

Sermon for One Nation Under God Please: Pray, Listen,

Date: July 10, 2022

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

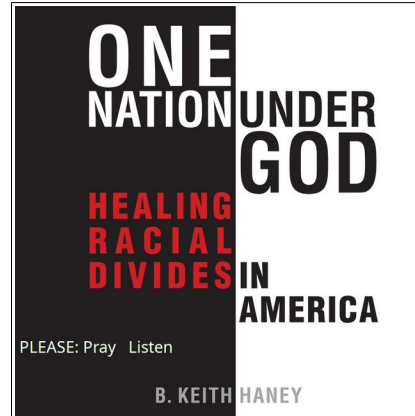
Old Testament: Isaiah 59

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Gospel Reading: John 14:20-24

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Sermon Title: One Nation Under God: Listen



Introit: Proverbs 26:24-28; Antiphon: Proverbs 26:20

Hymns:

LSB 576 – My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

LSB 657 – A Mighty Fortress is Our God

LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own
We Are One in the Spirit

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Songs:

By Our Love – King and Country

Happy Day – Crowder

Bleed the Same

Dont Tread On Me

One Day - Cochren

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: 1 Corinthians 1:10–18

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

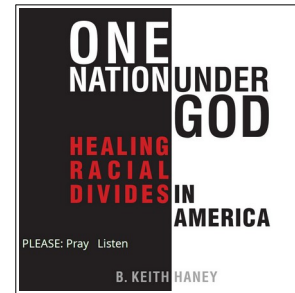
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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

<Video: Bleed the same>

We are in the second week of our One Nation under God series. Last week we kicked off the series by talking about the separation that happens between people. When we look at divisions from a human perspective, we think things like: We are too different. We get ourselves into an “Us” vs “Them” mentality.



These few weeks are going to be kind of squirmy at times. We’re going to struggle through some of this because we’re going to ask questions, perhaps we’ve not asked of ourselves, and we may not fully appreciate the answers we find in ourselves.

Now I’ve got to be honest with you. I had to wrestled a bit with speaking on this matter. First: I’m an older white male. I am, according to some, the problem, or at perceived as the problem. So how can I speak with any authority on this matter? Well I’ve met and spoken to lots of people on this matter. I have often seen the difficulties of especially our African-American brothers and sisters. I’ve met and spoken with people from all walks of life.



Grocery store across from a church I visited. “White money don’t spend here!”

I have myself encountered racism. I’ve been told to leave a grocery store because, “White money don’t spend here!” I’ve been told, “You should stay in your own place.” I’ve even been denied a room in a hotel, when I was in Japan, because I am white. I have myself encountered racism, but it is not the same, not at all the same as what some have experienced in our neighborhoods. It is not the same. I didn’t live in those places. I could leave. I had an easy way out.

So I wondered if I could really speak on this topic effectively, or with any real authority. I don’t think I can, but I can speak powerfully about the real enemy in this mess. I am an expert in the true issues, in the real root of the problem. The root in all of this is sin. Unconfessed sin. Unrepentant people. Satan’s whispers winning. The very purpose of the Church on earth is to overcome in these matters.

An unfortunate truth is this: Tensions between people groups is alive and well in America today. It is alive and well in Austin today. As we work through this series, I think as we start looking towards harmony and peace, this short video might help.

<Video: Twins>

Too cute. Right? They think they're twins. I can tell you that very exact same thing has happens in our CASE after school program often. That is how we as parents should raise our children. ...or maybe more truthfully learn from our children. Division between people is a thing that is learned. It is taught. Who teaches it?

Here's the problem. That story got in the news. That's the problem. Did you catch the tone? Did you here the assumptions?

“There obviously from different races...”

“Because of their friendship, they just don't care...”

It struck people as unusual, strange, unique. Did you notice the entire story was told from a “White” point of view. How different is that kind of relationship? You could walk into any classroom here in Austin and see that very thing everyday. It's is not unique or unusual in their world.

It is also sad to note that was a news story from 2017. 50 years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 50 years after he gave that powerful speech, “I have a dream...” We have come a long way, and we should as people take some pride in how much has changed, and for the better.

It is also important to note we still have a way to go. Right now, in our country tensions are rising. People are being divided for political reasons and political power. We are all being played like pawns. All of us. If this division is allowed to grow it could easily become a powder keg. We've come along way, but let's be honest, right now we are moving in the wrong direction. It is disheartening. It is defeating, and it is sad. It is wrong.



Some, for political power, would prompt us to “play the blame game.” To see the “Them” as enemies. Both major political parties are guilty. The voices of reason are being silenced by the din of division right now. There are times when it is good and important to remember the News



does not exist to inform you. The News exists to sell commercials. The News works on an “If it bleeds it read” mindset. The News might remember “we all bleed the same.” If we buy into what they sell, they'll keep selling it. Can you see how these two images are feeding the problem?

