Unity through the Spirit

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 May 2026

Preacher: Chuck Adams

[0:00] Today has been has really been wonderful. It's one thing that I really appreciate when I come to this congregation to preach is the music. Really, really a joyful time. And it's really neat to be singing and speaking in different languages. One of the one of the experiences that I remember really feeling the Holy Spirit was a number of years ago.

I got to be part with World Renew at what they call their assembly of worldwide partners, where they brought in a bunch of partners that they work with around the world, brought them into Colorado, brought in board members and things like that.
And we had a worship service. And during the worship service, there was just a period of time where we all sort of stood up and we were encouraged to pray our prayers in our own languages out loud.
And so this room was just filled with people from all over the world speaking dozens of different languages. And that really was I really felt the presence of the spirit at that time.
And so there's a reflection of that today as well. This morning, we're going to read a couple of texts. I'm going to read from Psalm 133 and then we're going to move over to Acts chapter 2.
[1:18] And I know the words will probably be up on the screen as well. But if you'd like to also join in your Bible, you can turn first to Psalm 133, but then put your finger also in Acts chapter 2 and we'll be reading verses from the beginning and the end of Acts chapter 2.

So first from Psalm 133.
Forever. And then turning over to Acts chapter 2. If you would stand for the reading of our New Testament text as we often stand before God in worship and hear these words from Acts chapter 2. We'll be reading from verses 1 through 11 and then going to the end verses 42 and 47. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
And suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.
[2:50] All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

And when they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked, aren't all of these who are speaking Galileans?
Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native languages? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs.
We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship. To the breaking of bread and to prayer.
Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.
[4:04] And every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. I'm not sure what exactly the proper greeting for Pentecost

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 07:18:15

is, so I'll just say, Happy Pentecost.
Happy day that this church around the world celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit. My prayer for you this morning is that the Holy Spirit renews and inspires and guides you in all that you do.
Now, you probably weren't all that surprised that our New Testament reading was from Acts chapter 2, the story of the first Pentecost. But it's appropriate as well that we began our scripture readings with Psalm 133.
See, Psalm 133 is the last of 15 Psalms of Ascent, a collection of psalms that were sung by the ancient Hebrew pilgrims as they traveled to Jerusalem for three different annual festivals.
[5:19] Jerusalem is at a high elevation, and it's above the country around it. And so the pilgrims were literally ascending as they approached the city and the temple within the city walls.

And this last psalm of ascent is the one that is sung as the pilgrims celebrate entering the temple, the place of God's presence.
And because it's the place of God's presence, it's the place of unity among God's people. And the opening line of the psalm is a declaration of the beauty of that unity, how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity.
It's a joyful moment. The pilgrims have banded together through hardship and danger, and now they arrive in Jerusalem to worship and place God's presence. This is what Christian worship is supposed to look like.
After a long week, God gathers us into his presence, and he binds us together as his people. And I hope you've tasted some of that beauty this morning as we worshiped in several languages.
[6:25] And yet we are one in the Spirit, and we are one praise rising to God. It is indeed good and pleasant. And when the psalmist uses those words, he's saying that more than just that unity is simply pleasant, that word good is the Hebrew word tav.

And in Scripture, tav names what is beautiful, what is whole, what is the way that God intended it to be. It's the word that's used in Genesis chapter 1 when God calls creation good.
Before the fall, creation was radiant with life and harmony and purpose. It was exactly the way it was meant to be. By echoing Genesis, the psalmist is showing us that unity is essential to God's original design for human life.
Unity not only makes the world a more pleasant place, it also allows the world to regain the goodness for which God created it. By hearkening back to the goodness of creation in Genesis chapter 1, the psalmist is telling us that unity is essential, essential to God's original design for the world, including the human race.
So as the pilgrims sang this psalm on their way to the temple, they weren't just celebrating safe arrival, they were confessing that life together before God is part of his purpose for his people.
[7:52] Unity makes God's people fit for service and fruitful in all they do. Even more harmony among God's people is one of the ways that God displays his blessings in the world.

