

Help! I'm Not Playing Nice

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[0:00] is a fascinating study in human belonging. Maybe you've witnessed one of these scenarios on a playground near you. A child picks up a handful of sand and throws it into the face of another child.

Have you witnessed that? Then you hear the mom say, Danny, play nice with others. Or there's a group of children, perhaps you've seen this, a group of children purposefully excluding a little boy. Not for any particular reason. You hear a mom cry out, children, play nice. Let that little boy play with you.

Or perhaps you've seen this scenario, a little child avoiding all contact with all other children at all costs on this playground. Because there's a fear there.

And you hear a mom say, honey, go play with others. It's good for you. The playground is a fascinating study of human belonging. But let's just be honest.

[1:02] I mean, we're all living on a playground of sorts. We're all wanting to belong, right? We all want to be part of a people bigger than us.

We all want to experience unity with others. What God has intended for us. And to that end, we need a lot of help.

Because our sinful tendency is to not play nice with others. And it undermines the unity that God has purchased for us through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope you just heard that. Our unity is a blood-bought unity. This morning, Psalm 133 is going to help us by prioritizing for us God's good and pleasant will for us, our unity, to live together for God's glory.

God's will is for us to be united. But Psalm 133 helps us see something else. If I were to sum up Psalm 133 in a sentence, it would be this.

[2:15] Our unity is a magnet for God's blessing. Our unity is a magnet for God's blessing.

And I'm guessing everyone in the room wants to experience the fullness of God's blessing in our relationships as a church. And so maybe you're the type who doesn't play nice with others.

I think we're all that type. Psalm 133 is just for us. So here's how we're going to move forward. I'm going to walk you through Psalm 133.

And then I'm going to spend the bulk of our time applying Psalm 133, this idea of unity, specifically 10 ways we live together for the glory of God.

And so we're going to, we'll get there, but let's first walk, let me walk you through this passage and let me start by giving you a little background on Psalm 133. You'll notice right away that in the title, it's a psalm, a song of ascents.

[3:18] Now, there are 15 songs of ascents. Psalms 120 through 134. And what an ascent is, is a gradual climb up, an incline.

And so what's good for you to know is that there are these three major feasts every year on the Jewish calendar. And every year, men were required to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship God together at these feasts.

And if you were to go to Jerusalem from anywhere in Israel, you're eventually going to have to go up to Jerusalem. It was on a mountain, Mount Zion. And so it was on an ascent.

And so the purpose of these psalms of ascent is for the pilgrimage. As Jews from every tribe around Jerusalem, all throughout Israel, made their way and were ascending to Jerusalem, they would be reciting, singing, thinking about these psalms.

They're intended to prepare God's people to meet with God in His place. It's a unity primer, is what it is. And so that's a little background.

[4:40] Now let's get into the text itself. If you look at verse 1, you see the word, Behold. Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

This is a psalm of David. And David is saying, Hey, look at this. I want you to see it. Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

Now David was a musician. And what's interesting, he's not saying here, He's not saying here, How good and pleasant it is when I write a great psalm. He's not, He was a builder. He's not saying, How good and pleasant it is when I build a great building.

He was a warrior. He's not saying, How good and pleasant, Look, how good and pleasant it is when I rout the enemy. He's saying, How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

The brothers is a reference to Jews from all the tribes of Israel coming together. And these tribes had a sordid past, a lot of infighting, a lot of hardship.

[5:47] And David is saying, Oh, how good it is, how pleasant it is when brothers come together in unity. David understands the value of unity.

He experienced discord himself. So the question we need to ask right now is, Well, what is unity? Biblically speaking. Well, the Hebrew word for unity, if your Bible has a little number next to it, when you look down at the bottom of the page, it says to dwell together.

That word unity literally means together. It's togetherness. But we all know that being together doesn't necessarily mean it's good and pleasant.

So this is a particular kind of togetherness. It's a particular kind of unity. And so here's my working definition of unity. Unity is when God's people live together for God's glory.

That's unity. When God's people are living together for God's glory, that's unity. God unites His people.

[7:01] I mean, that's the point of these three annual feasts. All the men of Israel would come up to Jerusalem in order to gather together around God's presence in His place, celebrating something that God had done for them.

I mean, that's why we get together on a weekly basis. We gather together in order to rejoice and celebrate what God has done for us. We're seeking to live for God's glory.

So, this observation, behold, it is good and pleasant when brothers are living together together for the glory of God.

