

"Beard Oil Ain't Just for Hipsters"

Psalm 133

10 September 2017

Hey, we're back in the Psalms of Ascent so turn in your Bibles to Psalm 133. I'll re-cap what the Psalms of Ascent are about in just a moment, but first let me tell you a little bit about my sabbatical. And let me publicly thank the elders here for loving and caring for their pastors so much that they give us sabbaticals. And if you're new in the last 3 months, you probably have no idea who I am, so let me introduce myself to you. My name is Benji and I'm the Senior Pastor here at Grace. I've been on a sabbatical, or a time of rest and refreshment, for the past 3 months.

So what did I do on my sabbatical? A whole lot of nothing! I rested and enjoyed my family and tended to my soul so that I would be renewed. We went and visited my family back in Oklahoma and were there for over a month. Heather and I got away on some adventures by ourselves and had many dates. I enjoyed drinkin' sweet tea on my parent's porch and listening to thunderstorms. I got to visit with some friends from high school.

And surprisingly, we only drove through the Texas panhandle on our way to Oklahoma. We never went down to Dallas to see friends, as we had planned. I ended up going to Texas for just 1 day, where I had the best BBQ I have ever had in my life. Listen, if you're ever in Ft. Worth, Texas, you have to go to *Heim BBQ*. When I bit into their bacon burnt ends, I literally thought I saw Jesus. I'm serious. It was heaven. Do y'all know that George Strait song *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*? Well, the answer, Mr. Strait, is "Yes. Fort Worth does cross my mind. A lot. Every day I think about *Heim BBQ* in Fort Worth." Honestly, eating *Heim BBQ* may have been the highlight of my sabbatical. My soul was refreshed after that meal.

So overall, we just had a very pleasant time seeing my family and being with one another. And there were days when all I did was watch T.V. I watched a lot of episodes of *The Rockford Files*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *The Streets of San Francisco*. I love classic T.V. shows from the 60's and 70's so I watched a lot of my favorites. Interestingly, I didn't take as many naps as I thought I would. I thought going into my sabbatical that I would nap every day. But that didn't happen.

But one thing that I got to do a lot of is paint. I am an artist, so I spent many days in the little studio I have craved out in our garage and I got to paint. All day long. It was wonderful. Some of you have been asking, so here are a few examples of some work that I did...

* JUDAS PAINTING

* JAMES GARNER- JIM ROCKFORD/THE ROCKFORD FILES

* SAUL GOODMAN/BETTER CALL SAUL

* ROD SERLING

* BOY #1

* BOY #2

* JOHN CALVIN

Speaking of John Calvin, turn in your Bibles to Psalm 133. I am going to take a cue from John Calvin. When John Calvin was sent into exile and had to leave his church for 3 years, he returned and started preaching right where he left off! Calvin was preaching in the Psalms when he left and he picked up right where he left off when he returned. So we are going to continue in the Psalms, just like Calvin, and pick up right where we left off in May. We have 2 psalms left in what are called the Psalms of Ascent. If you remember, the Ascent Psalms are found in Psalms 120-134. They were songs that ancient Israelites would sing as they made their way to Jerusalem to worship. Three times a year, the Israelites would travel to Jerusalem during their 3 main festivals and worship. And psalms 120-134, the Ascent Psalms, were the songs that they would sing on the way.

So these psalms are road trip songs. These psalms were the mix-tapes that they would play in their cars as they drove up to Jerusalem.

Now, what's interesting about Psalm 133 is verse 1. Before I read it, keep this in mind. There were families traveling with lots of little children. There were lots of questions like *Are we there yet?* There were a lot of siblings doing what siblings do when they travel long distances in cars. A lot of "Scoot over- He's

touching me- Mom!- Leave me alone, etc” You know what I’m talking about parents, right? Just like the Magness family all crammed in our van and driving to Oklahoma. It took us 4 days. 7 people in a van. Let me re-phrase that, 7 sinners in a van (our oldest stayed behind and worked his job). So it could have been 8 sinners in a van on a very long road trip. Now with all of that in mind, let’s read verse 1.

LOOK AT VERSE 1...

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

And all the parents said, “Amen!”

The context of Psalm 133 is a road trip. Kids crammed in the car. Luggage. *Cheerios* all over the floorboard. *Are we there yet? He touched me! I’m hungry. I don’t want to watch that movie, I want...* That’s the context of Psalm 133. But it’s not just limited to families on long road trips. This is a true principle. This is a Biblical principle that is true of families, businesses, churches, nations. It’s a beautiful thing when any group experiences unity.

