

“All Are One”
Galatians 3:28-29
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“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free for all are one in Christ Jesus.” Paul almost 2000 years ago gave us one of the first recorded speeches on equal rights here in Galatians. He reminded the church that Christ makes no distinction based on anything except the fact that they are a follower of Christ. It is Christ’s desire that all would be one in Christ, not divided but one.

Today we begin our fall Stewardship drive and in that we are reminded of the words of institution in our service of Holy Communion, to “make us One with Christ, One with each other, and One in ministry.” Paul knew the need for unity within the church and the same still resides here today. We as the body of Christ can accomplish all things through Christ who gives us strength. That is a tall order but it is also very true. The evidence is all around us.

God has blessed us with many things in this world and in our community. Everyday we are privileged to see the beauty of God’s creation and how are lives enrich that creation. When we understand that all that we have comes from God, how can we not out of thanks, give back to God? What did God give us to make us one?

First God gave us as Christians, Gods only son. In Christ we have the example of sacrificial giving for the sake of making the kingdom of heaven a reality on earth. Christ brought people together, performed miracles and enabled others like Peter and Paul to perform miracles? As we look at our budget goals for 2009 I ask this question: Do we believe in Miracles? Do we believe that God will bless this church to achieve a new goal for next year that far surpasses that of years before? I sure do, and I pray that we will look at what Christ has done for us, and look at our priorities as to what we can do for Christ.

Second: God gave us as Christians, each other. Daryl Davis our lay leader made a profound comment a little over a year ago, God did not call us together to just do charity work, or have a nice building. Don’t get me wrong buildings are nice, but what makes us the church is that we are a church family. Daryl said God made us brothers and sisters. We know that brothers and sisters don’t always get along or treat each other right the whole time, but at the end of the day they always have each other. God gave us all each other with all of our flaws, and of our fears, all of our hopes and all of our dreams and said that you are the body of Christ. We all come from different places, downstate, out of state, different countries but the thing that we have in common is that God has called us together here and now. There is no distinction because all of us are one with

each other, we bear one another's burdens and sorrows, and celebrate our dreams and accomplishments. Do we believe we are Christ body the Church and that we are here for a reason? I know that I do. That being said, our ministry with each other is also a ministry of invitation. We must invite people to come and see and to be a place where the Holy Spirit is so evident that you cannot help but feel it when you walk in these doors. That means we must, as children of God, invite others to be a part of this fellowship because it is really the invitation that God has made to us. The other side of that coin though is this question. What ministries do we have to offer that are evidence of our commitment to faith? For many years we have valued our music ministry by staffing those positions, we value our building by hiring custodian and maintenance, we have said we valued our youth by hiring a Youth Ministries Director. I believe that God is calling us to do more. It should be our goal that by 2009 we will show our faithfulness through our giving that we value our children as well as adults by hiring a Director of Christian Education once again. I believe that God is calling us to not stop there, but take that next step for now trusting that God will lead us further.

Third, God gave us the ministry of the church to all the world. Wow! That is a tall order. Support of our missions through work teams and extra mile giving is one way, but the world is also in our backyard, and I believe that God is calling us to give back to this community, through our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service. We must continue to be in mission here in this community and in this country and in this world so they will know we are Christians by our love. Last week I received several tongue and cheek comments that I gave the best sermon ever, because I didn't preach. We heard from our summer mission team and what they accomplished on their journey, but more so, what we could accomplish together through all of our gifts and all of our service. That is only the tip of the iceberg. I believe that together as one In Christ Jesus we can reach beyond these walls and make the kingdom of heaven a little more evident both inside and outside of our building.

What this requires is that all must step out in faith. For some that will mean looking at what they spend their time on and adjusting priorities for God. Not necessarily because we want to, but because God needs us to for the sake of the being one. For some that will be taking a look at their pledge and asking "am I giving out of what is left over, Or I am I giving because God has blessed me." It is a spiritual discipline, but also know that the reward goes beyond any measure. Other might be saying am I doing all I can and make that next step in pledging to give of ourselves, for the first time. Again when we give of ourselves, we receive more than we can do on our own because God has made it all one. Other might be asking can I afford to give? For some the answer is not now. As one in Christ we are called to use our gifts to help those who cannot but also to empower and

strengthen so that eventually they are able. Still for others it means looking at priorities in our own lives.

In these uncertain times financially and otherwise we have had to adjust our priorities. Even within those priorities we make decisions about what to do with what we have. We can never out-give God. We know what God has given us. I believe that with the power of the Holy Spirit we who have been called together by can and will do great things. As we receive our stewardship packets today and take them home and look through them and pray about what God is calling us as one in Christ to be. Pray to God about what we are doing to make that a reality over the next couple of weeks. Lastly when we gather in a month for worship, let us commit to being one with each other. Whatever you have to give God will use it because there is only One in Christ Jesus. Thanks Be to God. Amen.