How good and pleasant it is when a church lives together for the glory of God. Our greatest aim is God's glory.

And when we are united, it is a magnet for God's blessing. If we continue on, you're going to notice in verses 2 and 3, there are these two comparisons.

[8:09] David wants to compare. He is comparing this good and pleasant unity to two things. Oil, you see that in verse 2, and dew, you see that in verse 3.

In verse 2, we read, it is, it is, the it is, this unity, this good and pleasant unity 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.

Do you sense abundance there? Overflowing abundance. This oil is an anointing oil. And what an anointing oil was used for was to consecrate, to set apart a king or a priest.

That's why Aaron's name is there. He was a priest. And so what this is a picture of is God's overflowing kindness in setting Aaron apart for God's purposes.

And so this is what the comparison is. When God's people are united, they are set apart like Aaron, all that oil flowing down, they are set apart for God's purposes.

[9:26] Set apart for God's glory. glory. It's a good and pleasant thing. When we're united, we're aimed at God. The second comparison is to do.

This good and pleasant unity, we see it in the beginning of verse 3, it's like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. Hermon was this really high mountain in northern Israel, and it produced this really thick layer of dew.

You know what dew is? I mow my lawn Monday morning. My kids kind of make fun of me because I'm usually up at 7 o'clock mowing my lawn. They're like, beware of the neighbors. But I have a hard time mowing because there's so much dew in my grass.

That dew is a life-giving water. And if you're thinking about where this is taking place, it's life-giving water in an arid, dry place.

There's some debate of what this dew actually is. Some think that it's the actual dew from Mount Hermon coming all the way down to the mountains of Zion.

[10:33] It's a little bit of a reach. Or it could be that the dew of Hermon is more like an expression for a certain thickness, for a certain vibrancy of dew.

It's like when you say Kleenex to refer to tissues. dew. You're saying Mount Hermon dew to refer to a fullness of dew on the ground. Whatever the case, the good and pleasant unity of God's people is being likened to a source of life-giving water in a dry and arid place.

When God's people are united, it is refreshing and life-giving. It is a blessing to those around us. So here we have two comparisons, oil and dew.

Oil, it's good and pleasant in that we're set apart for God's glory. Dew, it's good and pleasant in that we're a blessing to those around us. Our unity is a magnet to God's blessing.

At the end of verse 3, we have the conclusion. you see it being formed with the word for. For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

[11:57] It's an interesting way to talk about things. Where's the there? For there, where is that there? For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

Well, you could say Mount Zion because that's what David was just talking about. But what's important to recognize, it's where the brothers are dwelling together in unity.

That's the there. And if it's in Jerusalem, God will command his blessing there. And if it's in Kenosha, God will command his blessing there. But God commands his blessing.

There's this verse in Isaiah 66. This is the one to whom the Lord will look. who is humble, contrite in spirit, and trembles at my Lord. God just delights in humility.

And he will just look to it, pour out his favor on it. Unity is this expression of humility. And God is compelled to pour out his blessing on it.

[13:05] Life forevermore. if we're unified, God will surely bless us. Christ the King Church, don't you want that?

Don't you want to be set apart for God's purposes? Don't you want to be a blessing to this city? We must be united.

I've got a theory, and here's my theory. Christians settle for surfacy relationships. And the reason why are twofold.

Christians settle for surfacy relationships because they don't know what true unity is. They don't know what it takes. It takes a lot of humility, a lot of hard work. So there's kind of an ignorance. But there's another reason why Christians settle for surfacy relationships. It's those Christians who know what true humility requires, but they are unwilling to pursue it.

[14:12] And they're unwilling to pursue it because they've been burned. They've been in a context where they have opened up their lives and they've gotten trampled.

And so there's an unwillingness, a guardedness to stay on the surface, to stay on the side of the playground. So the question becomes if unity is God's people living together for the glory of God, how do we as a church pursue that?

Well, that's the second half of this sermon. And before I go there, I want to share you a story that Mary Jo Filippelli has taught me. It's a lesson. Have you seen this garden in the front of our building?

If you come in through the front glass doors, there's this garden there and it's beautiful. An array of plants, different fragrances, different colors.

It's just beautiful. Here's what Mary Jo Filippelli has taught me. She's the gardener of that garden. The lesson is this.

