

The Seventh Sunday of Easter  
29-05-2022  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- Acts 16: 16-34     Paul and Silas in prison  
                              Their witness leads the jailer to believe in God
- Psalm 97             The Lord reigns, let the Earth rejoice
- Revelation 22: 12-22     Jesus is coming, He invites all to come  
                                      There is a judgement for those who won't come.
- John 17: 20-26     Jesus prays for his disciples that they would be one.  
                                      Just as He and the Father are one.

### Introduction

Today, on the last Sunday before Pentecost, we hear from John's Gospel how Jesus prayed that we might be one. As He and Father are one.

So today, let us look at how we are called to Christian Unity.

This Unity God is calling us to is big. It is actually all encompassing. So let us look at in in two parts, firstly the Purpose of Unity, and secondly the Practice of Unity.

### What is the Purpose of Unity

The purpose of Christian Unity is for the benefit of the whole world. It is to bring into place God's Kingdom, or in more general terms God's will for life on our planet, so that Humanity can be reconciled to God. And it begins by believing in Jesus. In today's first reading we hear:-

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. (Acts 16.31)

And it is important because the Bible tells us that life has a purpose. In Jesus we are reconciled to God. Jesus came to show us the way to God, and Jesus is coming again:-

<sup>20</sup>The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:20)

Christian Unity is not just for the benefit of the Church. Christian Unity will enable the Church to share God's love with all the people of the world. Christian Unity is part of God's plan, and it is Good for our World.

## The Practice of Unity

So how do we achieve Christian Unity? It is of course a very easy thing to say we want to be united, but it is very hard to do in practice. In fact, we will never truly accomplish it. The world will not ultimately reach unity, until Jesus returns, but it is the task of Christians to work toward this goal until Jesus does return. So let us now explore from today's scriptures how we might seek to live in unity with God and with one another.

### The Practice of Unity - Accepting Jesus

The first step in being united is to accept Jesus. Jesus was praying for his followers to be united, as one, in God. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is at the core of Christianity. It is Jesus that gives us Hope.

We can only be in unity with one another if we are first united to God in Jesus.

### The Practice of Unity - Personal Action

Accepting Jesus should lead us naturally into action. In the reading from Acts today, we hear how when the jailer accepted Jesus he got baptized, without delay. We hear how the jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas. The jailer was called into action, as a result of his belief in Jesus.

If we are to live in unity with other Christians today, we will also need to be striving to follow the teachings of Jesus in our lives.

### The Practice of Unity - Action within God's Church

As Christians we are called to follow Jesus in all that we do as individuals, and we are also called to take our part in the life and practice of the Church.

The culture we live in now, is dubbed the Western World. There is an overwhelming focus on the rights of the individual. But as human beings we can only exist as part of families, and communities and societies.

Over the Easter period our first scripture reading during Sunday worship has not been from the Old Testament as we usually have, but it has come from "The Acts of the Apostles". This fifth book of the New Testament is called "The Acts of the Apostles" for a reason. It was about how they acted, because of what they first believed. Today we hear how Paul and Silas acted to share God's love and build up the Church. Even if it meant being thrown into jail, they were willing to follow Jesus and take their place in the life and faith of the Church. They acted together as part of the Church, to build up the Church.

## The Practice of Unity - Revelation – Hope of Jesus return

In today's reading from the book of Revelation, we hear the conclusion. Jesus will come again and bring all things to himself. In verse 14 we hear:-

<sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. (Revelation 22:14)

Where "washed robes" signify those who have been purified by accepting what Jesus has done for us, and have sought to live into it.

A big challenge before us as we hear Jesus' call for unity today is - How are we seeking to create unity in the world around us?

## National Reconciliation Week

This week in the life of our country Australia, we have National Reconciliation Week. It is an intentional week to focus on the reconciliation of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. I know most people would be wholly in favour of this, but I think sometimes we don't know many indigenous people and don't know where to start. We start by listening, and by treating all people with compassion and respect. And as Christians we need, as always, to begin with prayer. There are prayers within our pew bulletin today, and I encourage you to use them.

## Conclusion – Being One – Why?

The purpose of Christian Unity is all tied up in God's love and in God's perfect plan for our World. Jesus prayed for us:-

<sup>20</sup> 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word (John 17:20)

How are we going to use our time and talents to work for Christian Unity this week and into the future?

Jesus loves us and wants us to live in unity with God, and in unity with one another. As we seek to uphold Christian Unity in our lives, let us conclude with the words of Jesus from today's Gospel:-

<sup>26</sup> 'I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.' (John 17:26)

Amen.