

Sermon for One Nation Under God: Speak

Date: July 31, 2022

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

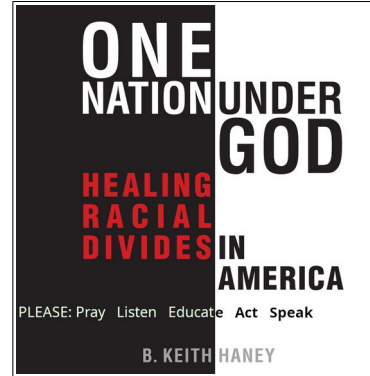
Old Testament: Micah 6:1-8

Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:1-13

Gospel Reading: John 17:13-23

Sermon Text: Philippians 2:1-13

Sermon Title: One Nation Under God: Speak



Introit: Psalm 49:7-8, 13-14a, 15; Antiphon: Psalm 49:1-2

Hymns:

LSB 690 – Hope of the World

LSB 653 – In Christ There is No East or West

LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own

LSB 980 – Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

Songs:

Between You and Me - DC Talk

One Day - Cochren

He Reigns – Newsboys

Relate - For King and Country

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Philippians 2:1-13

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

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

We've been on this journey looking at one nation under God. There are a lot of congregations across the United States that are doing this same study. It's not just an LCMS thing. This study is being used all over America right now.

Looking back, remember what we've explored so far:



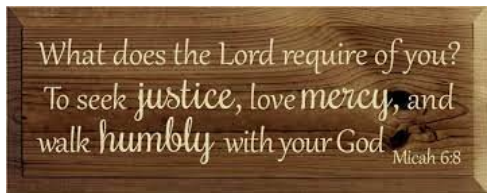
The first week we talked about how sin distorts who we are. It tears down the identity Jesus gave us. In Holy Baptism you are a new creation. Sin causes divisions among us. Prayer is the answer.

'Prayer' is the answer

The second week, we talked about the real enemy. The real enemy is Satan. It is not our brothers and sisters in Christ, or our fellow citizens of America, even if they speak a different language or have a different skin color, or come from a different culture. We asked: Who is my neighbor? The distortion of sin causes us forget who our neighbors are. God calls us to a life that is interconnected with one another. Listening to each other is the answer.



'Listen' is the answer.



'Education' is the answer.

Then we looked at discovering how we can stand in each other's shoes. Working at understanding each other. We asked what God requires of us, and how we can achieve that only through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We can't do it ourselves but through Jesus' teaching, healing comes. Education is the answer.

Last week we explored how we are one in Christ when we put on the full armor of God. If you remember? We looked at divisions around the time Jesus walked the earth. The Jews versus the Samaritans. The Jews against the Gentiles. Then Christians against the Gentiles. Then the Christians against the Romans.



Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people died. There was every reason to have division, but that's not what God tells us to do in His Holy Word. He says it is sin that distorts us into factions. Jesus says, "Bless those who curse you."¹

1 Luke 6:28; Romans 12:14

This is a real struggle for us but it's a struggle that is healed when we understand all of us fall under God's condemnation, and all of us are saved by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ.²

Now we're into week five and we are asking: What can I do about it? It seems like such a big problem, and I can't do anything about it.



There is a struggle we have as the body of Christ. We are divided by too many things. I would bet there are some sitting here right now who would be shocked to hear me say (as I did last week) there could be Democrats who are Christians. I would bet there are some sitting here right now who would be shocked to hear me say (as I did last week) there could be Republicans who are Christians.

We are defining ourselves, not as followers of Jesus, but defining ourselves by political organizations. Organizations that not all that long ago didn't exist. The time will most certainly come when they won't exist anymore. We should define ourselves as soldiers of the Cross, children of God, redeemed in the Blood of the Lamb, and called to be faithful to Him.

We have to realize, in these divisions we are experiencing, "white-America" can't fix this problem for "black-America." "Black-America" cannot fix this problem for "white-America." It is only Jesus who can make the changes in the "We" and the "Me" that are necessary for healing to happen. That healing is only going to happen when we "love people to life" in Jesus, because Jesus changes everything. Even our so-called "racial" divides and our prejudice, our pre-judging.

'Prejudice' is a word we should define. What does this mean? It means to pre-judge. That means before you walk into the room you believe you already know what's going to happen? Before you have a conversation you already know what I'm going to say or what I think. All prejudice is wrong. Regardless of the people group.

Maybe because of the color of their skin. Maybe because they wearing middle-eastern traditional clothing. Maybe because they speak a different language. Prejudice is wrong but the prejudice does not come out of a vacuum. Thoughts like that come out of Satan wanting to bring disharmony.

Pastor Keith Haney, who wrote the Bible study we're working through, has some powerful words to say. I want to read some them to you because I want you to hear it directly from him. Here's what he wrote:

² Romans 3:23-24

In 2012, after the death of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, the “Black Lives Matter” movement began. Three women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, are credited with starting the movement. They claimed that after his death, Trayvon Martin was tried for his own murder, and his shooter, George Zimmerman, was not called to account for his crime. They claimed black lives are being targeted for destruction.

These claims reflect the distrust many African Americans feel toward this country. But they go even deeper—making the bold claim that white America is intentionally targeting black lives for destruction.

As an African-American Christian, I cannot condone this charge—it sounds like Satan’s slander. But it is another example of black Americans wrongly believing they cannot be prejudiced—and explains why they don’t see anything wrong with lumping all whites together and prejudging the intention of every white person.

That is just as wrong as white-America prejudging black-America or any other group.

White America hears this harsh accusation and is baffled—if not aggravated by it. It will admit that there may be a small minority of whites who wish for the destruction of black lives, maybe even a handful of police officers—but the vast majority of whites, politicians, and police officers are repulsed by the idea.