Poor communication and close-mindedness is definitely part of the problem. Is the quantity and color of Melanin really the enemy here? Are all the police all of the problem? Even those who belong to, and attend our congregation? Who really wins that fight? No one! America is not winning. Our communities are not winning. The police are not winning. More individuals (are intimidated into silence for fear their words will only make the situation worse) are not winning.

So who is at fault? Who is the enemy? Who is really stirring up this soup of hate? Who is the real enemy in this mess? If you can't answer that question you can't be a part of the solution. When the enemy gets to lurk and whisper in shadow and in secret, when the enemy, the real enemy, remains hidden, the tension will become and arguments. The arguments will become a war. In that war everyone dies.

The real enemy laughs when division occurs. He cackles with glee when we hurt each other with hatred and angry hate-filled words, and with our actions sourced in hate. His name is Satan, the Devil, Lucifer, the Serpent and he is sick. He is a topic people do really want to discuss. People would rather avoid the subject of this enemy. Some places, that call themselves churches, actually teach he does not exist. Nothing could help him more. The Bible tells us:

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil...¹

We are in the fight for our spiritual lives, right here, right now, with the evil one, every single day. His names are fitting but we've avoided talking about him so long we've forgotten who he is:

Satan: means Accuser.

Devil means Slanderer.

Satan wants to control us to keep us down. He wants to convict us with accusations of the truth when it suits him and any slanderous lie when it doesn't. He knows God's Law. He knows it better than you, better than me. He uses the Law to his advantage. He is the father of lies.² He, along with his forces of evil, his demons, work around the clock to get us to do the things he wants us to do. Satan wants to overthrow God. He will do anything and everything to rip us away from: our righteousness, our eternity and God's kingdom. Division between people is his game.



1 Ephesians 6:12

2 John 8:44

Most of us are familiar with the devil from the Garden of Eden. You remember what happens. Satan comes, he twists God's Word and convinces Adam and Eve God can't be trusted. Adam and Eve fall for it.³ Most of us are familiar with that record from our history.

I wonder how many of you are familiar with the devil's appearance in the book of Job. Satan makes an appearance there and he plays a game with Job's life with God. Satan comes to God, and God brings up Job. God says:

Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?⁴



Satan says:

Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side?⁵

He is already twisting things. His point is: You blessed Job, take all that stuff away and he will curse you for sure. God gives Satan permission to start afflicting, to start tearing things up, in Job's life. God says, 'Go ahead and affect things around him, but do not kill Job.'⁶

God, the all-powerful, the all-merciful the One with all the power in this game, puts a leash on Satan. God says you can go this far and then you're done.

I think that's important for us to understand as Christians struggling in this battle. Satan is given some power for a time, but he is kept on a leash by God. He is kept in check by God. As the rest of that book unfolds Satan is allowed to take Job's things away one by one. Yet Job still remains faithful and does not turn his back on God. It is because Job truly respects God.

I love this quote by Oswald Chambers. He was a pastor in the early 1900's. He said:

The remarkable thing about fearing God, is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, but If you do not fear God you fear everything else.

Is that not the true enemy? In the angry marches, the violent riots, sometimes through police brutality, we see it. There is evil happening in the world. What can

3 Genesis 3:1-7

4 Job 1:8

5 Job 1:10

6 Job 1:12

we do? Nothing. Nothing until we as the Church come together and stand with the battle weapons of God. We must prepare for this battle because the attacks are real.

That is the root of the problem. Satan is the root of the problem. So are those who listen to his seductive whispers of racism. Racism is one of Satan's greatest and grandest lies. Those who listen to him, join him. Those who listen to him are at war with Christ.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil...⁷

This battle is full of weapons and powers too great for us to comprehend. If you really consider the force at war here you should be filled with shock and awe, and terror. Until you realize God gives us everything we need to be able to defend ourselves from the attacks from the evil one.

God the Holy Spirit speaks through the Apostle Paul, as he writes, "Put on the full armor of God."

Paul, a master of Old Testament Scriptures, knew his Bible. He was using the God's-Armor analogy from Isaiah 59 where God's Word speaks about Jesus' battle with Satan.



All of the armor is defensive. From the Helmet of Salvation to the Shoes of Gospel Peace, and everything in between. It is all defensive. It is with the Helmet of Salvation, we can walk into this battle with the Shoes of Gospel Peace to bring the only thing that will hem the chasm. It is the true Gospel of peace that we all need so much today. The good news that God still reigns. It is with these Shoes of Gospel Peace we can stand firmly on the Rock.⁸

The Roman warriors would stand together, fitted with these tools of war, to form a phalanx. They would stand, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, and together they were an insurmountable force. As are we, when we stand together so armed. That is why Satan needs to divide us. Because when we stand together in Christ, in Christian love, with genuine Christian resolve, "one little word can fell him."

