generation. It's the early learning center. It's where your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren. They're going to be out there being taught. All. It's about all of us.

Verse 22 says, "Not only is it about others, unity is never external. It is always internal in its beginning because Jesus said in verse 22: *The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one.* Unity does not happen in the external. It only happens in the internal of the glory of God and when the glory and the anointing and the doxology of God is in you, you will then be united

with others that have the doxology within them. You cannot make the externals keep a church together. Only the internals have bowed before the glory of Jesus Christ as Lord. That's the best thing I'll say today. It's the glory of God. It's an internal unity.

It's about others. It's internal. Thirdly, unity always grows and changes because verse 23 says: *I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.* Perfection is growing and changing. When you perfect something, you move it and you change it and refine it. That's how unity comes. God's making us more like him all the time.

Tonight we'll ordain two new deacons. Young men. Not all the time are deacons we ordain young but 99% of the time and these are young men, certainly much younger than I am. We'll lay our hands on those men and for years now we've taught our new deacons and reminded our old deacons that everybody in this church is carrying two buckets. Everybody's got two buckets. Ms. Helen's got two buckets. She's got one in her right hand and one in her left hand. Everybody's got two buckets. Heidi's got two buckets. Right hand, left hand. Adam, he could tell you what these buckets are. He's our past deacon chairman. He's got them. Steve's got them. One in one hand and one in the other. Steve's son and daughter-in-law have got a bucket in one hand. Everybody in here's got two buckets.

One bucket you've got water. In the other bucket you've got gasoline. Now you're going to find fires in the church. If you find a good fire, don't pour water on it. You pour gas on that one. When you find a bad fire you don't pour gas on it. You pour water on it. I know people if they see a little stirring up in the church they'll say, "That's bad. We'll make some trouble. Douse that thing with gasoline."

You see, you must perfect unity. Sometimes that means you pour gas. Sometimes that means you pour water but you've got to have the discernment of the inner glory of God to know which one to pour.

I'm always amazed at young preachers today. They come ask me questions. They'll make an appointment. There are two kinds that make appointments. There's one kind that comes in and wants to tell me how smart he is. So I sit there for an hour and he tells me everything he knows and I just kind of grunt and say, "Well, thank you. It was good to meet you." Then I have another kind that comes in and they want to ask some questions and try to glean out of my foolish failures how to do better. There's no need for you to make errors when you can learn from someone else's. If they'll come ask me when I was stupid I'll tell them.

Most of them will say, "Well I know in a church like Olive that it's just been a good place for a long time. I'm having this and I know you can't identify with this because we have some problems of division, of people that kind of want to do their own thing rather than being a part of the broad family. I know you don't ever deal with that at your

church but....” I say, “Son, the more sheep you’ve got the more of that you have. The old wicked one gets in there.”

Now remember this. You cannot out-hiss a snake. Alright? When that old wicked one starts, you can’t out-hiss him but you can out-pray him. You can out-love him. You’ve got to come together and you’ve got to know when to pour the water. Isn’t that right, Brother Dan? You’ve got to know when to pour gas on it. Isn’t that right, Brother Jerry? You’ve got to know and if you don’t know, keep your liquid in your bucket. Go ask somebody that’s wiser than you are so that we create an environment of unity.

Psalm 133, one of the great texts of the scriptures. It is the text that the year before last I preached the convention sermon at the Southern Baptist Convention out of this text. I argued with God for six months. I said, “I don’t want to preach on this. This is sophomoric. I want to do something that will be impressive.” I could not get away from Psalm 133. I was to preach right after the election of officers and we had an election of a new president and the top two guys, they had a runoff. Then they had to vote again and in a Baptist Convention it can only happen that two guys ran and neither one of them got a majority. You say, “That can’t happen. Oh it can in a Baptist meeting.”

There were some ballots that were disqualified but they count in the total and therefore neither one got a majority and one had to acquiesce to the other. All of that went on and as soon as all of that happened and the place erupted as these men hugged each other and one man said, “You’ll be the president. Not me. You go.” He received it. God had laid on my heart to preach, “Behold, how good and 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 along the edge of his robes. It’s like the dew of Hermon, coming down upon the mountains of Zion for there the Lord commanded the blessed life forevermore.”