And the racial divide grows yet again. But I ask, can white-America understand that each police shooting of a black man simply reinforces what we black-Americans were taught as children—we can’t trust police officers; we need to be afraid of them? Like I said before, on the rare occasion when a law enforcement officer pulls me over, my heart races, I am on edge not knowing how this whole thing will turn out. I am convinced both parties feel this uneasiness, and it is a recipe for disaster. Two people, both on edge, both afraid of each other. The officer has a deadly weapon. I am defenseless.

Can you understand that? Can you stand in those shoes? Because that is the very real reality for a lot of our brothers and sisters in Christ. That is their life experience. He goes on to say:

We need to remember there are two sides of this racial divide— and both sides have real and valid concerns, alongside grave misunderstandings and distrust of those on the other side.³

Did you hear that? Can you believe anyone would actually think like that? Is that not painfully sad? These divisions are real, but based on lies and gossip. The question is: What can do we do about it?

Saint Paul has something powerful to say to the Philippians.

Do you have any encouragement? Do you have any comfort from love? Do you have any spiritual relationships? Do you have any sympathy and compassion?⁴

Do his words describe you? I hope so. So you're not a cold-hearted knucklehead with no compassion, and you do have comfort from Jesus' love. You have encouragement from belonging to Christ. You understand the Holy Spirit blesses and comforts us. Paul says:

complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.⁵

That is the bridge that crosses the chasm. Any division we may have as a country, any division we have as a people or as a community, any division we have, be it: black and white, Sudanese and German, poor and wealthy, or Urban and Suburban. Whatever it is, Paul writes, if you want to find happiness, if you want to be happy, this is how you need to work together. Why? Because that is what God calls us to do.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.⁶

We've got to be thinking about the world in a different way, because that's how Jesus thinks about it. Jesus is our Teacher and example. We must strive to have the same attitude as Jesus. Remember He is the one who came across the great chasm

3 One Nation Under God Bible study p. 37-38

4 Philippians 2:1 (GWT)

5 Philippians 2:2

6 Philippians 2:3

of our sin. He left His throne in Heaven because He thought you were worth it. He couldn't imagine heaven without you. How can you imagine heaven without someone simple because the melanin content in their skin is different?

He prayed for you saying:

I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them [*make them holy*] in the truth; Your Word is truth.⁷

Let's all commit ourselves to the Way, the Truth and the Life.

- 1) We need to be willing to admit, at times, we have been a part of the problem because Scripture says we are a part of the problem. Jesus, when praying for you, says:

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through the Word.⁸

On that day, over 2,000 years ago, at a place near Jerusalem, Jesus was praying for you. He prayed:

...that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.⁹

Because when we show unity, the world can and will believe God is on the move. Jesus prays:

The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me.¹⁰

- 2) We need to come to a truce and become one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. We need to find a way to work together in unity and harmony, calling for an end to the strife. Both sides need to stop seeing the other as the evil villain whom they are determined to defeat. The only way that is going to happen is to realize sin is what is keeping us apart. Satan is the source of the hate. Sin is causing the bitterness and hatred. Our

7 John 17:15-16

8 John 17:20

9 John 17:21

10 John 17:22-23

sin, and the world's brokenness, because of Adam and Eve's sin, causes all of this. When sin wins, who wins? Satan does. Why should we, born again, born from above, baptized and redeemed, Children of God put up with that? Jesus defeated him, why would we join the defeated one, the evil one? It is we who should display, for all the world to see, we are joined with Jesus who prays:

Father, I desire that they also ...may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent Me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.¹¹

That is Jesus' prayer for you.

- 3) We need to be willing to fight for the relationships rather than against each other breaking relationships.

That's the hard part, but it is we who claim to be followers of Jesus. If we follow Him we cannot ignore Him, His Words, His prayer, or His example. We don't have any other option. If we are Christians we are Christ-ians, Christ-people. We have put His name on us. He has put His mark on us. The world is watching. What will we show them?

Remember how He built the relationship across to divide with the Samaritan woman at the well,¹² and how He dealt with lepers¹³ and the Romans,¹⁴ and all kinds of people that did not "deserve" His attention. They were not simply perceived as "those kind of people." They really were "those kind of people." Some of them really were sinners out loud on purpose. Yet Jesus loved them anyway. Could we be so arrogant we would think we are above Jesus and His way? Would we wallow in the wonder of sin, defying Jesus' example? Building relationships is the answer. The steps are easy to write down, but harder to actually implement.

- Make building relationships across cultural line or language barrier a priority.

11 John 14:24-26

12 John 4:1-45

13 Luke 17:11-19

14 Luke 7:1-10

- Be willing to accept disappointments and setbacks.
- Don't play the blame game.
- Don't think you need to fix or change the other person.
- Think about how change can be worked in you through Jesus.

One of the easiest places to do that, here at St. John's, is at the Sudanese service that happens right here. They are some of the most gracious people. They are so appreciative in being able to use our space to worship. We share with them a common doctrine and confession of faith. We share with them the important goal of introducing people to Jesus because Jesus changes everything. What would be different if:

- You tried to identify with just one person of a different: ethnicity, culture, language.
- You started building a friendship with just one person who is very much unlike you.
- If you prayed for them and asked God to help you build a relationship with them.

It starts by remembering Jesus did that for us? We didn't deserve it. We killed him. Who has been that evil to you? He crossed over the divide of sin, into our world, because He wanted to build that relationship with us. Will you P.L.E.A.S.E.: **pray, listen, educate, act and speak in Jesus' name? Next week we will learn what to expect.**

Amen.

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