[15:26] Beautiful gardens require a lot of hard work. Mary Jo Filippelli is in this building tending that garden on a frequent basis. And if unity

of our church is like a garden, it's going to take a lot of hard work. God and so what I want to share with you now are ten ways that we can live together for the glory of God. Ten ways that we maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Ten ways we pursue oneness in Christ. Now, if you're right now wilting in your chair like ten ways, man, it's hot in here. I'm out! Stay checked in. The challenge is going to be keeping up with me. I'm going to move through it pretty quick. So ten ways we seek this good and pleasant unity that God is just drawn to to bless. You ready? The first way. The first way we live for God's glory together is by realizing that our unity is dependent on Christ's death.

[16:40] Christ's death unites us. Our unity is a gospel unity. It's born of what Jesus has done in our behalf.

Remember how these Jewish men would make pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year and at these feasts, these feasts would commemorate something that God has done for Israel and it would unite them together around the work God has done for them.

Well, Christ's work on the cross for each of us unites us together. We share a common forgiveness in Christ. We share a common peace with God in Christ.

We share in the very righteousness of Christ. We share in the living hope of Christ. We share in a common aim, God's glory. We share a common eternity, a common destination.

We share a common enemy. Christ's death has united us. I find it really interesting that in the book of 1 Corinthians, this church that was dysfunctional and divisive, that the apostle Paul waits until the last chapter to raise the gospel.

[17:54] And he says to them in 153, I will now pass on to you of first importance what was passed on to me. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. Do you know what he's doing?

He's uniting that church in the gospel. This is what you have in common. Christ's death is the very basis of our unity.

It's the very cause of our unity. His death unites us to live for him. My favorite verse is 2 Corinthians 5.15, and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

I know it's a mouthful. Here's a summary. Christ died for all of us so that all of us would live in union for him. Our goal now is Jesus.

So the first way we live for God's glory is by realizing Christ's death unites us. Here's a helpful way to think about it. If you're in conflict with another Christian, you know it's a helpful way, helpful starting point, to see that other Christian as blood bought by Jesus.

[19:12] That person belongs to Jesus. It matters how you pursue peace with them. The second way we live for God's glory together is in a shared, personal, dying daily.

In order for us to live for Christ together, we must die to ourselves alone, daily. In Matthew 16, 24, Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. It's a picture of humbling yourself, following after Jesus. Our unity as a church will never result from any one of us insisting on our own way.

That's not the way of humility. The path of unity begins with dying to ourselves so that each of us is living for Jesus.

I'm constantly amazed at how easy it is. I put no thought into living for myself. I default into insisting on my own way.

[20:27] I put no thought into it. I wake up in the morning, you know, this is about me today. But what it takes to live for Christ is conscious intentional effort to die to myself in order to live for Christ and others.

So the question I have for you is, have you died to yourself today in order to live for Christ? So to preserve the unity of our church.

The third way we live together for God's glory is by walking by the Spirit, sharing in a Spirit dynamic. What Christ's death accomplished, the Spirit seeks to apply.

In 1 Corinthians 12, 13, we are taught that the Holy Spirit baptizes each Christian at the moment of salvation into the one body of Jesus Christ.

He unites us. And not only does He unite us, He is actually seeking for us to experience this unity in greater and greater measure.

[21:42] We're going to be preaching through Galatians in September. And you remember what the fruit of the Spirit is in Galatians 5? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control.

We tend to think about those as individual characteristics, but do you know what? That is couched in loving one another. That whole section in Galatians 5, it's about unity.

It's about living together as a church. It's about walking by the Spirit and not yielding to the desires of the flesh so that we can love one another.

In Ephesians 4, 3, we're told to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. So do you know what our sinning against each other is?

In the words of one theologian, it's culpable shalom breaking. It's working against what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do to unite us.

[22:54] Living for the glory of God together. And this is a dynamic. What I mean by that is our unity is not static, it's dynamic.

It ebbs and flows. And it often, more often than not, depends on our willingness to humble ourselves. It is good and right for us to be regularly praying, fill us today by your Spirit of God.

Unite us. Help me. Help us to walk by your Spirit and so fulfill the law of Christ to love your neighbor as yourself. The fourth way we live together for God's glory is by sharing in doctrinal truth.

Doctrine simply means teaching. What the Bible teaches, what the Bible teaches about God is the doctrine of God. What the Bible teaches about sin is the doctrine of sin.

What the Bible teaches about salvation is the doctrine of salvation. So on and so forth. And so our posture as a church, all doctrine comes from this book, the Bible.

