

E PLURIBUS UNUM

Revelation 7: 9- 17; John 17: 20- 23; txt, Revelation 7: 9- 10, John 17: 23

September 27, 2020

All Nations Heritage Sunday

I. God's Desire that His People Be Diverse Yet One

A. God desires that his people be diverse (or different and unique)

Revelation 7:9-10 (NIV) After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

1. So, we see that Jesus has not just chosen one people as his own, but people of different nationalities, races and cultures from every part of the world.
2. Our Creator ordained that many different races and people would flower from one father and mother.
3. Our heavenly Father delights in our differences, just as parents delight in the differences among their children.
4. And here in these verses he has given us a future family portrait.

B. God Desires that his people be one.

John 17:23b (NIV) May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

1. This verse is part of what is known as Jesus high priestly prayer.
2. It was prayer in which Jesus prayed for his followers, asking that God make them be what he saved them to be and that in so doing they would bring honor to him.
3. In these verses we see that God's intention for his people is that they might be one with him and with each other.
4. For us as Christians around the world to perfectly be what God intended us to be, we must be one.
 - a. The original Greek more shows us even more clearly that this is God's purpose for us.
 - b. Translating the first part of this verse literally, it would say something like this- "may they be perfected into one."

C. God Desires Unity in Diversity

1. We who are different must be one.
2. That is what we experience in Holy Communion

1 Corinthians 10:17 (NIV) Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

- a. In Holy Communion we celebrate our union with Christ and with each other.
- b. In Holy Communion we celebrate that who many in number and in our differences are one in Christ.

3. When Jesus died on the cross to reconcile us to God, he also reconciled us to each other.

Ephesians 2:14-16 (NIV) For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. 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 their hostility.

- a. Paul was writing to Gentiles (non-Jews) telling that they did not have to obey all the Jewish religious laws and become Jews in order to be part of God's people.
- b. Jesus paid for their sins, so that could be part of God's people simply by confessing their sins and trusting in Jesus.
- c. As part of God's people, they became one with believing Jews, and eventually with believers all around the world.

Questions:

- 1) Am I truly thankful to God for the unique person he made me to be? Am I thankful to him for the unique person he has made my brothers and sister in Christ to be? Do I rejoice in our differences in nationality and race?
- 2) Do I experience real unity with other Christians, and rejoice in that?
- 3) Some believe that in order to experience the unity Christ prayed for there should be only one church and not many different Christian denominations, some of which were begun as not only because of difference in understanding the Bible, but also because of culture and national identify? Do I agree? O can we be separate denominations, but still be one in Christ?
- 4) When has the church, in our desire to be one in Christ, not respected and celebrated that God has also made us different? Why is this wrong?

II. So That We Might Reflect God, Who Is Three, Yet One

A. In our text Jesus prays to the Father that his disciple be one, "to let the world know that you sent me."

1. To understand this, we must look back to verse 21.

John 17:21 (NIV) That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

2. Jesus is saying here that he wants his disciples to one just as he and God the Father are one.

B. In John 8:42 Jesus declares that he came from God.

John 8:42 (NIV) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.

1. **When Jesus said, "I came from God," he was saying more than just that he was God's messenger.**
2. **He subtly was saying he came from the godhead.**

C. John 1 says this more clearly.

1. **John 1:14 refers to Jesus as the Word that became flesh and lived for a while among us.**
2. **And John 1:1 declares that the Word was God.**

John 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

D. The doctrine of the Trinity states God who exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but that these three are one God.

1. **Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9 that he is one with the Father.**

John 14:9 (NIV) Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

2. **And later when promises to send the Holy Spirit he implies that he is one with the Holy Spirit.**

John 14:16-18 (NIV) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

E. God made us in his image to reflect who he is.

Genesis 1:26 (NIV) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

1. **When we diverse people are truly one, we reflect and bear witness to God who is 3 yet one.**
2. **Hence, we give witness that Jesus was sent from that one godhead, a godhead united in essence, purpose, and love.**

F. When Jesus says, "may they also be in us," he tells us how we can do this.

1. **When we trust in Jesus and become his disciples, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, who according to John 14: 17 "lives with you and will be in you."**

2. **The Holy Spirit connects us to God, so God's life and love also begins to shape us and shine through us.**

Questions:

- 1) **Where else in the New Testament do we find evidence that Jesus is God, and that he came to this earth from the Godhead? Where else do we find evidence that three persons of God are united as one God?**
- 2) **How do I, as an individual Christian reflect God. How do we as a congregation (Maranatha Fellowship), as a denomination (Christian Reformed Church) and as a worldwide church reflect God who is three in one?**
- 3) **How has the Holy Spirit, who lives in me, changed my life helping me to become more what Jesus saved me to be?**
- 4) **How has the Holy Spirit who lives in us as a church been changing us, so that God shine through us?**

III. Resulting in a Powerful Witness to God's Love

John 17:23 (NIV) I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you ...have loved them even as you have loved me.

- A. When we are who remain different show our unity in Christ, we let the world know that God loves us even as he loves his own Son.**
- B. When God's people show his love, the glory of his presence shines through them and blesses those who witness it.**

John 17:22-23 (NIV) I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

C. As we watch the news this week and see images of bigotry, injustice, racial violence, and police shootings, and as we Christian consider our own attitudes, let us remember Jesus words, in Matthew 5:14-16

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV) "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

1. **Have you ever seen a church with stain glass windows?**
2. **The stained glass is most beautiful at night.**
3. **Let us pray that in this night of a world his light will shine through us.**
4. **And in this darkness may we in all our colorful diversity show the world a picture of God and his Christ.**

Questions:

- 1) **Do I truly experience the love of God as I worship and work with others in my church? In what ways do I experience his love because we who are different love each other and are united as one?**
- 2) **How have we blessed our community, when we as unique diverse Christians showed our love for them and each other? How have we failed in this? How should deal with those failures?**
- 3) **What signs of darkness do I see in our community and nation, especially the darkness that stems from people of different races and culture being unable to love each other and get along? How have I individually and we as church responded to this? How has God's light and presence shown through us?**