

3 Reasons For Church Unity

by Cherry Cherian

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and love among believers, highlighting that God chose us and calls us to bear lasting fruit through love for one another. The speaker reflects on the significance of being saved by grace, the unity of believers as one body connected to Christ, and the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to the Father through love and unity. The message challenges listeners to prioritize reconciliation and love, reflecting the love of Jesus in a world filled with hatred and division.

Scripture: John 15:16, Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 12:12, John 13:34, Ephesians 1:11

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Love and Reconciliation"

Description

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Transcript

who think we will be young forever, that youth is fleeting. And it was a reminder for me this morning, it's the first time that I've got something like this, but I believe that God has a plan. And this morning I want to thank you, especially the Achins, Matthew Philip Achin and Philip Philip Achin for this warm invite.

I'm privileged to be here this morning to share God's word with you. And I also want to thank Raju uncle and Amani aunty for the hospitality and the friendship that we have been enjoying for the past couple of years. This morning I want to share with you from the gospel reading of today, John chapter 15, and as the church we are celebrating Ecumenical Sunday.

My father always tells me there are two things you have to be careful when you preach in the Marthimer church. One, you have to stick to the topic, the lectionary, two, you have to stick to the time. So I would definitely try my best to stick to both of these and may the Lord speak to us.

John chapter 15 verses 16 and 17 is what I would read for you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that would last. Then the father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

This is my command, love each other. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for this morning and we look to your word, seeking you, seeking your face, asking you, oh Lord, that you would speak to us.

I pray that even as I speak, Lord, your voice would be within my voice. This morning we are not interested in hearing the voice of man or God. What we want to hear is the voice of God.

So even as we spend a few minutes meditating on your word, I pray that you would speak to us because we are listening this morning. In Jesus precious name, we pray. Congratulations on your 45th president as well.

Your president wants to build walls. Our prime minister wants to take the little cash that we have from us. Kim Jong-un wants to eliminate every single person that comes against him.

We live in a world where hatred runs countries and nations. That's the world that we live in, but above all the rulers of the world, there's a king. His name is Jesus and he's above every single ruler of the world.

And he said, love one another. While he was on this world, he even loved his enemies. A man came to betray him at the garden of Gethsemane and he looked at Judas and he said, my friend, what can I do for you? And he looks at his church this morning.

He looks at me, he looks at you and he says, you do what I just did, love one another. So when we look at John chapter 15, there are three things that this chapter tells us about unity, about ecumenism, and I want to share very briefly with you on these three things. And I promise you, I will stay within the time that has been given to me.

Number one, what is the reason for unity? Why should we be together? Number one, we have one history. We have one history. Let me read this for you.

Chapter 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you. You did not choose me, but I chose you.

What that verse tells me is there was nothing that I could do to choose God. But God in his sovereignty chose me. And that creates a lot of humility.

That's why the Bible says while we were yet sinners, while we were yet enemies of the cross, Christ loved us and he died for us. You ask Apostle Paul, he would say this, may I never boast in anything except in the cross of Jesus Christ. So you can ask Paul, I can ask Paul, Paul, how about your education at the University of Gamaliel? And he would look back and say, that did not save me.

You could look at Paul and say, Paul, Saul, how about your standing within the Jewish community? Weren't you a Pharisee? Saul would say, that is not what saved me. On my way to Damascus, while I wanted to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, Jesus found me. I did not go in search of him.

He came in search of me. I know who I am, he would say. I was a sinner.

I was a God hater. And yet he loved me and he died for me. And now I can say, may I never boast in anything except in the cross of Jesus Christ.

You know, many times what happens in our lives is, we look back and we think we have achieved something. We carry these different badges on our chest. I'm a Malayali Christian.

I have known the Lord for the past 25 years. I grew up in a godly family. I have certain, certain kinds of educational background.

I tied very well to the church. So I'm better than you. Sometimes we say, oh, no, no, I don't even go to this church.

I go to a different kind of church. So I should be definitely better than you. You ask Paul, he would say, you know what? There's only one thing that qualifies you, and that's that you have been saved by the grace of God.

And that is what is the one thing that unites us, that we have one history. I was like this on work, I was traveling to Goa once and there was this brother who was working among the Anglo-Indian community. He said he got my number from, I never knew him.

He got my number from somebody and he said, Cherry, are you free over the weekend? I said, yes, I don't have work. So can you come and speak at our fellowship? I said, yes, I will do that. And I go to this fellowship in the evening, and as I walk in, I see two different kinds of people.

One is suited up, well-dressed, the church-going, regular crowd. And on the other side, there were these few women who were sitting. They didn't look quite the church crowd.