The rest of scripture reinforces this truth. Sin tears apart what God made whole, but grace begins to gather it back together. That's why unity in the church matters so much.
God is using his people as part of his work of restoring shattered creation to shalom, the way things were meant to be. Perhaps you noted in Psalm 133, there are two images of the sheer delight of godly unity.
Verse 2 compares it to oil, to the anointing of the priest that overflows from his head to his beard to the collar of his robes. Oil was not only the symbol for anointing kings and priests, it was also a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
The oil on Aaron's head points us to the Holy Spirit, which is the binding source of unity in God's presence for believers. That image illustrates abundance pouring out to overflowing.
[9:08] There's no shortage. The Spirit's presence is extravagant. And then in verse 3, unity is compared to the dew of Mount Hermon falling on Mount Zion, a source of water coming down from the sky.

Jesus said in John chapter 7, verses 38 and 39, Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.
By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Again, we see streams of living water in abundance, the Spirit's eternal source.
And oil and water are two substances that normally they don't mix, but in this beautiful psalm of unity, the Spirit is the symbol of both. And it's the means by which that unity is realized.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 07:18:15

The Church of Jesus Christ is the most ethnically and socially and linguistically diverse movement in the history of the world, and the Spirit brings it together. Psalm 133 foreshadows this with those two images of water and oil pointing to the Holy Spirit.
[10:17] How good and how pleasant it is when the Spirit is poured out upon God's people. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Now, if Psalm 133 hints at God's delight in unity, the New Testament states it plainly. See, unity is God's deep desire for his people.
Christ's redeeming work is not only about isolated individuals being saved, it's also about God reconciling all things to himself and drawing a people together in peace.
Even that famous verse, John 3.16, points in that direction. For God so loved the world. And in Greek, that word is kosmon, the cosmos. God's love and redemptive purpose are as wide as creation itself.
He's saving souls, of course, but he's not just doing that. He's also reclaiming the world he created. And that's why reconciliation is such a central theme in the gospel and in the Christian faith.
[11:22] We often speak of reconciliation in sort of in that vertical dimension. Sinners reconcile to God through Christ, and rightly so, that's important. But the gospel also has a horizontal dimension.

In Christ, broken relationships among people begin to be healed. And even creation itself is drawn towards restoration. And that connection between reconciliation and unity is key.
Through Christ, hostility is put to death, and a new humanity is formed. And as members of that new humanity, we reflect that unity that we now have with Christ.
The New Testament repeatedly calls Christians to receive unity, both as a gift and as a calling. For example, in Ephesians chapter 4, the writer urges believers to make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.
There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, and through all, and in all.
[12:33] This unity is rooted in our shared life in Christ and in the indwelling Holy Spirit given to us at Pentecost. It reaches across cultural and social and ethnic lines.

As Galatians 3 declares, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
The early church embodied that unity, as we heard at the end of our text this morning, where all of the believers were together and had everything in common, demonstrating a profound life of fellowship and mutual care.
Unity is essential to the church's gospel witness. Jesus prayed in John chapter 17, near the end of his life, that all of them may be one, just as he and the Father are one.
Our life together is meant to testify to the truth of the gospel and to the reconciling mission of Christ. It's a reconciliation and unity.
[13:38] They belong together. These themes intertwine throughout scripture, and they reflect the power of the gospel to restore what sin has fractured, to form a people whose shared life reflects God's peace.

