

Sent in Christ's Mission

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, The kingdom of God has come near to you. Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."



July 3, 2016

Thoughts for the Week

WHAT IS HUMAN?

ONE

The humanity we observe today is full of divisions. Whether it is in macro expressions as nation against nation, or race against race, or whether it is in micro expressions as brother against brother, or husband against wife, we are divided. We are at odds or at war with one another. We see the other as a threat and react accordingly. We see ourselves as superior or inferior, and treat others on the basis of that perception.

This dividedness, and its accompanying tensions, fears and hatred, is not the order of creation. It originates purely from what we believe in our heads and our hearts for a whole range of reasons, not from any elemental differences.

Humans are, in fact, of one blood. None of the things that divide us - neither our race, our nationality, our political affiliation, our religion, our sex, our history, our culture, nor our skin color - can change this essential oneness.

The Bible gives us two accounts of creation: Genesis 1:1-2:3 records in broad terms the creation of the entire universe and all that is in it, culminating in the creation of 'man' (male and female) in God's image. Genesis 2:4-25 focuses on the creation of the human, adding more detail about 'man' than we are given in Genesis 1.

It is here in God's accounts of his creation of 'man' that we learn this fundamental fact that

the whole human race is *one*. This intrinsic and undeniable unity is grounded in two facts of creation:

God created only one 'couple', Adam and Eve, not multiple couples. The whole human family is descended from this original two. [Note that we read in Genesis 3:20 that 'Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become *the mother of all living*.'

From the Genesis 2 account we learn that when God created the original man and the original woman he did so in two different ways: he created the man 'from the dust of the ground' [2:7], and he created the woman from 'the rib he had taken out of the man' [2:22]. While we may puzzle over how God actually did this, one thing is very clear: that the original woman was of the same substance as the original man. Not because God made two separate humans from the same substance, but that he formed the second human being out of the substance of the first. This fact intensifies the truth that humans are one. Every one of us comes not just from the original couple, but from the one original male. The whole human family is essentially one: of one blood, coming from one man, and from one couple.

This is further attested in Acts 17:26:

'From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth...'
[Where the English above reads 'from one man' the original Greek text reads 'from one blood'.]

Our present dividedness has not removed this essential and elemental oneness. Rather it has been laid on top of the oneness, hidden and stifled the oneness. But it has not taken it away. It is so elemental that it cannot be taken away even if we tried our hardest to do so. It is simply there, as an undeniable and unchangeable fact. Underneath all of the horrific stuff we see and the divisions we talk about this oneness is still there.

This elemental oneness stands in judgment on all of those things that we use to create, perpetrate and justify dividedness. It stands in judgment on racism. It stands in judgment on sexism. It stands in judgment upon our exultation in the perceived superiority of whatever group we identify with and it stands in judgment upon us when we permit others to convince us that we and our group are inferior. This oneness thus exposes our guilt. It allows us no excuse for our divisions and our hatred. It allows us no excuse for the terrible things we have done and do to each other.

But our dividedness is an expression of our alienation from God, and until that primary separation is reversed the secondary separation will persist, regardless of our best efforts. From the biblical perspective lasting reconciliation with each other can come only as a flow-on of reconciliation with God.

Jesus, who establishes peace between God and man, also enables peace between man and man. Jesus, who restores unity between God and man, makes unity between man and man possible. Jesus, who tears down the barriers that separate God and man, also destroys all justification for the barriers that separate man and man.

The prayer of Jesus: 'I pray ... that all of them may be one ... May they be brought to complete unity' [John 17:21-23].

The teaching of Paul: 'For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death the hostility' [Ephesians 2:14-16].

'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' [Galatians 3:28].

'Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all' [Colossians 3:11].

For those redeemed by Christ there is now a two-fold irreducible oneness: we are one blood physically because of our common descent from Adam, and we are redeemed, reconciled to God, regenerated and renewed by the one sacrificial, atoning blood of Jesus Christ. We are one by virtue of creation and we are one by virtue of redemption.

To those of us who through Christ have been reunited with God and with each other, the challenging command is given:

'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all' [Ephesians 4:3-6].

Over and above all of our dividedness there is one thing that links us all: we are human, we are of the same blood from the one original ancestor. And over and above this,

enabling the expression and experience of our elemental human unity, is the blood of our brother, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shed for our redemption and restoration.

Prayer Thought – Chile

Life is never so full and free as when we engage in the full and free experience of praising God. We thank you, God, for your ever-present spirit at work in our world. Grant that our eyes and ears may be opened so that the sights and sounds of your presence may call forth a more generous response from us.

Personal distractions and lack of resources hinder our involvement in the cause of justice and peace. We seek personal forgiveness and a keener sense of what is important in our living. May our concern for self give way to generosity as we respond to the needs of others.

O God, help those in authority, in all countries and all institutions, to govern wisely for the benefit of all. With others around the world, we uphold the people of Chile and seek for all people your blessing of peace.

Teach all persons that there is more to bind nations together than to drive them apart, and there is no place in God's kingdom of peace for violence and intolerance. Fill us with compassion and understanding, we pray.

Gracious God, help us to live out our lives as a reflection of our faith in your promises of justice and peace. May it be so in Jesus Christ, Amen.

One in Christ Moment

Our purpose, as Ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) is to faithfully present Jesus Christ to the world.

We aim to do this by equipping believers with His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17), give a forum for prayers from around the world, and encourage Christian fellowship.

His death on the cross to pay for our sins is our joyful message.

He has, *if you will receive His free gift by faith*, set you free (John 8:36) from death, the punishment we all rightly deserve for our sin (Isaiah 53:4-6).

It is simple! It is liberating! He said He came to set the captives FREE! Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16-21 Hooray and Praise the Lord!

Our Mission is to Proclaim Jesus Christ and Promote Communities of Joy, Hope, Love and Peace.