

Exposition on Psalm 133

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and harmony among brethren, as exemplified in the early Christian community and the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Scripture: Psalm 132:1-3, Isaiah 65:1, John 3:30, Acts 2:1, Acts 4:32, Acts 4:34, 1 Corinthians 15:6

Topics: "Church Unity", "Christian Brotherhood"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the beauty and importance of brethren dwelling together in unity, as highlighted in Psalms 132:1. He emphasizes how this unity led to the formation of Monasteries and the gathering of believers from all corners of the earth. Augustine reflects on the significance of true brotherhood among Monks, despite the existence of false Monks and false believers. He delves into the symbolism of unity, likening it to the anointing of Aaron's beard and the dew of Hermon falling on the hills of Sion, signifying God's grace and blessings upon those who dwell together in harmony.

Transcript

1. This is a short Psalm, but one well known and quoted. Behold, how good and how pleasant is it, that brethren should dwell together in unity Psalm 132:1. So sweet is that sound, that even they who know not the Psalter, sing that verse. ...

2. For these same words of the Psalter, this sweet sound, that honeyed melody, as well of the mind as of the hymn, did even beget the Monasteries. By this sound were stirred up the brethren who longed to dwell together. This verse was their trumpet. It sounded through the whole earth, and they who had been divided, were gathered together. The summons of God, the summons of the Holy Spirit, the summons of the Prophets, were not heard in Judah, yet were heard through the whole world. They were deaf to that sound, amid whom it was sung; they were found with their ears open, of whom it was said, They shall see him, who were not told of him; they shall understand who heard not. Isaiah 65:1 Yet, most beloved, if we reflect, the very blessing has sprung from that wall of circumcision. For have all the Jews perished? And whence were the Apostles, the sons of the Prophets, the sons of the exiles? He speaks as to them who know. Whence those five hundred, who saw the Lord after His resurrection, whom the Apostle Paul commemorates? 1 Corinthians 15:6 Whence those hundred and twenty, Acts 1:15 who were together in one place after the resurrection of the Lord, and His ascension into heaven, on whom when gathered into one place the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, sent down from heaven, sent, even as He was promised? Acts 2:1-4 All were from thence, and they first dwelt together in unity; who sold all they

had, and laid the price of their goods at the Apostles' feet, as is read in the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 4:34-35 And distribution was made to each one as he had need, Acts 2:45 and none called anything his own, but they had all things common. And what is together in unity? They had, he says, one mind and one heart God-wards. Acts 4:32 So they were the first who heard, Behold how good and how pleasant is it, that brethren dwell together. They were the first to hear, but heard it not alone....

3. From the words of this Psalm was taken the name of Monks, that no one may reproach you who are Catholics by reason of the name. When you with justice reproach heretics by reason of the Circelliones, that they may be saved by shame, they reproach you on the score of the Monks....

4. Moreover, beloved, there are they who are false Monks, and we know men of this kind; but the pious brotherhood is not annulled, because of them who profess to be what they are not. There are false Monks, as there are false men among the Clergy, and among the faithful.. ..

5. Since the Psalm says, Behold, how good and how pleasant is it, that brethren should dwell together in one, why then should we not call Monks so? For Monos is one. Not one in any manner, for a man in a crowd is one, but though he can be called one along with others, he cannot be Monos, that is, alone, for Monos means one alone. They then who thus live together as to make one man, so that they really possess what is written, one mind and one heart, Acts 4:32 many bodies, but not many minds; many bodies, but not many hearts; can rightly be called Monos, that is, one alone.. ..

6. Let the Psalm tell us what they are like. As the ointment on the head, which descended to the beard, to Aaron's beard, which descended to the fringe of his garment Psalm 132:2. What was Aaron? A priest. Who is a priest, except that one Priest, who entered into the Holy of Holies? Who is that priest, save Him, who was at once Victim and Priest? save Him who when he found nothing clean in the world to offer, offered Himself? The ointment is on his head, because Christ is one whole with the Church, but the ointment comes from the head. Our Head is Christ crucified and buried; He rose again, and ascended into heaven; and the Holy Spirit came from the head. Whither? To the beard. The beard signifies the courageous; the beard distinguishes the grown men, the earnest, the active, the vigorous. So that when we describe such, we say, he is a bearded man. Thus that ointment descended first upon the Apostles, descended upon those who bore the first assaults of the world, and therefore the Holy Spirit descended on them. For they who first began to dwell together in unity, suffered persecution, but because the ointment descended to the beard, they suffered, but were not conquered....

7. As the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hills of Sion Psalm 132:3. He would have it understood, my brethren, that it is of God's grace that brethren dwell together in unity....

8. But ye should know what Hermon is. It is a mountain far distant from Jerusalem, that is, from Sion. And so it is strange that he says thus: As the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the mountains of Sion, since mount Hermon is far distant from Jerusalem, for it is said to be over Jordan. Let us then seek out some interpretation of Hermon. The word is Hebrew, and we learn its meaning from them who know that language. Hermon is said to mean, a light set on a high place. For from Christ comes the dew. No light is set on a high place, save Christ. How is He set on high? First on the cross, afterwards in heaven. Set on high on the cross when He was humbled; humbled, but His humiliation could not but be high. The ministry of man grew less and less, as was signified in John; the ministry of God in our Lord Jesus Christ increased, as was shown at their birth. The former was born, as the tradition of the Church shows, on the 24th of June, when the days begin to shorten. The Lord was born on the 25th of December, when the

days begin to lengthen. Here John himself confessing, He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30 And the passion of each shows this. The Lord was exalted on the cross; John was diminished by beheading. Thus the light set on high is Christ, whence is the dew of Hermon....But if he have the dew of Hermon, which fell on the hill of Sion, he is quiet, peaceable, humble, submissive, pouring forth prayer in place of murmuring. For murmurers are admirably described in a certain passage of the Scriptures, The heart of a fool is as the wheel of a cart. Sirach 33:5 What is the meaning of the heart of a fool is as the wheel of a cart? It carries hay, and creaks. The wheel of a cart cannot cease from creaking. Thus there are many brethren, who do not dwell together, save in the body. But who are they who dwell together? They of whom it is said, And they had one mind and one heart towards God. Acts 4:32

9. Because there the Lord commanded blessing. Where did He command it? Among the brethren who dwell together. There He enjoined blessing, there they who dwell with one heart bless God. For you bless not God in division of heart....Are you straitened on earth? Depart, have your habitation in heaven. How shall I, a man clothed in flesh, enslaved to the flesh, you will say, have my habitation in heaven. First go in heart, whither you would follow in the body. Do not hear, Lift up your hearts, with a deaf ear. Keep your heart lifted up, and no one will straiten you in heaven.

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