They were heavily dressed, they were wearing heavy makeup on their faces, and they were not quite the church community. So this brother comes up to me and he says, Brother Cherry, I want to tell you something. You know, we have two groups of people, and I'm sure you would have noticed it.

And this group, there is this group of women who were involved in prostitution a couple of years back, but Jesus saved them, and that is why they are here as part of the fellowship. So I was not quite sure what I would preach upon, but then they started singing, and they sang a Hindi song. I don't know Hindi, but the song went like this, Prabhu, tera pyaar saagar se bhi gehra, tu hai mahaan, aasmano bhi uncha, tere vichar, saagar ki ret se zyada, Prabhu, tera dil, srishti se bhi hai mahaan.

They were singing about the love of God, God, your love is bigger than the creation, Lord, your love is higher than the seas. And they were talking about the love of God, and I couldn't stop crying. I remember standing there and crying and crying, and I was crying, the brother next to me was crying, all of us were crying.

And then the Lord spoke to me and he said, Cherry, you have no clue of the enormity of the sin that you have been saved from. You have no idea. So we as brothers and sisters could stand next to each other and sing a song, which Revelation calls it as the song of the redeemed.

And we could say, Jesus, you alone are worthy to receive glory and honor and power. You know why? Because we all were saved from the same kind of sin. We all were saved from the same kind of sin.

Sometimes we tend to forget that, that we have one history, that we were on a highway to hell. We said, God, we don't want you anymore. We showed our fist to God and we ran.

And God in his mercy overtook us and saved us by his blood. So that's why Paul says there's no Greek or Jew, there's no slave or free, there is no educated, uneducated, there's no circumcised, no uncircumcised, all are one in Christ. Let us never forget, let us never forget that we have one history.

So there are no badges, there is only one badge, sinner saved by grace. Paul knew that very well. And that's why he said, let me never boast in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ.

So that is number one, we have one history. Number two, we are one body. We are one body.

Verse five goes like this, I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Like Achan said, apart from me, you can do nothing.

I am the vine, you are the branches. The only thing which is common is the vine. And the only thing that unites us is the vine.

And we are different branches. One branch cannot look at the other branch and say, you're not needed. You get away from the vine.

Number one, I am better than you, not possible. As long as you remain in the vine, we all remain together. We are connected to the vine.

We are members of one body. Just imagine with me, when you and I look into the mirror, we see a beautiful body. You like it or not, we all have a beautiful body.

So when we look into the mirror, we see a beautiful body. Because everything is connected to each other. You have your hands connected, you have your brain within the body, you have your face, you have your legs, your toes, your stomach, everything is connected together.

And how beautiful it looks, the body. But sometimes what happens is, for those of you who have been to anatomy class, you go to anatomy class and sometimes they have these exhibitions. And when you walk into the anatomy class, what you see is this.

You see the heart separate. You see the liver separate. Then you see the brain separate.

And it doesn't look good. It doesn't look good at all. Aren't they members of the body? Of course they are.

But they don't look good because they are not together. Sometimes when the world walks into our church, that's what they see. They see the brain separate, they see the liver separate, and they don't see any beauty in it.

But the moment it's together, the beauty of Jesus Christ shines through. If I were to look at my thumb, I would say, hey thumb, you're an important person. I'm able to grab my Bible because of the thumb.

Now the thumb might become arrogant one day and look at me and say, you know what, I like the brain, I like the head, but I don't like the arm. So I don't want to be part of the arm. I'll get directly connected to the head, Jesus Christ, you know, that's all I need.

I don't need any of you. And the thumb decides to go for a walk. And he says, I don't want to be part of it.

You have an anatomy class. Thumb can't do anything by itself. But when we are together, it's of much, much use.

When we are in the body of Christ, there are different functions. That's why the apostle says that some have been given the gift of discernment, some the gift of preaching, some the gift of serving, some the gift of generosity. We all need each other.

So while I'm standing here, you know, if someone notices that I'm in a lot of pain, okay, and they come to me with a few tablets and a glass of water, and they're just coming down the aisle, and for some reason they trip somewhere in between, and they trip and they fall. I will tell you how many of us would react. One person would run and say, hey, are you okay? Are you fine? Don't worry.

Okay? And the other person would run and say, I'll take you to the hospital. Another person would pick up the pieces of the glass which just broke and say, how much did this glass cost? I will sponsor the glass. The gift of generosity, right? Another person who's involved in the church would come and say, I think there's a problem with the carpet.

We need to level it. The gift of governance. Don't we need all of them? Of course we need all of them.

Everybody isn't called to preach. Everybody isn't called to teach. You need a Barnabas, and you need a Paul.

And that's the beauty of the body of Christ. When we come together and we remain as one body, the glory of Jesus is able to shine in and through us. And many times what happens, the reason why we are not able to connect with each other is because we are not connected to the vine.