What is that Word? What is the weapon of offense? With what do we attack? We attack the enemy with:

7 Ephesians 6:12
8 Matthew 7:24-27

The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making requests for all the saints.⁹

Jesus said:

I tell you... on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.¹⁰



I wonder how many of you have read those words and wondered? Have you ever wondered: about how gates do not move. They do not attack. They just sit there. How can the Gates of Hell prevail? It is because we are the ones who must attack. We attack with:

The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making requests for all the saints.¹¹

We attack with the Truth of the Gospel, and with Jesus, the only real Healer. We stand together in that place, and as we engage the enemy those gates will not prevail. They will fall! That is why Satan needs to divide us. Because when we stand in Christ, in true Christian love, with genuine Christian resolve, “one little word can fell him.”

To those who would join him, “Shame on you!” It is the Church that should stand together. It is the Church that should not allow itself to be divided. It is the Church where all should be welcome. It is the Church, the Body of Christ, with Jesus at the head, that will stand against evil, division and dissension.



Wisley and Dorothy Ochoro

Holy Scripture proclaims:

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

9 Ephesian 6:17-18

10 Matthew 16:18

11 Ephesian 6:17-18

knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.¹²

This is the Word of the Lord.

Jesus spoke to such things. He said:



Abel Kirui

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the



Allen Kirui

sea.¹³

The armor of God is a perfect picture of Jesus. Jesus is the Truth and came to testify the Truth. Jesus is our righteousness. Jesus is our peace. Jesus is faithfulness. Jesus makes our faith possible. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. Jesus is our weapon against every attack from Satan in this world.

All of us have fallen short. It does not matter from where you come. It does not matter to what house you were born. It does not matter the color or quantity of Melanin in your skin. God's Word proclaim that painful truth.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...

¹² Titus 3:10

¹³ Matthew 18:6

That however is not the end of the sentence. So often God's Word is quoted in quick little quips. Often it says so much more. All have sinned. That is true, but that would also mean all are condemned. Listen to God's Holy Word.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as the payment through His blood, to be received by faith.¹⁴



We are all in the same boat, called the Ark of the Holy Christian Church. Pushing people out of the boat will not stop the sinking. We need Jesus in the boat, calming the storm.¹⁵ We alone have the true answer to moving forward, to harmony, to reconciling, to peace, to rejecting Satan's so-called "racial tension" in this world. We have everything we need to spread peace, love and joy in this world. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaking against the lie of "races." There is only one: The Human Race.

The answer is not to cover it up. The answer is not to sweep it under the rug. The answer is not to ignore it, or pretend it does not exist. It does. It is wrong. The answer is found when we come together as true Christians, as the Body of Christ, united against our true common enemy: Satan. Together we can defend, ourselves and our neighbor, against his attacks.

Job lost everything. When his friends came to him, for days they just sat with him because, they didn't know what to say when they saw his pain. The Bible says:

[Job's friends] sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw his suffering was very great.¹⁶

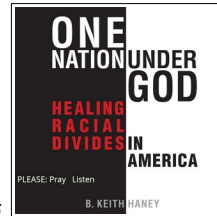


There are people in this town where we live with scars from gun shots as they were driven from their home and their country. There are people in this town with machete scars as they were driven from their land and all they knew and loved; the place where they were born. They came here only because to stay where they were meant death. This nation, this nation which proclaims often to be "One Nation Under God" took them in. There

14 Romans 3:23-25
15 Matthew 8:23-27
16 Job 2:13

are people in this town with scars made by those who have told them they are not welcome, even in some churches.

You might not know what to say. You might very truthfully not have anything you could say to mend those scars. You could not understand them. You cannot stand in their shoes. You don't have to. Just listen. Please pray and listen.



Job's friends sat in silence for a week, and that was the best thing they had to say. As you read through the book of Job, and listen to their answers, you find them foolish. So foolish they angered God.

It is recorded:

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to *[Job's friends]*: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.



Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to My servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves.

And My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer and not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."¹⁷

You don't know what to say. You don't know what to do. Maybe you think you would look foolish. Even there the Bible speaks. Please Listen:

Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise;
when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.¹⁸

The very fact that you are there speaks louder than any words; gives more healing than the most medically advanced balm; gives more comfort than any check you'd care to write or gift you'd care to give. To make them rich share your riches of: God's Word, God's peace and God's companionship which they see first in you.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

¹⁷ Job 42:7-8

¹⁸ Proverbs 17:28

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people