[24:03] And our posture as a church is to come under God's word together. We don't stand over God's word, we come under God's word. Doctrine unites us.

God's truth knits us together. Unity is not the result of minimizing doctrinal truth.

Unity comes from emphasizing the right doctrinal truth. That's why we have a statement of faith.

That's why in our membership class, we purpose to bring everyone through every paragraph of our statement of faith.

Because we as a church are saying these are the doctrines from God's word that we are committed to and are vital to our faith and practice. Our unity depends upon doctrine, not the other way around.

God's love.

[25:14] God's glory is sharing in a common dependence. God's love. In John 15, Jesus describes our dependence in relationship to him as a vine and a branch.

Jesus says in 15.5, I am the vine, you are the branches, anyone abides in me and I in him. He it is that will bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing.

It's another picture of humility, our humble dependence upon our Lord Jesus Christ. We are all dependent on Jesus. Not one of us can be fruitful for Jesus apart from Jesus.

And so to bring this little point to a head, are you depending on Jesus today? Our unity depends on your dependence on Jesus.

The sixth way we live together for the glory of God is in a shared interdependence. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the church as a body.

[26:27] Remember, the Spirit baptizes each Christian at the moment of salvation into the one body of Christ, but that same Spirit also gives individual gifts to each Christian for the building up of the church.

God and Paul, when he's talking about this, describes the church and individual Christians as individual members of the body. I mean, our church, we need hands and thumbs.

We need elbows in knees. We need shoulders, knees, and toes. Knees and toes. Knees and toes. It's a picture of interdependence.

And so, in love, individual Christians use their Spirit-given gifts to build up the one body of Christ.

So, another way to say it is, the Holy Spirit has gifted you, brother and sister in Christ, not for you.

The Holy Spirit has gifted you in order to build up this church. You've been gifted for the unity of our body.

[27:43] And this is much more than just kind of utilitarian view of gifts. This body image pictures us in close proximity to one another, living life together, knowing what's going on.

We build each other up formally and in formally. Now, on a related note, under the same point, I just want to clarify something.

Unity does not mean uniformity. Unity does not mean sameness. We have men and women in this church.

We have people of all ages in this church, all seasons of life, different ethnicities, different income levels and education levels. We have people adhering to different political parties.

They take different stances on gun control, different native languages, different music preferences. This is the stuff that makes us diverse. But when we are united with Jesus as our head and his death uniting us, we're united under his word and walking by the spirit dynamic, democratic, we embrace the diversity.

[29:01] We're saying yes to this. There is nothing that can divide us when our unity is in Jesus Christ.

In fact, I believe that diversity when held rightly actually enriches our unity. community. It helps us understand people.

You know, the Amazon River, it gathers tons of silt and nutrients on its way out into the Atlantic. and where the Amazon and the Atlantic meet, this nutrient rich fresh water and this cold salt water, where it comes together, these two diverse bodies of water, where they come together, it is incredibly fertile.

They've discovered a whole new ecosystem underneath this. I believe that God through Christ is bringing about a whole new gospel ecosystem in a whole new people.

[30:14] The diversity is our strength when united in Christ. We live together for God's glory by sharing in this interdependence.

The seventh way we live for God's glory glory is by sharing a determination to work towards peace. In Romans chapter 12 verse 18, Paul says, if possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Experience shalom with all. not just an absence of hostility, but a fullness of affection, a fullness of trust, a fullness of goodness.

You want to be with them. What Paul is saying in Romans 12 is that our peace as a church in our relationships will be challenged and we're going to have to work on it.

When it's challenged, we will already have needed to have determined that we're going to do everything we can to pursue peace with all, especially those in this church.

[31:32] So, in light of that, I want to ask you a question. Is there a situation right now in your life that you need to take action on?

There's a lack of peace and there's still something that you can do in order to move towards peace with this other person. Matt Sear pointed out this past week, Ephesians 4 3 starts with eager.

Eagerly maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Be eager to do it. Jesus talked about it as drop your offerings before you go to the altar and get right with your brother.

Be eager to pursue peace. If there's anything unresolved, any conflict in the room between any of us, be eager to pursue peace with one another. Do everything you can.

But I also know of situations in this room where Christians in this room have done all that they can and there's still no peace. What do you do then?

[32:38] You've played out all your cards. What do you do? Well, you run to Psalm 62. You wait for the Lord in silence. You recognize that you are being shaken.

