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United in Christ, Witnessing to the World

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KEY VERSE
Matthew 18:20 - "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

READINGS
Isaiah 2:2-4; Psalm 133; 2 Corinthians 13:5-13; Matthew 18:18-20

Unity Sunday

Today, as we observe Unity Sunday, we are reminded of one of the most important principles of Christian life and witness: the unity of the Church. The theme before us is "United in Christ, Witnessing to the World." This theme invites us not only to reflect on the importance of unity but also to examine how our unity can become a powerful testimony to the world around us. The Church is not merely an organisation, a building, or a gathering of people who share the same religious traditions. The Church is the body of Christ, called by God to live in fellowship, serve one another in love, and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Although we may differ in language, culture, tradition, theological understanding, and personal preferences, we are united by our faith in Jesus Christ and our common calling to participate in God's mission.

Unfortunately, divisions, misunderstandings, jealousy, competition, and conflicts sometimes weaken the witness of the Church. We may proclaim the message of reconciliation while failing to reconcile with one another. We may preach about the love of Christ while allowing bitterness and resentment to remain in our hearts. When this happens, our message loses its credibility before the world. The unity of the Church is not simply an internal matter. It is essential to our Christian witness. Jesus prayed for the unity of His followers so that the world might believe that the Father had sent Him (John 17:21). Therefore, our unity is meant to reveal Christ to the world. Through today's readings, let us consider three important truths about being united in Christ and witnessing faithfully to the world.

1. Unity Is God's Purpose for His People

The first lesson we learn from Scripture is that unity is part of God's purpose for humanity and His people. In Isaiah 2:2–4, the prophet describes a vision of the nations coming to the mountain of the Lord to learn His ways and walk in His paths. God's Word will go forth from Jerusalem, and the nations will learn to live according to His justice and peace. The passage concludes with a beautiful picture of weapons being transformed into instruments of cultivation: swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. Nations will no longer take up swords against one another, and they will learn war no more.

This prophetic vision points towards God's desire for a world transformed by His truth, justice, and peace. God does not delight in hatred, violence, or hostility. His purpose is to bring people into a relationship with Himself and to teach them to live together in peace. The Church, as a community shaped by the Gospel, is called to anticipate and demonstrate this divine purpose in its own life. Psalm 133 expresses the beauty of unity in a simple yet powerful way: "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" The psalmist compares unity to precious oil poured upon

the head of Aaron and to the refreshing dew of Mount Hermon. Both images communicate abundance, blessing, and life. Unity is not a burden imposed upon God's people; it is a gift that brings joy and blessing. However, Christian unity does not mean that everyone must think alike in every matter or that all differences should disappear. The Church includes people with different gifts, experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. Unity does not require uniformity. Rather, it calls us to remain together in Christ despite our differences, to respect one another, and to seek the common good above personal interests. This is especially important when we face disagreements within our congregations, dioceses, denominations, and ecumenical relationships. We must learn to distinguish between differences that can be discussed respectfully and attitudes that destroy fellowship. We should never allow personal ambition, institutional competition, or denominational pride to become more important than our common identity in Christ. As Christians, we must ask ourselves: Are we building bridges or walls? Are we encouraging fellowship or creating divisions? Are we seeking God's glory or protecting our own positions? Unity begins when we humble ourselves before God and recognise that we belong to one Lord. When the Church reflects God's peace and reconciliation, it becomes a living sign of God's kingdom in the world.

2. Unity Must Be Built on Christlike Love, Truth, and Reconciliation

Our second point is that unity must be nurtured through Christlike love, truth, and reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 13:5–13, Paul addresses a congregation experiencing difficulties and challenges. He calls the believers to examine themselves to see whether they are living in the faith. He encourages them to seek restoration, listen to his appeal, live in peace, and experience the presence of the God of love and peace. Paul's instruction is significant because it reminds us that unity requires spiritual self-examination. Before we accuse others, we must examine our own hearts. Before we identify the weaknesses of others, we must allow God to reveal our own shortcomings. Sometimes, we are quick to defend ourselves but slow to admit our mistakes. We expect others to forgive us, yet we hesitate to forgive them. We desire respect but may fail to show respect to those who disagree with us.

The call to unity begins with personal transformation. A united Church is formed by people who are willing to repent, forgive, listen, and change. Unity cannot be sustained merely through official resolutions, organisational structures, or occasional gatherings. It must grow out of hearts transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ. Paul's words, “Be of one mind, live in peace,” are particularly relevant to the Church today. Living in peace does not mean avoiding difficult conversations or ignoring injustice. True unity requires honesty, fairness, accountability, and the courage to address problems in a spirit of love. When conflicts arise, we should seek restoration rather than revenge, understanding rather than suspicion, and reconciliation rather than permanent separation. The Church must also learn to celebrate the gifts of all its members. No individual, congregation, or ministry possesses every gift needed for God's mission. We need one another. Some are gifted in preaching, others in teaching, pastoral care, administration, evangelism, social service, and prayer. When we recognise and appreciate these different gifts, the Church becomes stronger.

