

Psalm 133

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Friends, while you're standing, let me pray. Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this morning. In Christ's name, Amen.! Yeah, please be seated. Good morning, everyone. Good morning. If you are visiting with us today, my name is Aaron Roberts. I'm one of the ministers on staff here.

Now, Jacob just preached my sermon to the kids, basically, which is fine, which is fine. Don't worry about it.

We're looking at Psalm 133. So a long time ago, three times a year, God's people would travel to Jerusalem, as Jacob has already mentioned, for these festivals. And so they would come in these large caravans, a diverse group of people in large caravans.

They're all heading in the same direction. And on their way, they would sing, and they would sing these psalms. And the psalms were a particular group of psalms called the Psalms of Ascent, and they were songs of praise. They're songs asking God for things like patience, songs of repentance. They would sort of cover a lot of theological ground.

One thing they sung about was unity, the unity that they enjoyed on the journey together, which is what this psalm is all about. And it's a very simple psalm. And so you know, there's no big sort of application at the end of this.

[1 : 3 2] In preaching workshops, they often talk about, you know, you've got to make sure you kind of land the plane. If you've ever heard that saying before, like, it'll land the plane at the end of the sermon, and like really apply it to real life.

And it comes from a desire to give people something to do at the end of your talk, which is understandable. I remember going to this Anglican professional development thing, and there was a guest speaker there.

And the main point of his talk was all about landing the plane at the end of his sermon. And David Short got up immediately afterwards and preached this brilliant sermon, this fantastic exposition of Scripture.

And then he just finished by saying, well, I'll let you guys land the plane. And then he just walked off the stage. And it was very funny and actually a little bit naughty, but it was very funny.

And he's right. Like, not every sermon has this big kind of to-do list at the end. Psalm 133, the application is just, is behold.

[2 : 3 8] It's like behold the gift of unity that God gives his people. And in our time, in our time of transition right now, in our community, what a great thing to behold.

And what a great thing to celebrate the unity that we have in the gospel. So, let's get into it. So, Psalm 133, three verses, very simple, and it's going to be a short sermon.

So, the first verse is the main idea. Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell in unity. So, this is the summary statement, and it's followed by two word pitches.

So, verse 1, unity is great. Behold it. Verse 2, it's like such and such. Verse 3, it's like such and such. Jacob, pop quiz.

Pop quiz. Verse 2 and 3, are they metaphors, analogies, or similes? Oh, this is good stuff. We have to know this.

[3 : 39] The people demand an answer. Like and as, is it simile? Is it right? I have no idea. Is it right? Is it a simile?

That's a simile, brother. There we go. So, you go, that's the structure. Let's get into the details. So, summary statement, and then two similes. All right? So, verse 1.

Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity. Okay, two words. The unity that we experience is good and it's pleasant. Okay, good means morally good.

When God's people walk together unified, it's innately good. And I think that has something to do with the fact that it's reflecting the very nature of God. God who is a community of perfectly unified persons.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, unity is not just, it's preferable to have unity. We'd prefer to have unity. No, it's inherently good. But it's not just good, it's pleasant.

[4 : 45] So, not everything that's good is pleasant, like cleaning your house. It's not pleasant, but it's a good thing. Okay, so good is this sort of objective thing. Pleasant is more subjective. The psalmist is saying when a people are unified, when we're unified, it's subjectively pleasant.

It's lovely. It's delightful. It's enjoyable. It's a much better experience, isn't it? It's like when you go to a family thing, and you know there are a couple of cousins who don't get on.

And they're in the same room together. It's like you can feel it. It's like the shadow over it. It spoils us. It's terrible. So, unity is intrinsically good because it reflects God, and it's enjoyable.

Let's keep going. Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity. And whenever you hear brothers, think brothers and sisters. When brothers dwell in unity. So, dwell means doing life together, like what we're doing here.