But David is doing more than just giving us a nice, universal principle in Psalm 133. He’s actually revealing the heart of God here. David is showing us that the heartbeat of the Triune God is that His people would dwell together in unity. And that just makes sense because the Triune God- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- has always dwelled together in unity.

And what David will show us in Psalm 133 is this-

UNITY FLOWS DOWNHILL.

Unity descends from above, from God. 3x in this psalm David uses the Hebrew word for “descends/falls.” David knows that if a church family is to experience unity- that it has to come down from God. So the door to unity is humility. We each individually have to humble ourselves in order for unity to occur. Unity flows downhill.

Now, look at the first word there in verse 1: *behold*. This Hebrew word is used and when the authors use it, they are inviting us into a scene and they want us to observe something. That’s the Hebrew word here: *hinneh*. It means, “Come here. Enter into this scene. Observe with your own eyes what I’m talking about.” So what does David want us to see?

David wants us to come close and he wants to point out to us just how sweet and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity. David wants us to see unity in action. He wants us to see how good it is when people are unified and not bickering and squabbling with one another. David is telling us, *“You guys gotta come here and see this! Look at that. Those people are unified. They’re getting along with one another. They’re not bickering. Look at that! Isn’t that something else? Isn’t that so good?”*

But David doesn’t just want us to see it- he wants us to *experience* it. That’s the idea behind the word *pleasant*. David wants us to see that, objectively, unity is a good thing. But he doesn’t stop there. He wants us to *experience* it. He wants us to subjectively experience how pleasant it is when a church family is unified.

And that’s the danger that every church faces: do we experience subjectively the objective truth that we believe. In other words, does what we actually believe as a church affect our church culture? Ray Ortlund says, *“The doctrine of a church can be right, but the culture of that church can deny that doctrine.”* Think about that. The doctrine of a church can be right, but the culture of that church can deny that doctrine.

So relationships, our relationships, are the true test for what we believe, not merely our statement of faith. In other words, unity does not play alone in a sandbox. Unity is not an only child. Unity must leave the paper, must leave the statement of faith, must leave doctrinal beliefs, and then go be with others. You have to have both: Gospel on paper and Gospel in partnership. Gospel beliefs and Gospel community. You have to have both.

Let’s be honest this morning: We believe in the Gospel here at Grace, correct? Now the question becomes, “Has the Gospel that we believe created a Gospel culture?” Does our culture here actually deny the Gospel that we say that we believe? Does how we treat one another or talk about one another deny what we say that we believe? Do we really have a Gospel-centered culture here at Grace? We need to wrestle with that question. Or, is it just on Gospel on paper?

You see, we can even have unity of doctrine, unity of beliefs, but not see that fleshed out in real life, in real community. For instance, take your children on a long road trip. There is unity of “doctrine” or unity of belief: murder is wrong, hitting is wrong, complaining is wrong, biting one another is wrong, etc. That’s

unity on paper. We all agree that it's not right to hit one another.

But seeing that belief lived out? On a long road trip? *That takes a miracle.* We don't even realize it but we are desperately dependent on the Holy Spirit. But we're actually sometimes blind to this reality. We think all is well because we have solid doctrine on paper. We're conservative here at Grace. We run elbows with and run in the same circles as R.C. Sproul, Alistair Begg, John Piper, etc.

But you can be okay on paper, but not be okay in reality, not okay in community, not okay in real relationships. And we see this in marriages, right? We see this in our country, right? This can plague every relationship.

To be unified, to see and experience what David is talking about here in Psalm 133 takes a miracle. So what does David mean when he speaks in verse 1 of dwelling in unity? The Hebrew phrase is used in the Old Testament for sharing a meal and for relatives and tribes living close to one another. To dwell together in unity means that we share common interests and we meet common needs. So the idea is that we defend the family interests and we work hard to ensure its future. So think about our church. Are you defending the family interests here? Are you working to ensure our future? Or, do your, do my actions and thoughts and conversations undermine that?

Listen, it takes a miracle for unity to happen. We're sinners. And we'll mess this up if we're not actively praying that God would unify our hearts. It has to come from above. It takes a miracle, which is exactly what David tells us in the rest of this psalm.

LOOK AT VERSES 2-3...