Paul concludes this passage with a blessing that is central to our Christian faith: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:13). The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit provide the spiritual foundation for Christian unity. Therefore, on this Unity Sunday, let us commit ourselves to becoming instruments of reconciliation. Let ministers and laypeople work together in mutual respect. Let congregations support one another. Let church leaders lead with humility and transparency. Let us refuse to spread rumours, nurture bitterness, or rejoice in another person's

failure. Instead, may our words heal, our actions encourage, and our relationships reflect the love of Christ.

3. United in Christ, We Become a Powerful Witness to the World

Our third point is that Christian unity strengthens our witness to the world. In Matthew 18:18– 20, Jesus speaks about the authority and responsibility entrusted to His disciples, the importance of agreement in prayer, and His presence among those who gather in His name. Our key verse for today is Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” These words remind us that the presence of Christ is central to the life of the Church. We do not gather merely because we share a building, an institution, or a tradition. We gather in the name of Jesus Christ. He is the centre of our fellowship, the source of our unity, and the Lord who guides our mission. The immediate context of Matthew 18 includes the restoration of a fellow believer who has sinned and the responsibility of the community to address wrongdoing. Therefore, Jesus' words about agreement and gathering in His name should not be understood simply as a promise that God will endorse whatever a group decides. Christian agreement must be shaped by the character, teaching, and will of Christ. Our unity becomes meaningful when we seek His guidance and act according to His truth and love.

When a Church lives in genuine unity, its witness becomes more credible. The world is watching how Christians treat one another. People notice whether we are divided by jealousy or united in service, whether we compete for recognition or cooperate for the common good, and whether we speak about love only from the pulpit or practise it in our daily relationships. A united Church can accomplish much more than isolated individuals working independently. Churches can cooperate in caring for the poor, supporting vulnerable families, educating children, helping those affected by disasters, protecting human dignity, and sharing the hope of the Gospel. When Christians from different backgrounds stand together to serve people in need, they demonstrate that the love of Christ transcends social, cultural, linguistic, and denominational boundaries. Unity also strengthens our evangelistic witness. People are more likely to take the message of reconciliation seriously when they see reconciliation practised among those who proclaim it. A congregation marked by compassion, mutual respect, hospitality, and shared responsibility becomes an attractive witness to the transforming power of Christ.

This does not mean that unity guarantees numerical growth or that the Church should compromise its convictions merely to attract people. Rather, unity helps the Church become faithful to its calling. We grow in spiritual maturity when we work together, and our witness becomes clearer when our lives reflect the Gospel we proclaim. Therefore, let Unity Sunday become more than an annual observance. Let it be a renewed commitment to cooperation among churches, respect among Christian traditions, and reconciliation within our own congregations. We may not be able to resolve every disagreement immediately, but we can begin by loving one another, praying together, serving together, and recognising Christ's work in one another. When the world sees Christians united in Christ, it receives a glimpse of the kingdom of God - a kingdom where love overcomes hatred, reconciliation overcomes hostility, and service replaces selfish ambition.

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today's readings remind us that unity is God's purpose, unity must be nurtured through love and reconciliation, and unity strengthens our witness to the world.

Isaiah gives us a vision of nations learning God's ways and living in peace. Psalm 133 celebrates the goodness and blessing of God's people dwelling together in unity. Paul calls the Corinthian Church to restoration, peace, and spiritual maturity. Jesus assures His disciples of His presence when they gather in His name. Let us remember that Christian unity does not mean the absence of differences. It means that our differences do not become greater than our commitment to Jesus Christ. We may come from different backgrounds and traditions, but we belong to the same Lord. We may have different gifts and responsibilities, but we share the same mission. We may express our faith in different ways, but we are called to demonstrate the same love of Christ. On this Unity Sunday, let each of us examine our hearts. Is there someone we need to forgive? Is there a relationship that needs restoration? Is there a ministry with which we should cooperate? Is there a division that we can help heal? Let us take practical steps towards unity, beginning with our homes, congregations, and Christian communities. May our churches become communities of grace, our relationships become instruments of peace, and our service become a testimony to the love of Jesus Christ. Let us be united in Christ, strengthened by His presence, and sent into the world as witnesses of His love. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.