So, my extended family, siblings, aunties, uncles, nephews, nieces, they live 12,000 kilometers away. We get on great, right?

[5 : 55] There's never any problems between me and them. I mean, that's easy, isn't it? It's very easy to get on with people when they live on the other side of the planet. But actually dwelling together in close proximity together, that's a whole other thing.

That's harder. And it makes our unity more precious. The question is, how are they unified? Why are they unified? What's the secret sauce?

You get a whole group of people in close proximity unified. How? How are they pulling this off thousands of years ago? And how do we pull it off now?

A.W. Tozer was a Christian preacher and author. He was mid-century, last century. He wrote a very famous book called The Pursuit of God. Let me read just a little line from it here.

He says, has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same tuning fork are automatically tuned to each other?

[6 : 57] I'll read it one more time. Has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? So, here's what he means.

So the folks singing this psalm back in the days, what are they doing? They're not doing their own thing. Not living their own truth. They're all on the same journey to Jerusalem.

They're all on the same journey together to celebrate and remember God. Their gaze is Godward. They're all tuned to the same fork. That's what unified them. That's the secret sauce.

So let me read a little bit more from this quote. Pianos are of one accord by being tuned not to each other but to another standard to which they must individually bow.

So 100 worshippers meeting together, each looking to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other. So each looking to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become unity conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship.

[8 : 05] So do you see what he's saying here? The unity talked about in the psalm, it doesn't count. They're not, they didn't workshop it, right? There was no unity training sessions here. The unity that is celebrated in the psalm is this deep and enduring gift from God that happens as we look to him, as we stay on the same journey.

It's something we receive. We don't workshop it out. We don't conjure it up. We don't manufacture it. It happens as we get on the same journey.

Okay, that's verse one. Very simple. Wonderful. Now let's go to verse two and three now. And they both say it's like, similarly. So verse two, this unity we celebrate, it's like precious oil on the head running down the bed, on the bed of Aaron running down the collar of his robes.

Okay, who was Aaron? Aaron, the brother of Moses. So he was the first Hebrew priest way back in the days. And when he was consecrated, this priest had put oil on his head. So that seems like slightly interesting.

But how does it add, how does it add, how does it understand, how does it help us understand that unity is precious and good in God's people? Well, two things to notice.

[9 : 23] The oil on his head, it runs down his head. Not just on his head though. Runs down onto his beard. But not just on his beard, it runs down on his clothes.

It's trying to tell us this gift of unity that God gives us. It's excessive. It's over the top. Seems like it's a bit more than is needed. It's better than we can imagine.

I want to do a little exercise now. And don't feel uncomfortable at this. This is going to be great. This is going to be great. Okay. Hands up if you were born in Canada.

Born in Canada. Look at that. That's interesting, right? That's, I don't know, like a third or something? Okay. Hands up if you were born in not Canada, but North America, in Central America or South America.

Born or you are sort of ethnically and identify as somebody from there. Okay. A few people there. Okay. English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh descent. Identify as primarily.

[10 : 33] Yeah. Scattering. Oh, is that right? Good. Okay. Australia, New Zealand or Pacific Islands. Fantastic.

There's a few. They're scattering. They're scattering. We're like cockroaches, aren't we? We just like... We just find our way in every country in the world. All right. Africa. Africa.

Born here, but maybe ethnically African. Yep. A couple of people. A couple of people at the back there. Okay. China, Japan, Korea. China, Japan, Korea. Good smattering of people there.

Okay. The cricket nations. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh. A few people. Thank you. Thank you. A couple of people. Caribbean. Caribbean.

Thank you. I see you. I see you. Okay. Caribbean. Okay. Northern European. Sweden, Norway, Finland. Oh, I didn't know that. Okay. That's interesting.

[11 : 29] Okay. Eastern European. Eastern European. Yep. A couple of hands back to the back there. Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia. Like Malaysia. Thank you.

