

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

Date: July 24, 2022

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

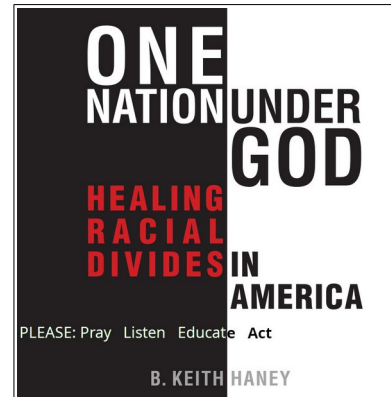
First Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

Gospel Reading: Matthew 8:5-13

Sermon Text: Matthew 8:5-13

Sermon Title: One Nation Under God: Act



Introit: Psalm 119:145-149; Antiphon: Psalm 50:15

Hymns:

- LSB 601 – All Who Believe and Are Baptized
We are One in the Spirit
- LSB 649 – Blest Be the Tie That Binds
- LSB 594 – God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203

Songs:

- Brothers Sisters let us Gladly
Only Jesus
Truth be Told
Way Maker

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Revelation 7:9–17

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

<Play 1 minute Video: Make Us One (Intro)>

We're in this series: One Nation under God. I really believe this can be a real blessing, to not just our congregation, but our whole community. When we start seeing each other as "Us" not "Us vs Them" when we see ourselves as:

a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...¹

who are one nation under God. When we start to see each other that way the world will be a better place for all of us. We're not there yet. True, real, factual and actual Christian love is needed. It is on display by some, but some is not enough. It should be from all of us, from the whole nation.

The song we just sang, "We are One in the Spirit" says:

We are one in the Spirit,
We are one in the Lord,

...

And we pray that all unity
may one day be restored:

And they'll know we are Christians
by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we are Christians
by our love.

That is the only answer. All the might and wisdom of the human race, detached from Jesus, cannot produce anything that will heal this divide which Satan has concocted. To defeat the devil on this point will require some steps.



As we walk through this series we've look at some already. The first we looked at was how sin distorts our identity. Because of sin we forget who we are. We talked about "Us" vs "Them" seeing the world as divided, when we really need to be seeing everyone as "We" with "Me." It is Satan who is the sowing seeds of division and dissension. He is the "prince of this world"² who wants to destroy this world. The world that God loves so much that "He gave His only Son"³ to save the whole world.

1 Revelation 7:9

2 John 12:31; John 14:30; Ephesians 2:2; John 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4

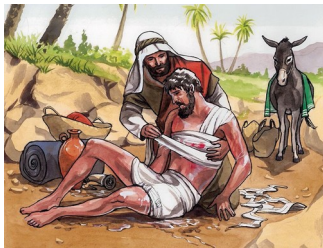
3 John 3:16-17

Two weeks ago we talked about putting on the full armor of God:⁴ the breastplate righteousness, the belt of truth, the shield of faith, all so we are ready to be the ones who bring peace, carrying the sword of the spirit God which is His Holy Word. In this image we are people getting ready. We are a nation on the move for a purpose. We must stand shoulder to shoulder, side by side, against the enemy,



so that we would not be outwitted by Satan;
for we are not ignorant of his designs.⁵

That is the purpose for which the armor of God is to be used. Not just for me to protect myself, but us as we to protect each other. Satan distorts our identity. It is he who is the real enemy.



Last week we saw that, as we looked at the Good Samaritan. You recall the man was beaten and left by the side of the road, and the priest and the Levite walk on the other side. It was the Samaritan, the “worthless” one, the foreigner, the rejected one, who stopped to help.

This was his enemy. That Samaritan is not just helping somebody on the side of the road who’s in trouble. This man lying there sees him as the other side, the enemy, as “Those people” and yet he (one of “Those people”) is the one who heals his wounds, put him on his donkey, takes to an inn, and says whatever it costs take care of this man. More than that he says if there’s anything more than I’m giving you right now (2 days income) I’ll take care of that when I come back.

What caused that division back in those days? We could point at all sorts of thing but all of those things are only symptoms. Who is the real enemy? Satan is the source. Who is my neighbor? That’s what we’re going to talk about today.

We are one in Christ. The healing starts by building up the other side. That can be easier to say than to do. Thinking about all of us as one in Christ is hard sometimes because we look at the world through eyes that too often see: “you are with me or you are against me.”



4 Ephesians 6:10-20
5 2 Corinthians 2:11

Look at the political environment these days. People on one side can't believe there are people on the other side who could be followers of Jesus. The abortion issue which has been in the news is probably one of the best examples for us today. People will think, "You can't be a real Christian. If you were you wouldn't follow that person. You wouldn't, you couldn't, vote for that person. A real Christian could never vote for pick your guy." "A real Christian could have never voted for Trump!" "A real Christian could never have voted for Biden!" In just saying that, in just speaking those two sentences, I bet most of you are feeling the tension of division rise in you, right now. Right?

It is the seeds of Satan that cause us to define our identity as "Us" vs "Them." It is the seeds of Satan that cause us to see ourselves in opposition with others. Jesus has the answer; the only answer. Remember what Jesus said, "Love your enemy."⁶ Pray for your enemy. His words were not conceptual or abstract. They are concrete. We are really supposed to do that.