Unity is God's desire for his people. Just a moment ago, I referenced Jesus' prayer on the night before his crucifixion, his prayer that his people would be one.
And he even prays there that we would be brought to complete unity. But of course, that prayer cannot be fulfilled by human effort alone. It's only possible through the sending, empowering, and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
Unity is only possible because of the Holy Spirit. One of the Spirit's great works is to create a community that is united in Christ. The theologian Herman Bavinck writes, it's the Spirit who creates the new humanity, where God's dwelling will be forever.
And we see that new humanity now in Acts chapter 2. People from many places hearing the mighty works of God in their own languages, and then believers devoting themselves to teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.
[14:56] The Spirit doesn't erase difference. The Spirit creates communion in the midst of that difference. And that's what Spirit-filled fellowship looks like.

Listen again to the description of the Spirit-led church that came about in the immediate aftermath of Pentecost. It says there, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 07:18:15

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.
Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. As you think about your own experience of the church, whether it's here at Covenant Corner or in other congregations or in the wider body of Christ, I suspect that you have seen at least a glimpse of that devotion and joy in life together.
[16:09] But if we're honest, we also know how far the church can fall short. Christians are often divided by politics or by worship style or by doctrine, custom, race, ethnicity.

If living in unity is part of God's design for his people, then our disunity is not something we can excuse. It's something we must confess.
We're called to repent of it. We're called to ask the Holy Spirit to move through our congregations and move in our hearts to lead us toward deeper faithfulness, for greater humility and truer unity.
One of the most important ways that we can promote unity is through forgiveness. All of us know what it is to be sinned against. It hurts.
And despite Jesus' command to forgive, we often search for ways around it. We tell ourselves the offender doesn't deserve forgiveness or forgiveness can wait until repentance is complete or that avoiding the hard conversation is easier than facing it.
[17:16] Yet forgiveness remains one of the Spirit's chief instruments for preserving the unity of Christ's body. Now, we do have to recognize that forgiveness is a process.

It may begin at the moment that we decide to forgive, but it rarely ends there. Deeper hurts require long journeys towards forgiveness, journeys that often meander in different directions or even end up circling back to places where we were before.
And forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation. We want it to. And as much as we long to see every relationship restored, that restoration cannot always happen in this world.
But forgiveness is still possible, even in the worst of situations. Corrie Ten Boom's story is a striking example. You've probably heard of her.
During the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, Corrie and her family hid Jewish refugees in their homes. And they were eventually betrayed and arrested and sent to prison.
[18:21] Her father died in custody. Corrie and her sister Betsy were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany, where Betsy later died. After the war, Corrie traveled widely, and she spoke about God's forgiveness, and she called on others to forgive.

And then in 1947, after speaking in a church in Munich in Germany, she came face to face with one of the cruelest guards she had met at Ravensbrück.
He approached her, he extended his hand, and he said that he had become a Christian. And then he asked, Will you forgive me? And Corrie later wrote that she couldn't do it, not on her own.
Corrie was confronted with her own message. So she prayed. She prayed to God, I can lift up my hand, Lord. I can do that much.
You must do the rest. And so she put out her hand. And when the guard took her hand, she experienced something incredible, something she could only describe as the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling what she herself could not do.
[19:33] I forgive you, brother, she cried. Corrie says that she had never known God's love so intensely as she did at that moment. But she realized that this wasn't her love.

This was the power of the Holy Spirit coming through her. That is the miracle of forgiveness. It isn't denial. It isn't pretending that the wound is small.
But it is the Holy Spirit giving the power to do what we could never do by ourselves. Equally important is also remembering that our unity is not the same as uniformity.
In fact, one of the great strengths of Christ's church is its diversity. And the Spirit's power can be seen in the way that he binds diverse people together in one body.
Just yesterday, I was talking with my daughter about how differences can actually make us stronger. She spent the last four years teaching at Central Wisconsin Christian School in Waupon.
[20:37] And as she prepares to leave for a teaching position now in Singapore, she reflected on one of her middle school colleagues with whom she felt she had never really connected.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 07:18:15

We were just such different people, she said. And yet she was also glad that they had worked together. See, their different personalities meant that they connected with different students.
And in middle school, that matters. Some kids gravitated to one teacher, some to the other. But between them, they were able to reach far more students than either could have done on their own.
And that's often how diversity works in the church as well. Diversity within Christ's body is not a weakness to overcome, but a gift to receive.
And that's part of what Paul means in Galatians chapter three. There's neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor there is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
[21:37] The gospel doesn't erase our histories. It doesn't erase our languages or callings. What it does is it means those differences no longer rule us and no longer divide us.