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

What's church unity look like? What does it look like to see Gospel doctrine create a Gospel culture in a church? What does it look like to see Gospel doctrine on paper create Gospel culture in community? Answer: it's like oil running down a beard and dew falling down on a mountaintop! But what does that even mean? In order to understand David's word pictures, we have to go back in time to ancient Israel. So let's talk about each one:

1) BEARD OIL. What does it mean that unity is like oil running down a beard? It doesn't mean that you get all messy and have oil all over the place. And it doesn't mean that you'll have a well-trimmed and well-shaped beard. Listen, if you're a hipster and you use beard oil, this ought to be your favorite psalm! David just lobbed you a soft pitch! This should be a hipster's favorite psalm. But, beard oil ain't just for hipsters. It's for the whole church.

Here's what David is getting at. Oil was used when priests were ordained and consecrated to the ministry, like Aaron in Exodus 29. Oil was used to consecrate Aaron and other priests to ministry. So what David is saying here is that when there is peace and unity in a church body, it is then that we are functioning as a kingdom of priests and we minister God's grace to one another. This was God's plan, that we would be a kingdom of priests, ministering His grace to one another (see Exodus 19, Revelation 1, 5).

So when unity descends from on high, we then move out to minister to one another. When the Gospel becomes our culture and the miracle of unity happens with believers, we begin to take our eyes off of ourselves and we start ministering God's grace to others. When Jesus becomes everything to us and the miracle of unity overtakes a church family, it's like oil running down Aaron's beard and getting inside his collar. It gets everywhere. The idea then is that unity is a sacred blessing from Yahweh. It's all encompassing. It gets everywhere. It creates a Gospel culture that affects everything: our hearts, how we treat one another, what we say and how we talk about one another, etc. Everyone in the church is affected! And when that miracle happens, we start looking not to our own interests (Philippians 2:4), but to the interests of others.

I want that for this church. I want that for us. That we would create a Gospel culture here where we forgive one another, we assume the best, where we have Gospel courage to talk with someone that we have an ought against and not to talk to others about them, where gossip and slander die, where we really just love on another because of Jesus. That's what I want more for this church.

Now, the other picture that David gives us-

2) MOUNTAIN DEW. Yes, mountain dew is in the Bible and it's good. When David says that unity is like dew falling down from Mount Hermon to mount Zion, he's telling us that it takes a miracle to see unity happen. Here's why it's a miracle: Mount Hermon was the chief mountain in the north, Zion was the chief

mountain in the south. Mount Hermon was the tallest mountain, coming in at 9,100 feet and Zion came in at 2,400 feet. And these 2 mountains were over 100 miles apart, so if dew was to leave Mount Hermon in the north and descend over 6,000 feet and travel over 100 miles and replenish the inhabitants of Mount Zion, well that would take a miracle, friends. And that's David's point. It takes a miracle for church unity to happen.

Understand this, Grace: It takes a miracle to get your eyes off of you and what you want. That takes a miracle of Holy Spirit proportions. That's what David is telling us with these 2 word pictures of the beard oil and the mountain dew. He's telling us that-

UNITY FLOWS DOWNHILL.

3x in this psalm, David uses the Hebrew word "descend." He's trying to get us to see that unity descends from above, from God. He's trying to get us to see and experience true, Gospel-centered unity. He wants us to know that church unity is a God-wrought miracle.

Therefore, the door to unity is humility. We have to humble ourselves and die to our wishes, our wants, our preferences, etc. If we want to be a unified church, we have to humble ourselves and give up our wants and wishes. We have to humble ourselves and pray. We have to repent of our selfishness and self-absorption and beg God to unleash the gates of Heaven and bless us with Gospel-centered unity. We have to ask for it.

Our preferences and personalities can keep us from true, Gospel-centered unity. These seemingly "innocent" things can actually paralyze a church and friendships and fellowship. That's why it takes a miracle- because we all have preferences (theological, cultural, musical styles, décor, etc). And the Gospel is the only thing that can cause us to lay down our arms and lay down our preferences and become "one."

This is why the Gospel must be central in this church. We must have Gospel doctrine *and* Gospel culture. Fixing our eyes on the finished work of Christ for undeserving sinners will help foster this kind of environment where we aren't up in arms because we do not get our way.

So instead of killing our preferences, many times disciples end up killing each other, killing their own church!