When Jesus walked the earth they struggled with this kind of stuff. One of the main divisions was Jews versus Samaritans. How did Jesus act? Remember when Jesus talked to the woman at the well? When the disciples arrived they could not believe he was talking to a Samaritan, and further horror of horrors, a Samaritan woman. "You know what they're like!" (...and she was... like that.)

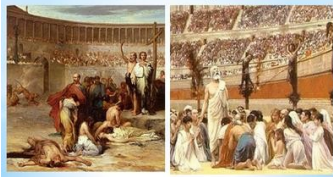
The other main division was Jews versus Gentiles. The first major dispute in the Church was over the requirement of circumcision. Some wanted the requirements of the Old Testament to remain in affect to be followers of Jesus. Others wanted to maintain the dietary laws to be acceptable in the kingdom of God?

Jews & Gentiles



* How did the Romans Treat the Christians

*Christianity was made illegal by Rome and many Christians were slaughtered.



Then there is Christians versus Romans. These were the people sending Christians to the cross. These were the people sending them to be slaughtered by gladiators. These were the people who sent them to the arena to be killed by animals for entertainment. These were the people who made them outlaws.

With all of that going on look at the Gospel reading for today. A Roman soldier a centurions, a commander of 100 solders, comes to Jesus and says, "one of my servants is suffering." He no doubt had heard about Jesus. Jesus did miracles from

6 Matthew 5:44-45

the very beginning of His ministry. Folks in Capernaum would regularly bring people when Jesus was coming through town. They would regularly bring people to be healed.

They brought them from all over the region to receive healing. Then here comes a Roman soldier. He must have heard about this, and after I suppose trying everything medicine could do, he comes and asks, “Lord, my young servant lies in bed paralyzed in a terrible pain” Jesus said, “Okay, I’ll come and heal him.”

Jesus jumped over the divide. You need to know that the divide is much bigger than we understand. When Jesus said this the Centurion says, “Don’t come to my house. I know You can just say the word and he’ll be healed.”

You see if Jesus went into his home He would be ceremonial defiled and the soldier knew exactly what Jesus would have to go through to get cleansing after He’d been into the home. Jews would not step over the threshold of a Gentile home. When they came back from the marketplace they washed themselves ceremonially, because they might have touched a Gentile. “Don’t come to my house. Just say the word and my servant will be healed.”

Jesus looks around and says, “In all of Israel I have not seen this kind of faith. You guys don’t believe like this guy does, and he’s not one of us. I tell you this, that many gentiles will come from all over the world from the East and the West and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Jesus said this to give you hope. Jesus is saying, “There is no division. You make divisions. I don’t make the division. I’ve got the whole world in My hand.” Then Jesus said to that officer, “Go back home. Because you believe, it is happening.” The young man was healed that very same hour.

What happens when we see divisions and we live in divisions? What is Jesus trying to tell us? It is the cross that erases all those divisions. I’m not divided from the people that I am going to be sitting next to in heaven. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod will not be the only collection of people in heaven. There will be plenty of others. Some find that hard to believe.

When on the cross Jesus broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating itself one new people, from two groups has God created one.⁷

7 Ephesians 2:14

We are all children of God through faith in Jesus, together as one body. Jesus reconciled all people to God by His death on the cross. Our hostility toward each other has been put to death. It is no longer “Us” and “Them.” There is a different structure that God is teaching us. Only God can make the changes in the “me and the we” necessary for healing to happen in America.

It is not going to be a political party. You cannot vote unity into existence. Only God can make us:

...one nation under God,
indivisible
with liberty and justice for all.

So what we need to do is let God make the change. We love people in Jesus because Jesus changes everything. He can even rescue this nation from itself, and the destructive path upon which we have set ourselves.

That is what Saint Paul is trying to tell us. We’re all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. We have been united with Christ in Holy Baptism. Everyone has put on Christ. It’s like, putting on new clothes. So there is no longer Jew or Greek, no slave or free, male or female. We are all one in Christ.



Maybe for you to pray about that can be tough because it’s strikes at the heart of the matter. If we looked at each other like “Us” instead of “Us vs Them” what would be different about our situation? What if we acted more like brothers and sisters, the one Body, the one Church, the one people, the one nation under God. The nation whom He made us to be, in Jesus. What if we stop talking about “Them” and see them as “Us.”

We want change. Everyone does. So many are looking for the fix, but they are looking for ways to do that without Jesus. If voting could fix it, if government could fix it, if power could fix it, if taxes could fix it, if regulations could fix it, if rules could fix it, it would be fixed by now. None of that will work.

Jesus is the one who needs to bring healing. Healing our hearts, reminding us:

We are one in the Spirit.
We are one in the Lord.

We pray that all unity may one day be restored,

as God bring about the salvation of all mankind. It starts with each one of us, and then let us see ourselves as the salt and light, and see ourselves equipped to

stand against Satan and his ways, and see ourselves as having put on the full armor of God so that we can be a positive force of love and grace in the world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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

