

MY PART IN FULFILLING CHRIST'S VISION

Good morning Just Church!

We are in part 4 of our sermon series called "The Awesome Power of Vision"

Today we will be talking about the unity of the church .

Unity is very important to Jesus in fact in His last prayer before He was arrested He prayed for unity for His Church He said:

I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. (John 17- 21NLT)

So let's recap what we have learned so far in the past 3 weeks.

We have gone over 12 points that are all Biblical

These are WHY UNITY IN CHRIST'S CHURCH ARE SO IMPORTANT

1. My unity with other believers is the proof that I'm saved.
2. The Trinity is our model for unity.
3. Jesus' last prayer was that members of his church would live in unity.
4. God gives us his glory so we'll be united.
5. Our unity is our greatest witness to unbelievers.
6. Unity removes fear and creates boldness.
7. When a church is truly unified, everybody's needs are met.
8. Baptism and communion are visible signs of unity.
9. Focusing on our common purpose creates unity.
10. Unity begins when we realize we're incomplete without each other.
11. Jesus died to unite us, not divide us.
12. Jesus expects the US to work hard at unifying Christians.

Here at Just Church we are very blessed to have a great amount of unity between each other. But we can all do better and be better.

Right now we live in a world that is trying to divide us on so many levels! This message is more important than ever before because we as Christians need to unite together and stand firm in our faith.

So we all should be asking ourselves what's our part?

HOW CAN I BE AN AGENT OF UNITY IN MY CHURCH?

So today I have 4 points to teach from, the first is:

1. FOCUS ON WHAT WE SHARE, NOT OUR DIFFERENCES

What we have in common with each other, not our differences.

*“Let us concentrate on the things which create harmony and the growth of our fellowship together.”
Romans 14:19 (Ph)*

Think about the word concentrate, that means focus! You can't casually concentrate, it's impossible to do. If you are choosing to concentrate you have to be intentional! So what are the things that we as Christians have in common? One of the coolest things about Just Church is that we are all different and we celebrate those differences. We have different backgrounds, we come from different cultures and because of that we are unique. Just look at our pastoral team, Pastor Kevin and Tammy came from a pentecostal background, Pastors Jon and Rachel came from a Methodist background and Jenn and I came from a Baptist background. But what do we all have in common?

God tells us in Ephesians that we all share 7 big things that we all have in common.

*“There is only one Body (the church) and one Spirit (We all have the same Holy Spirit in us), and we have been called to one hope (The hope of the second coming of Jesus). There is only one Lord, one faith (and that faith is contained in the bible), one baptism (which means you don't have to be baptized every time you sin), and only one God, who is the Father of us all, who is over all, is through all and is in all.”
Ephesians 4:4-6*

We as the Whole body of Christ are not to point fingers at each other and say to each other that the other is doing it wrong. In fact we are not even called to just put up with each other.

God doesn't want you to merely tolerate other Christians He wants us to be united with them. But unity is not uniformity! God doesn't want us all to be alike, if He wanted that He would have made us all alike.

For unity sake we must never let differences divide us!

Well if you are like me you might be asking yourselves well what about all those differences that annoy and irritate me? Conflict is usually a sign that the focus is shifted to less important issues. Something that the Bible calls disputable matters.

The Bible says in Romans

“Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with... They have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.”

Romans 14:1 (MSG)

Everyone of us has our own history, our own trauma, our own stuff that we need to unpack! Treat each other gently!

“Let there be real harmony so there are no divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, UNITED in thought and purpose.”

1 Corinthians 1:10b (LB)

2. REALIZE I MUST CONTINUALLY WORK AT UNITY

Unity doesn't just happen! This is true in any relationship as well as in the church! It takes effort!

Paul says in Ephesians 4:

“MAKE EVERY EFFORT to keep the unity of the Spirit. Bind yourselves together by living in peace with each other.” Ephesians 4:3

Unity Happens only when you are intentional about it!

Well, how do I do that? Well let's talk about a few things not to do.

These next few things create division instead of vision. division always destroys vision.

- **DON'T BRING WORLDLY VALUES INTO THE CHURCH**

We live in a world where there are so many celebrities and influencers telling us to do things! telling us how we should feel and how we should act. We only need one person to influence us and that is Jesus Christ!

Our society will use these people to tell you that people that don't believe in what you believe are the enemy. They are not!

Paul found this happening in Corinth. The people were fighting over who should lead them. In fact it was so bad that Paul had to write a letter to Corinth to rebuke them, that letter is 1 Corinthians.

“You're acting (in the church) the same way unbelievers act in the world! The proof of your immaturity is your arguing and quarreling and the divisions you've created. That proves you still belong to the world and are living by worldly values! When one of you says, 'I support Paul,' and another says, 'I support Apollos,' you're acting like unbelievers, not like Christ. Is Apollos important? No! Is Paul important? No!”

