

Sunday 17th October 2021
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on Ephesians 4:1 – 6
Theme: “We are family, we are one”
“Love and care for one another,
***as brothers and sisters in the Lord*”**

Introduction:

As I look around this morning, it's wonderful to see such a diversity of people: people whose country of origin is China, or Korea, or Japan, or South Sudan, Australia, and so on.... We are different in so many ways: in our racial backgrounds, in our cultures, in our languages and much more....

And yet we are one family in the Lord Jesus....

As we sang in the song before the message:

We are heirs of the Father;

we are joint-heirs with the Son;

we are children of the kingdom,

we are family, we are one (SLH #805).

Part 1: Our unity, our “one-ness”

In our Bible reading, Paul speaks about our unity, *our “one-ness”*, by using the word “one” seven times. He writes:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. ⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ there is one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in all (Eph. 4:4-6 TEV & NIV).

A more careful reading reveals that three of these seven refer to the three persons of the Trinity, *of God*.

- 1) We are one body, one family, because there is only one Spirit and He binds us all together.

The Father and the Son, are united by the Holy Spirit, who in turn lives in us who are God's baptised children, and who unites us to God and to one another (*Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13*)

2) We have one Lord Jesus, who links us to him *and all that he has done for us* through one baptism, and who leads us to one faith and one hope (*see TEV diagram, Gal. 3:28*).

Sure, we have differences of opinions about things, but essentially we have "one faith": one faith in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord (*1 Cor. 12:3; 15:3 cf. Rom. 10:9,10*).

3) Furthermore, we have:

One God and Father of all, who is over *you* all and through *you* all, and in *you* all (*Eph. 4:6*).

John Stott comments on this in his commentary on Ephesians: **A few manuscripts read "in you all" clarifying that that the all of who God is Father means 'all Christians', not 'all people' indiscriminately, or 'all things' (the universe).... Nevertheless, it is a correct gloss. For the 'all' above, *through*, and *in* whom God is Father, are his family or household, his redeemed children"** (*Stott, Ephesians, p. 150-151*).

We who trust in Jesus as our Saviour all belong to one Christian family, *one body, no matter which church we go to, or what country we come from, or what language we speak,* because we have:

- One Spirit who unites us
- One Lord *and Saviour* in whom we all trust
- One Father who is taking care of us

You know, I'm often asked why we Christians are so divided, with different denominations and different worshipping communities....

And I say back to them:

“Well, we are not divided over the essentials. We all believe in a God above who loves us, in a God who came among us in the person of Jesus and who suffered and died for our sins, and then who was raised to life and is at the right hand side of God in heaven. And we believe that God’s Spirit lives in us, who trust in Jesus as our Saviour...”.

I usually go on to say to them:

“It’s all like an onion.... We have all the inner layers of the onion in common so far as our faith is concerned. It’s only in some of the outer layers that we have some disagreements: over infant baptism, for example, or over the real presence of Jesus in the Lord’s Supper, or over what exactly is going to happen in the future...”

But essentially, we have one common faith, which we express in our common Creeds: the Apostles’ Creed, and the Nicene Creed!!”

Part 2: Love one another

So how does God want us to relate to one another? Well, in short, as brothers and sisters who love and care for one another, *just like Jesus did.*

Paul calls on us to be *like Jesus* to one another. Listen to what Paul writes:

I urge you, then—I who am a prisoner because I serve the Lord: live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called you. ² Be always humble, gentle, and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another (Lit.

“Putting up with one another, and do all this in love” (Eph. 4:1-2).

Paul here lists five qualities that God wants us to have as we relate to one another and brothers and sisters in God’s family: humility or *lowliness*, gentleness, patience, tolerance, and love....

In short, as I said, God wants us to be like Jesus, who says of himself:

²⁸ “Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. ³⁰ For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30).

And who was long-tempered and tolerant and did everything in love....

So how should we relate to one another?

Be like Jesus to one another, and Paul adds in verse 3:

Do your best (Lit. “being eager”) to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together (Lit. “the unity of the Spirit, by means of the bond of peace”).

We have peace with God as we trust in Jesus as our Saviour (Rom. 5:1), and we have peace with one another, since we are brothers and sisters in God’s family (Eph. 2;14, 18). That’s who we are, so let’s struggle keep this peace at all times. That’s what God wants for us, His family.

Part 3: Reach out to others

And finally, “What does God want us to do as His family?” “What task has God given to us?” Well Paul doesn’t emphasise this here, but it clear from reading the Gospels and the New

Testament as a whole what God wants us to do: to reach out to others around us, with the Good News of God's love, and His forgiveness through Jesus.

Listen to what Jesus says at the end of Matthew's Gospel:
Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20).

And again to what Jesus says to his followers, shortly before his ascension:

Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. ⁸ But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹ After saying this, he was taken up to heaven as they watched him, and a cloud hid him from their sight (Acts 1:7-9).

You know, couples usually want to grow a family around them.... They want to have children, and often will go to all sorts of lengths to have children: by the adoption of orphans from overseas; by In Vitro Fertilization, *and the repeated cycles of trying that this involves*; and even by surrogacy....

And, you know, God is the same....

He will go to any lengths to reach out to the people *who He has created and loves*, and to bring them into His family as His forgiven children.

I love the words of the song “Reckless love”, or as *one of my sons prefers to sing*, “Relentless love”. The chorus goes like this:

(And) **O the overwhelming
Never-ending reckless
Love of God
O it chases me down
fights ‘til I’m found
Leaves the ninety-nine
I couldn’t earn it, I don’t
Deserve it
Still You give Yourself away
O the overwhelming never-
Ending reckless
Love of God, yeah.**

Of course, the song has as its inspiration Jesus’ parable of The Lost Sheep... (*Luke 15:4-7*).

God want us, His children, to be like Him: to be prepared to do anything, and to go anywhere, to rescue the lost around us, and to bring them into God’s flock, or *better His family*.

Conclusion:

It’s multi-cultural Sunday.... Let me finish by reminding you of where we are all headed: home to God’s renewed Kingdom, where all God’s forgiven children will gather before God our Father, and our Lord Jesus....

Listen again to how John describes a vision of this that the risen Lord Jesus gave him:

After this I looked, and there was an enormous crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the throne and of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud

voice: “Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9-10).

We are the multi-cultural people of God *now*, and this is where we are headed....

Let me bless us all with the blessing that the writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses at the end of his letter:

God has raised from death our Lord Jesus, who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep as the result of his blood, by which the eternal covenant is sealed.

May the God of peace provide you with every good thing you need in order to do his will, and may he, through Jesus Christ, do in us what pleases him. And to Christ be the glory forever and ever! Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).