Thank you. Okay. And if I missed anyone, shout it out. What's that? Middle East. Thank you. Middle East. Middle East. Thank you. Anyone else?

Who else have I missed? What have I missed up there? What's that? Western Europe. Western Europe. Western Europe. Yes. Western Europe. Fantastic. Look at that. Look at us together.

Look at that. All of us together. Praising God. Under his word. Looking out for each other. On pilgrimage together. We're waiting for a new rector.

We're not freaking out. We're unified. Right? Because we have a Godward gaze. Despite all the differences. Our unity is wonderfully excessive.

[12 : 28] I think. God is not stingy. When he gave this particular gift. To our church. Behold how good it is. Behold how good.

This is. Okay. The other thing to note. About this. Little simile here. Is the downwardness of the oil. Right? Do you hear. There's a picture of downward. Downward.

Downward. Downward. Descending. Descending. Descending. It's a reminder. Another reminder. Like all good things. We have in the world. That unity.

This gift of unity. Is a gift from above. It's a true unity. Comes from above. The fact that we have so many people here. From different groups. And we're unified. We're being told again.

This is not an achievement. We're not clever. It's not because we're clever about this. We haven't workshoped this. It's a very very good gift. That God has given us.

[13 : 23] And that's something to celebrate. And I think it's one of these things. We don't celebrate enough. Or think about. Okay. Let's move on to the next word picture. Verse three. It's like the dew of Hermon. Which falls on the mountains of Zion.

From there the Lord has commanded the blessing. Life forevermore. Again. Downward movement. Okay. So Mount Hermon. What's that all about? That's the highest mountain in Israel. And because of the elevation.

Dew forms on top of the mountain. And because of that. It's a lush place. It's lush. There's lots of life. Mount Zion. Is a quarter of the size. So naturally. It is not going to get dew.

So why is unity. Like dew on Mount Zion. A couple of things. Firstly. There's the downward piece. But secondly.

Dew would never fall on Mount Zion. That would be a supernatural thing. That's a super. That wouldn't occur. If it happened. It would be a miracle. And that's what the gospel of Christ does for us.

[14 : 20] It creates a supernatural bond. Unity. Between people. What the Holy Spirit has done in this church. Thirdly. Why is there unity like dew on Mount Zion? It was on Mount Zion that the people would gather at the end of the pilgrimage.

And what the dew did on Mount Hermon create life and flourishing. It does for us as we gather. That's part of the picture as well. The dew brings life and unity and flourishing.

And maybe we're stretching the picture a little bit too far here. But the dew comes quickly. Appearing like kind of out of thin air. Almost magically. Like our unity.

It shows up. It just kind of shows up. And in our community. I see it showing up in like short tender conversations after a service. Gatherings.

Small gatherings in homes. Encouragements. Nods of recognition. Waving to people. Welcoming them to church. In quiet secret prayers for each other.

[15 : 21] Just us representing God to one another. These things are like dew. They appear quietly. And they're magic. Okay. Let's finish off here.

Friends. It's a short psalm. Short sermon. So let me say this. There's no real action point here. I think the action point is behold.

It's like behold. Look at this amazing thing God has done for us. This precious unity. And friends. There is. There is one explanation for our unity.

And that is we have all bowed the knee before King Jesus. And he's given us this incredible blessing. Despite our differences. And it's a thing to treasure.

And friends. If we lose this unity. There'd be one explanation for that. And that would be with taking our eyes off Jesus. And we're doing our own thing. And we're off on our own little adventures.

[16 : 22] We're leaving the caravan. Well let's not do that. Let's not do that friends. I remember if you were at the gala. We played these videos.

Where I interviewed these old employees. And I was very struck by what Joella Erickson said. She worked here 20 something years ago. And I said. What's your message for St. John's for the next 100 years?

And just straight away she just said. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Let's do that. And we'll continue to enjoy God's unity. Amen. Amen. For more information visit www.fema.gov