In Christ, the barriers that once separated us now lose their power. And Pentecost makes that beautifully clear. Everyone didn't suddenly begin speaking in one language.
Rather, each person heard the wonders of God in his or her own tongue. The Spirit didn't flatten human diversity. Rather, he created communion within it.
And that's why our worship in multiple languages this morning isn't a distraction from Pentecost, but rather it's a living sign of Pentecost. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live together as a community of saints with glad and sincere hearts.
How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. That unity is possible because of the work of the Holy Spirit whose coming we celebrate on Pentecost.
[22:47] Pentecost is about reconciliation, about God reconciling people to himself and through the Spirit drawing them toward one another. Both the Old and the New Testaments bear witness to that work.

Psalm 133 celebrates the goodness of life together in unity. Acts 2 shows the Spirit gathering a diverse people to declare the wonders of God.
In that unity, the church bears witness to God's goodness and power. This is how the contemporary testimony describes Pentecost.
Here are these words from the contemporary testimony. It says there, At Pentecost, promises old and new are fulfilled. The ascended Jesus becomes the baptizer, drenching his followers with his spirit, creating a new community where Father and Son and Holy Spirit make their home.
Revived and filled with the breath of God, women and men, young and old, dream dreams and see vision. The Spirit renews our hearts and moves us to faith and leads us into truth and helps us to pray, stands by us in our need and makes our obedience fresh and vibrant.
[24:04] God the Spirit lavishes gifts on the church in astonishing variety, prophecy, encouragement, healing, teaching, service, tongues, discernment, equipping each member to build up the body of Christ to serve our neighbors.

The Spirit gathers people from every tongue, tribe, and nation into the unity of the body of Christ. Anointed and sent by the Spirit, the church is thrust into the world, ambassadors of God's peace, announcing forgiveness and reconciliation, proclaiming the good news, of grace, going before them and with them, the Spirit convinces the world of sin and pleads the cause of Christ.
Men and women, impelled by the Spirit, go next door and far away into science and art, media and marketplace, every area of life, pointing to the reign of God with what they do and say.
We are God's dwelling place when we live together in unity. We can't do this on our own, but we can only do it by the power of the Holy Spirit in and among us.
So let's receive that gift. Let's seek that unity and give thanks to God for every foretaste of it, even this morning as one congregation lifts one praise in many tongues.
[25:27] Thanks be to God. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Lord, we come to you this morning.

We ask you to empower us as agents of your mercy and grace, both in truth and in love. May your righteousness be ever before us.
May your grace go behind us, clothe us in the knowledge of you. Lord, we grieve the pain and hurt that surround us, hurt that result from human sinfulness, pain that demeans and destroys human life, grief that at times is caused by our very own hands.
Forgive us for trying to justify behavior that doesn't bring you glory, and help us also to forgive, for in forgiving, we reflect the forgiveness you've granted to us.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 07:18:15

Lord, make us one. Unite us in seeking your purposes. Help us to feel your love and in turn to show your love to those around us. Help us to find our joy in you.
[26:36] Help us to see you in every human life we encounter. Help us to remember that just as you are not alone, neither are we. Make us ever mindful of the unity that we have in you.

You promised your faithfulness, oh God. Make us faithful to you in return. Grant us the courage so that we might move our feet to follow you. Give us strength that we might be persistent in serving your mission and pray for those who don't yet know your salvation and Lord, please encourage us as we seek to reveal your glory through the unity that we have in you.
In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and through the power of your spirit, we pray all these things. in the name of our

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-09 07:18:15