

Read

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Jeremiah 32:36-41

Consider

Human relationships are complex and often not easy. Pandemic has made them even harder for most of us. Prolonged lockdowns and uncertainties have caused strains and tensions to many inter-personal relationships as people become increasingly stressful, irritable and edgy. A BBC report tells us that divorces and break-ups have skyrocketed all around the globe in 2020 and are still on the rise. Disagreements and disputes seem to have penetrated all levels of relationships in workplace, family, church, and in all realms of life like business, politics and even science. Our broken world is further darkened by heightened conflicts, discord, alienation, hate and violence.

When we turn our eyes to church, we see the body of Christ and we talk about unity in the body. But what does unity entail? Jeremiah 32:38-41 was what Raymond and I picked for Scripture Reading at our matrimony some 40-plus years ago. We were intrigued by God's promise of "singleness of heart and action". What a beautiful picture of a life of communion with unity and blessings in God! How blessed we are to be bestowed with God's wonderful promise of healing and restoration.

Jer 32:26-41 was spoken to the people at a deeply troubled time tormented by "sword, famine and plague". The nation was defeated, people driven into exile, the whole land afflicted with human and natural calamities. Now God spoke to them with absolute clarity and certainty. Read slowly through the passage and list out every action that follows the subject 'I' that spells out God's promise. Do you know how these promises have been fulfilled in Jesus? Consider also the receiving end and reflect on how the people of God would be impacted and how they are expected to respond. How would such a relationship transpire in our daily living? Imagine what church would look like when every follower of Christ lives out these words.

This coming Sunday, we will continue our 1 Corinthians series with 1:10-17. Here Paul says with great passion "I appeal to you.... that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought". It is interesting how Paul got so quickly onto this subject right after the opening address, and spoke about unity and division with such forcefulness and unflinching determination. It calls for our full alert and attention. Reflect on the passage and prepare your heart to hear more.

Deacon Dr. Josephine Chow

Pray

Here is a Celtic* prayer to offer to God:
God the Father, source of Divinity, good beyond all that is
good, fair beyond all that is fair,
in you is calmness, peace and unity.
Repair the things that divide us from each other and
restore our unity of love
like your divine love.
And as you are above all things, unite us in goodness
and love that we may be spiritually one,
with you and with each other,
through your peace which makes all things peaceful and
through the grace, mercy, and tenderness
of your only Son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

* Dionysius of the Syrian Jacobite Church, 9th Century

Diving Deeper

1 Corinthians 1:10-12

What do you think are causes for divisions and quarrels?

Consider what are the factors that can bring about “agreement” and “unity in mind and thought” in a group of diverse people. What sort of changes, individually and collectively, need to take place so that disagreements and divisions can be resolved?

1 Corinthians 1:13-17

What is Paul driving at with the question “Is Christ divided”?

What is the common factor that binds us as one?

What must we guard against as we dwell together in a community of faith?

How should we treat and relate to one another?

What are the attitudes and commitments that we must work on in being an active and positive member part of the oneness in Christ?

How did Paul see his role and mission? What is the example that Paul sets for us as we serve or lead in church?

How can we live closer **WITH** God in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **DO** this week?