Gossip, slander, backbiting, etc kills churches. Not going to a person that you have an issue with but talking to someone else about them- that kills churches. If you want to put a church, put a marriage, a put a business, put any relationship in the graveyard, that's how you do it. False doctrine usually doesn't kill Gospel-centered, Christ-centered, Bible-centered churches. You know what does? Gossip. Slander. Complaining. Not being unified. Paul says in Galatians 5 that we start biting each other and we eventually devour one another. We become zombies that kill off a church.

Think about it: What do kids do when they have an issue with their brother or sister? They hit! They bite! Sometimes they just bite because that's the only effective weapon that they have- especially when they are like 2-3 and they have no other defense mechanism. They just bite. Think about this for a second: What if we walked in here next week and just bit each other? Rolled up our sleeves and walked around and we bit all the people we have issue with? Wow. We may not do it literally but we do it, right?

I don't want that for us! I want the Gospel that we believe on paper- that God loves sinners- I want that to shape our culture here. I want the finished work of Christ on our behalf to move from paper to community. I want to see Gospel doctrine create more Gospel culture here so that we exist as a kingdom of priests and we continue ministering God's grace to one another.

But it takes a miracle to see this happen. It takes a miracle to humble yourself. As Ray Ortlund says, "*Authentic Christianity is miracle, not management.*"

Here's what Psalm 133 looks like fleshed out in the New Testament: It's Romans 12:9-18

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Imagine if this is what our culture was like here at Grace? What if we all were striving after these things

while focused on the finished work of Christ? I think Psalm 133:1 would start to become the norm around here! Romans 12 is like the twin brother of Psalm 133. It actually tells us **how** and **what** Christian unity looks like in a church family.

UNITY FLOWS DOWNHILL.

And guess what? Jesus loves unity! So Psalm 133 is teasing you, tempting you, wooing you to pray to Jesus for something that Jesus loves! Why is Jesus so partial to unity? You only have to look at the Godhead to understand. We worship a Trinitarian God, one God, who has eternally existed in 3 Persons. And for all eternity, there has been unity in the Godhead. All 3 persons- Father, Son, and Spirit- are equal, they are unified and they are all deserving of worship and honor and glory.

Jesus loves unity and this psalm is trying to get us to see that. What did Jesus pray for in John 17?

"...that they may one, even as we are one...that they may become perfectly one, so that the world will know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." John 17:22-23

Jesus loves unity so much that He prayed for it! He prayed for us! He prayed for this church in John 17! And Jesus prayed for us because He knew that it takes a miracle for us to not be self-absorbed. It takes a glimpse, repeated glimpses of Jesus to reorient our sinful hearts. That's why the Gospel must be central to every thing that we do here.

Unity flows downhill from Mount Calvary to sinners like us. Unity flows down from Jesus. Let's humble ourselves and begin asking God to work this miracle in our hearts. And David ends his psalm with a promise to entice us to want this unity. He says in verse 3-

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

When David say, "there" he's pointing to unity, to brothers dwelling together. He's telling us that blessing and life forevermore is to be found in unity. God's blessings fall down on a church that is unified! True life is found when we are unified. Jesus offers His sort of life to those who cherish unity. Jesus offers every church His life, if they will humble themselves. The good news is that it's free of charge. All we have to do is humble ourselves.

So, why not? Why not us, Grace? If Jesus offers His blessing, His life to a church, why not us? Why not now? Why not this time in the history of this church? Who's in?

My prayer is that the Gospel that we believe continues to create a Gospel culture here. That we talk about Jesus all the time, that we forgive one another, that we love one another, that we assume the best in each other. I want to glorify Jesus with this church. I'm praying for unity. I'm praying that the Holy Spirit works a miracle in all of our hearts. May we experience His blessing now and in the coming years.

We're gonna fail at this. We're gonna mess up. We're not going to be unified all the time because we are sinners. And that's why there's grace. There is no condemnation. We are forgiven. We are cleansed. We are free. Let's live in that reality, shall we?

"Beard Oil Ain't Just for Hipsters"

Psalm 133

Sermon Study Questions

1. If we want to see Grace be a unified church, where do we start? Why can't we just all get along?
2. Read Psalm 133:2. What does this verse teach us about community?
3. What do **you** do/say when someone gossips or slanders someone at Grace? What should you do/say?
4. Ray Ortland says, *"The doctrine of a church can be right, but the culture of that church can deny that doctrine."* In your opinion, how does Grace stack up?