1 Corinthians 3:3-5a

They took their eyes off of Jesus and started focusing on the unimportant things.

DON'T GET SUCKED INTO THE WORLD'S FIGHTS

Did you know that Jesus did not get into political discussions? Now he did talk about morals and the difference between right and wrong, but not politics. He was too busy teaching, preaching, and doing miracles. Just as we should be.

Now that's not to say people didn't ask. He just chose to be Kingdom minded.

“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is NOT of this world. If it were, my servants would fight...’” John 18:36a (NIV)

We all need to be more Kingdom minded like Jesus, including me! I love talking about politics, I love debating, every day on facebook I see things that I want to comment on and have a debate about. BUT I also know that I am called to something bigger! I am called to be Kingdom minded not worldly minded! That’s not our fight make no mistake about it we have a battle but that is not it!

Now that being said we are called to speak up for the poor, we are called to speak up for the elderly, we are called to speak up for the unborn, for people in prison, for immigrants as the bible called them foreigners we are called to speak up for those who are denied justice. Now those are moral issues that can be backed up with biblical references.

Don’t get caught up in arguments that are not glorifying God and guess what? No argument glorifies Him. In fact Paul writes to Timothy this:

“Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. The Lord's servant must never quarrel; instead, you must be kind to everyone, able to teach, and patient with everyone. You must be humble, gently teaching those who oppose the truth.” 2 Timothy 2:23-25

But Pastor James surly Jesus didn’t know about these antimaskers.... umm yes He did. But Pastors James surly He didn’t know about all there people trying to take away my freedoms umm... yes He did!

The next step that we will talk about is so crucial for unity in your family, your job, your spouse, and your church is:

3. BE REALISTIC IN MY EXPECTATIONS

We all brought unrealistic expectations when we got married and we all brought unrealistic expectations when we first went to CHURCH. Think about it: the church is filled with imperfect people, sinners like me. How do you expect us to create a perfect community?

We need to remember Psalms

“Nothing is perfect except your Words.” Psalm 119:96 (LB)

Now a church can be healthy and not be perfect! If we relate the church to children you might be able to see it better. They can be healthy but they are certainly not perfect. You don’t just love your kids when they are fully grown and mature. You love them throughout all the stages they go through. The baby Christian that can be very messy, the adolescent Christian that thinks they know everything and the mature Christian that realizes that there is so much they don’t know! We need to love people in every stage of their growth and we need to love our as a whole church in every stage of our growth. When there was only 15 of us in the early months at JC, when we moved to GAR park, when we got the space above the A1, When we moved to the farm, now that we are at First Baptist and wherever the Lord takes us next. I love this church in all of the stages we go through.

More importantly Jesus passionately loves Just Church more than me. He loves all of His church and He wants us all to do the same.

Are some of the people going to annoy you absolutely! But the Bible says:

“Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.” Ephesians 4:2b (NLT)

“Most of all, let love guide your life, for THEN the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:14 (LB)

“Love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything.” 1 Peter 4:8 (MSG)

I know this is hard! But God is not interested in your comfort. He is interested in your character! When we get to Heaven we will not be judged by how comfortable we are but on our character!

Our last principle is:

4. OFFER ENCOURAGEMENT INSTEAD OF CRITICISM

“Let’s use ALL our energy in getting along with each other. Help each other by using encouraging words; Don’t drag others down by finding fault.”

Romans 14:19-20a (MSG)

So what do you do when something is just wrong and you know it? Should you ignore it? Of course not! But you can always word it in a positive way so the person can receive it. It is possible to speak a difficult truth in a positive way!

“A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is.” Proverbs 16:21 (TEV)

I’m never persuasive when I’m abrasive!

Remember the people in the church belong to God and He loves everyone of us,

“What right do you have to criticize someone else’s servants? Only their Lord can decide if they are doing right...” Romans 14:4 (CEV)

“Why do you criticize and judge your brother or sister in Christ? Why do you think you are better than they are? We’ll all be judged one day, not by each other’s standards, or even by our own, but by the judgment of God.”

Romans 14:10 (Ph)

Here’s some hard truth, the bible calls satan the accuser of the brethren the accuser of our brothers and sisters. That’s in Revelation 12 verse 10. It’s the devil’s job to blame and complain to criticize members of God’s own family which means when I do that or you do that we are being duped into doing satan’s work for him! When we do that, satan doesn’t have to work hard; we are doing his job for him!

We have 2 choices as Christians

“You’ve been called to live in freedom — not freedom to indulge your selfish nature, but freedom to serve each other in love. God’s entire law is summed up in ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ But you keep biting and devouring each other and tearing each other apart, you will be destroyed by each other.”

Galatians 5:13-15

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 1 peter 3:8 niv

Lets Pray