If you are connected to the vine, the next process is automatic. You don't have to build it. You don't have to make it up.

It happens automatically. When Jesus walks into a family, there is fellowship in the family. When Jesus walks inside a church, there is a fellowship within the church.

The reason why we don't have fellowship is because Jesus is not connected to us, and we are not connected to Jesus. When sin entered the life of man, you see Cain getting angry with his brother. Why? Because he was not connected to God.

God was reaching out to him, and he said, Cain, sin is at your doorstep. Cain didn't want to listen to God. And the moment you get severed, the moment you get disconnected from God, what can automatically happen is that you might become a murderer in the whole process.

The reason why we have strife and fighting is because Jesus has left our homes, Jesus has left our fellowships. If we can just get connected back to him. And that's why when we read John chapter 15, as we heard the gospel being read, it goes on like this, for those branches that do not bear fruit, I will cut off.

But there's another translation that goes like this. If you don't bear fruit, sometimes in these vineyards, what happens is some of these branches fall down, and they get covered in the mud, you know. And when they get covered in the mud, they're not able to bear fruit anymore.

And you know what the wine dresser does? The wine dresser doesn't come and cut those off. The wine dresser would come and wash those branches and put it back and reinstate it. Today, if we are not connected to the branch, to the vine, God gives us an opportunity.

God gives us an opportunity to be washed by the precious blood of Jesus. And that blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. And I can go to the throne room of God's grace with confidence, because I can be washed by the blood of Jesus.

And the moment I get connected, I can have fellowship with my wife, I can have fellowship with my husband, I can have fellowship with my brothers, I can even have fellowship with those who hate me. Friend, what can I do for you, Jesus said. So number one, we have one history.

Number two, we are one body. And finally, before I close, we have one purpose. We have one purpose.

Let's look at verse eight. Verse eight goes like this. This is to my father's glory.

Verse eight goes like this. This is to my father's glory. Now, why should we be connected? Why should we be united? There's only one purpose, and that's the father's glory.

There's only one purpose. I would define the existence of life, there's only one purpose, and that is the father's glory. You know, Jesus said this before he left this earth.

He said this, by this, they will know that you are my disciples. By what? By the love that you have for one another. You know, in the Old Testament, let me just tell this and then I will close because I know my time is up.

In the Old Testament, there was the concept of slavery. God permitted for people to have slaves. And there was a rule which went like this, that if a slave serves his master for seven years, he can go free.

It's called the year of jubilee. So sometimes what happens in the course of the slave living with the master, what can happen is, the slave might fall in love with the master. So at the end of seven years, the master would call the slave and say, Mr. Slave, thank you so much for serving me for seven years, now you are free to go.

And if the slave for some reason fell in love with the master during those seven years, you know what he would say? He would say, Master, I know I can be free, I know I can go free, but I decide to stay with you. I'm not going anywhere. And the Bible says in the Old Testament, as per the rules and regulations, the master should take the slave to the doorpost of the house, take a nail and pierce his ear through the doorpost.

And after that, he would be a slave for life. And it's called a love slave. Because it's not by compulsion, but it's by choice.

Now just imagine with me, alright, for a moment. Now the next time, after this process happens, there's this huge mark on the slave's ear, a huge mark. It's like, you know, in olden times, we had these Kerala Ammachis who used to have these huge, big holes in their ears because of the heavy earrings they used to wear, you know.

Huge, big hole in their ears. Just imagine with me, the slave goes to the market next time, right, he's going shopping, and everybody would look at the slave, and they would see this huge mark. And you know what they would say? They would look at the slave and say, what a wonderful master he has.

When Jesus left this earth, he said, there's one mark I want to leave with you. And that mark is your love for one another. The world will know that you're my disciples when you love one another.

Does the world look at me and say, what a wonderful master he serves? Does the world come into our houses, into our homes and say, what a wonderful master they serve? Does the world walk into our churches, into our fellowships and say, so much of unity, this must be Jesus. If not, before we come to the

communion table, today is the opportunity to say, God, I want to get connected to the vine. The Bible says that if your brother has anything against you, and when you come to the altar, leave your sacrifice at the altar, go back, reconcile, and come to the altar.

It doesn't say that if you have anything against your brother, it says if your brother has anything against you. Jesus ups the standard, always. And this evening, this morning, it's a great opportunity for us to come to the table of God's grace and say, God, I want to be reconciled to you and I want to be reconciled to my brother.

God gives us a great opportunity to demonstrate to the world that our master is different. In the world of Donald Trump's and Kim Jong-un's and Narendra Modi's, may the church of Jesus Christ shine the light by loving each other. May God bless us, let us pray.

Father, we thank you, God, for this time that you've given us.

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