That was my text. I had a guy walk up to me after. He said, “Did you change that sermon when that happened?” I said, “You really don’t believe that I would do that.” Number one, I’d never be courageous enough to walk in that building in front of 10,000 people and change on the fly. I said, “I’ve been arguing with God about this for six months because He knew already what was going to happen in this building.” I preached about the release of the unity of God and oil flowing down. Then I preached about the reward, life forevermore.

Church, you want to know the reward of unity of the environment? It is that God breathes His life in a church. There are dead churches all over America today that are divided and busted up. People are hating each other but when God finds His people come together. They’re not perfect people but coming and in mutual submission one to

another, I'm here to tell you, the breath of God falls on that place. It's the blessing of life forevermore.

Some of you are in this room today. You ought to join this church today. Amen. You ought to come dwell together in unity. You ought to come. You know it's God's mind. Some of you ought to engage. You ought to get in a small group. You ought to engage and love one another. Today. Some of you ought to begin to serve today. Some of you ought to repent today because repentance will change you and get you into the body life of Christ.

We see our enemies. We see the environment of unity but thirdly, quickly, and lastly is the evangelism of unity. Oh yeah. It's found in verse 23 where Jesus said: *I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know [oh, yes, sir] that You sent Me.* You want to know what will draw a lost man to Olive Baptist Church? A unified family will draw him. If it's out in the community that they're fussing and fighting down there at Olive they don't want to have anything to do with that. There's enough fussing and fighting going on in our world. People are sick and tired of it. They're looking for some people to come together around the Lord Jesus. Not that we're all carbon copies and we're not different. I mean, God made us everyone special but that we've rallied together saying no to ourselves and yes to a Savior.

Lord, in my short life it may have happened but I'll tell you what. I've never seen this grand old land that I'm a part of in such division as I see it in America today. I've never seen anything like it. I know that it's because of Twitter and Facebook and social media and the news. I give you a challenge. Get your clicker. At 5:30 one afternoon, when ABC, NBC, CBS, when the national news is on, set it on any of them. It doesn't make any difference. Then get them on a roll so you can go to CNN and Fox. Just go bang, bang, bang. Don't even listen to what they're doing. Just flip back and forth and you'll see what's happened to the news.

The man or the woman on the national news will be, "Reporting today from Switzerland where the President is addressing the economic status of the world." It's the way Walter Cronkite used to be forever and ever. They try to make it as plain and vanilla. They lean a little but not much. Then you flip over to CNN. "President Trump is there today. He's probably got a prostitute with him underneath the couch somewhere." Then you flip to Fox. Flip it on to Fox. "The President is there today and he reminds us of JFK. He is rising like a..." Those are the entertainment channels of news.

Then you've got the ones that are trying to be in the middle of the road because they're prim and proper. It's division. It's division. Everywhere you look it's divided. It doesn't matter. You could give people not a thousand – you could give them a million dollars and they say, "That's chunk change." Why? Because you're afraid someone is

going to get good out of it and we're so divided we hate one another. I wonder what it'll take to bring this old nation together again.

We're divided racially. My Lord, you sneeze and you're a racist today. I don't even know what to say anymore. My son's in law school. He sent me a tweet the other day. He was taking a tax class. He hates tax. So I sent him back a tweet. I said, "You is kind. You is smart. You is important." That's a great line out of "The Help." Have you seen the movie? My wife said, "What did you do?" I said, "I sent him that line." She said to me, "The professor is black." I said, "I didn't know." She said, "You better erase that." I said, "I is smart. I is kind. I is not a racist." No. People just blow that everywhere you go. You find that on every side. It's amazing. Such division politically. Such division racially. Such division economically. Have and have nots. Oh, the division internally. When you travel today.

I was in France last year. I must say, Paris is better. It's better. I've walked up to people in the Paris Airport. They can tell by my accent where I'm from. I'll say, "Can you help me?" "I have money. Do you understand me? Do you know what I'm asking?" "No, I can't understand you."

Family, listen to me. No matter how rich or poor, no matter how white or dark, no matter how democratic or republican, any man, woman, boy, or child who walks in this place and will bow at the foot of the cross is welcome and we become unified within the bond of the Lord Jesus.