

Journey to Unity

Please begin by reading John 17:20-26

Jesus prays that we may be one as he and the Father are one. Even so, our lives are filled with disunity. There are serious disagreements between churches about theology. There are fractures within our country between people of differing political parties. And there are certainly breaks internationally as countries fight about borders, resources, trade policies, and immigration to name a few. Part of what makes consensus difficult is that through both upbringing and biology, different peoples' brains are wired differently. We may try to walk a thin line, speaking only what we see as acceptable to everyone, but we run the risk of being lukewarm Christians, unwilling to take a stand on anything. The possibility of giving offense should not paralyze us, as we are called to be present in the world. However, rather than looking at the Gospel through the lens of our political party, we need to look at anything espoused by our political part through the lens of the gospel.

1. Tell of an experience you have been surprised by the actions of someone from a different culture. What are some of the differences in values that might be at play?
2. Pastor Mary talked about the difficulty of including political sensitivity in her sermons. How do you deal with that difficulty in your day to day experiences? Have you ever felt as though you were being "lukewarm" and overly concerned about not offending when you didn't speak up on an issue?
3. How do we look beyond our differences to let the Gospel shine through? How do you feel about knowing that there are people from opposite sides of the political divide in our church? How does it affect our ministry?

Because we are wired differently, our goal is to work toward unity, but not unanimity. We are very aware of seeing God's glory in the other, and receiving God's glory joyfully into our own lives. We move in joy past doubt, beyond moral rigidity, carrying a peace that burst through the confines of fear and helps us speak in one unified voice of the wonderful mercies of God in Christ Jesus.

1. C.S. Lewis writes "*A sick society must think much about politics, as a sick man must think much about his digestion; to ignore the subject may be fatal cowardice for the one as for the other. But if either comes to regard it as the natural food of the mind – if either forgets that we think of such things only in order to be able to think of something else – then what was undertaken for the sake of health has become itself a new and deadly disease.*" Comment on this quote. In a society where we are joyfully loving God and neighbor, what is the proper place of politics?
2. Central to this study, "Joyful Journey" is the understanding that joy leads to a larger space for life – a space where we make room for the inexplicable, we explore the possibilities of how God can use us to spread grace and forgiveness, and we take delight in God's glory, receive that glory, and recognize it in others. Talk about how this way of viewing a life of faith can lead to unity amid differences. How can it bring joy?
3. What has been your most impactful insight from "Joyful Journey"?