You surrender control to Him. You rest in your God knowing that He is unlimited power, unrelenting love, and He is unrivaled in His sovereignty, and you rest in His peace even though there is an unresolved peace with someone else.

You've obeyed Him as far as He can go. And now you just wait. peace. But as a subset to this point, I just want to point out that this determined to be at peace with one another, it's still going to require some dialogue.

This peace gets worked out conversationally in order for us to dwell in unity and experience this good and pleasant thing that David is describing. We've got to talk it out from time to time. when people, God's people, are living in close proximity with one another, it's just a matter of time before someone says something that annoys you or offends you or confuses you or alarms you, disappoints you, or angers you.

[34:02] Amen? Amen? When any of us realizes that we have given offense to someone or we've been offended by someone and it's not something we can overlook, you will need to talk it out with that person.

You'll need to pursue peace with that person. Now there's a couple resources here I want to point you to. Ken Sandy has a classic, it's called The Peacemaker. It is a very helpful book. I use a lot of that material in our premarital counseling. The other book that I want to highly recommend is Paul Tripp's War of Words. I'm working through that book right now with a brother in the church and we are both really benefiting from this book.

It tells you how to use your words well. We're either going to use our words for peacemaking and unity or peace breaking and discord and it all depends on what's ruling your heart at a given moment.

The point though is we all need to be determined to pursue peace with one another. It might be uncomfortable but good and pleasant is waiting.

[35:17] The eighth way we live together for God's glory is by being dedicated to show up. Membership is this formal commitment to one another.

And in Psalm 133 those making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem at some point they decided to go. At some point they decided you know what it's time to leave I gotta go show up.

Unity often boils down to a faith filled decision to just show up. Psalm 133 says remember for there the Lord commands the blessing.

Do you need help? Are there moments where you're like I just don't want to go to the service. I want to lie in bed and binge on Netflix. I don't want to go to life group.

It's been a hard week. I want an open night. I don't want to go and serve on this ministry team. It's just crazy. Let me encourage you at those moments to pull out Psalm 133 3 and say for there for there the Lord commands the blessing.

[36:42] There's life forever more on the Sunday service. Life forever more in life group. Good and pleasant things are waiting for me. Unity our unity depends upon each of us showing up and unity has a reality of being present.

The ninth way we live together for God's glory is by sharing a distinction. Do you remember in Psalm 133 the anointing oil of Aaron's head how that was a picture of being set apart for God's purpose of then there was that other comparison of the dew of Hermon and how God's people are a blessing to those around them?

In John 17 20 and 21 Jesus is praying for us and as he's praying to his father for unity he says so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

God unite them so that the world may know that you have sent me. our unity sets us apart from everybody else and it speaks a word to the world.

It validates our message about Jesus. That he's united us. That he's making a difference in us. In fact it seems as though what Jesus is saying one of the implications is the effectiveness of our evangelism depends in some measure on our unity as a church.

[38:25] Our unity distinguishes us from everybody else and it's a good and pleasant thing. It points to the fact that Jesus has come.

The tenth and final way we live together for God's glory is by sharing in God's delight. 133.3 For there the Lord commands his blessing.

Where is that? Wherever God's people are dwelling together in unity. You know what? It would be possible for us to unite in grumbling and complaining.

We see that in the Old Testament. Israel grumbling and complaining. God wasn't thrilled by that. He didn't pour out his blessing on that. Far better for us to unite in our gratitude to God for what he's done.

We have so much in common for what Christ has done. A shared forgiveness. A shared peace. A shared eternity.

[39:38] Destination. Hope. Rejoice. Rejoice. Let every tongue rejoice. One heart. One voice. Oh, church of Christ.

Rejoice. Our gratitude unites us. When we are expressing our gladness to God in gratitude, it unites us and it distinguishes us.

God's glory. Well, these are the ten ways to live together for God's glory. And as Mary Jo has taught us, like a garden is hard work, so is unity.

Unity is hard work. It requires humility. Like cultivating a garden. But over time, with all the weeding, with all the pruning, with all the intentionality, comes beauty, comes health, comes fragrance, comes fruitfulness, comes life forevermore.

God commands his blessing. Our unity is a magnet to God's blessing. blessing. So let's unite.

[41:00] Will you pray with me? God, thank you so much for your word. Thank you for Psalm 133. God, would you take these words and now press them into our hearts.

And God, would you bring about the effect that you unite us, that we are eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. And God, you would use us in this city to be a blessing to others.

for the glory of your name. Amen. Amen.