

January 31, 2021

“Community As a Gift of God” Psalm 133

FCF: A world torn by disunity that longs for something else

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Community is a gift of God to His people
(anchor) to be shared with the world.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

We are a conflicted society. We see it in the recent election and the close numbers in the results. We hear it in the commentary from both sides on those results. We read it in our social media posts and the ugly combativeness put on public display. We witness it in the shocking video clips from January 6th and the storming of the U. S. Capitol. We are a conflicted society.

In the President’s Inaugural Address, he called the nation to “unity”. Some received that with skepticism, understandably concerned as to what that meant. But, skeptic or not, there is a stirring deep within at the mention of this, as though some ancient memory was being resurfaced.

Our world longs for this. But is unity possible? If so, how? How could it be possible?

SCRIPTURE READING: [Psalm 133](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

We don’t know the context of when David wrote this. It could have been when he finally had the nation behind him and his throne was established. We do know it was used years later as a “song of ascent” – sung by pilgrims of the twelve tribes of Israel, coming from different towns and villages, as they made their way up to Jerusalem and the Temple for the annual festivals.

We also know the images are rich and worth unpacking. The key is in how “running down” shows up three times – twice in v.2 and then also in the Hebrew of v.3 (as the dew “falls” on the mountains of Zion). Meaning that there is movement. This isn’t stagnant. There is an effect ([READ Psalm 133:1](#)). This a gift of God to the people of God for a hurting world.

Community is a gift of God. It is “good” - the very word used of all creation in Genesis 1. It is good and “pleasant” - delightful, lovely in its appeal and effect. “Behold!” Relationships lived out the way they are meant to be - this is something that has to descend. It has to come down. It’s a gift. True community is a gift of God to His people to be shared with the world.

But what would it mean to live this out? Psalm 133 points us to three things about true community. First, that it stands out. Second, that it gives life. And, third, how it takes root.

I. STANDS OUT

So there are three parts, the first in how this community stands out ([READ Psalm 133:2](#)).

A) The Imagery

1. The oil

Think of the imagery for a moment. This oil, likely olive oil, had many uses in those days. It also had a way of leaving a sheen on the skin and fragrance in the air. But beyond the practical everyday uses, such oil was used to consecrate, to set apart, to confer authority, to ordain.

2. Aaron the priest

After all, it's the beard and robes of Aaron. As the high priest, his was an intercessory role, to be a mediator standing between parties. He was the one taking the blood of the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, going behind the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

B) The Significance

1. Israel's calling

The significance of all this? Aaron's calling pointed to the calling of the nation. When Israel walked in God's commands, living in community, she was carrying out her calling in the world.

2. The world's response

For she would stand out, drawing attention not to herself but to the God who redeemed her (**READ Deuteronomy 4:5-8**). Jesus spoke to this even more specifically (**READ John 13:34-35**).

Such community, following God's commands in this way, stands out and gets attention.

Application:

Such community gets the world's attention. Which means we have to be wary of the world's messages that would subvert this calling. We're told, "*Don't give up your rights. Be real, true to who you are.*" You can hear the me-centeredness at the core of it all. We fall prey to this far more than we know. And it is all so toxic, so poisonous, to sustaining relationships.

We're called to live as salt and light, as a city on a hill, as a distinctive people loving one another in a distinctive way. Which is a way that will give credence to the faith we proclaim.

Community is a gift of God to be shared with the world. And it will inevitably stand out.

II. GIVES LIVE

That's clear in this image of oil. But not only that, we read of life (**READ Psalm 133:3a**).

A) The Imagery

1. The dew of Hermon

Again, let's think about the imagery. Mt. Hermon is the tallest mountain in the region, 9200', sitting at the northern border of ancient Israel. "The dew of Hermon" was proverbial for plentiful dew on the ground each morning. The snow melt seeps into the channels and pores of the rock, feeding springs at the base which eventually merge together and form the Jordan River.

2. Falling on the mountains of Zion

David is speaking here of the slopes of Hermon extending down all the way to Jerusalem, to Mt. Zion, sharing the life, growth, and newness. Keep in mind this region is arid and dry. Moisture – so critical for vegetation and livestock – can be hard to come by. And so it is deeply prized.

B) The Significance

1. Lifelessness without it

The significance of all this? There is a lifelessness without such community. It is dry, arid, and barren. It is at best going through motions. There is an emptiness to isolation and estrangement.

2. Flourishing with it

That said, there can be flourishing with community, sharing life. It's how things are supposed to be. It's how we are supposed to be. We experience life through community with one another.

John Stott noted this (READ), "*Unity is as fragrant as oil and is as refreshing as dew.*"

Application:

When we come to see what community brings, we should prize it. We should prize it and pursue it, laying hold of opportunities (think Community Groups), and take initiative as well.

Prizing, pursuing, and protecting. This is too valuable a thing to let harm come to it. It's our incentive to peacemaking, to patience, to needed repentance, confession, and forgiveness. It's why we need to take gossip and slander off of our list of "acceptable sins" - even online.

Community is a gift of God to be shared with the world. And it truly gives life.

III. TAKES ROOT

So as this community flows and descends, it stands out and gives life. But where does it descend from? What is its source? Here's the thing. Such community attracts to the gospel. And it is an inevitable result of the gospel (READ Psalm 133:1, 3b). It descends as it takes root.

A) What This Really Is

1. Not just things in common

Understand that this community is built on far more than just shared experiences. It's far deeper.

2. But a work of grace

It is a work of grace - not something we can earn from God but something He freely grants to us.

Illustration:

The First Great Awakening was a revival that swept through the American Colonies in the 1730's and 1740's. A key figure in this was Jonathan Edwards. In 1741, Edwards wrote *The Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God*. Care to guess what was the greatest evidence of revival? Love for God and for each other. Why? Its sole source is the Spirit of God.

B) How This Can Really Be

1. Not from us

Think through the phrasing here. It can't be from us. There's even a hint of tragic irony in that this is coming from David. There in Jerusalem, his sins would eventually bring down upon his people a discord and division that would spread from his house to every corner of the kingdom.

2. But from Christ

The source of this community can't be David. Or us. But the Son of David, the Prince of Peace.

Community is rooted in an embracing of the gospel. That's where it has to begin.

Application:

On our own, we are more guilty and sinful than we ever dared to fear. But in Christ, we are more cherished and loved than we ever dared to hope. That is what gives us the humility and boldness, the softness and strength, the kindness and courage to truly do relationships well.

Preach that daily to yourself. Pray that this reality would permeate all our relationships. And pray that we would be what we say in the Creed – one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Community is a gift of God to be shared with the world. We need to live that out.

CONCLUSION:

In J. R. R. Tolkien's wonderful story, *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins is set out on a long journey through mountains, forests, and dark waters. Along the way, Bilbo and his traveling companions come to rest at the hospitable home of the great Elrond ([READ *The Hobbit* quote](#)):

(It) was perfect, whether you liked food, or sleep, or work, or story-telling, or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all...All of them, the ponies as well, grew refreshed and strong in a few days there. Their clothes were mended as well as their bruises, their tempers and their hopes.

That's Rivendell. How many of us could stand such mending? And how might we give it?

We are to be a living demonstration of the gospel in all we do, including right here ([READ Psalm 133:1](#)). Community is a gift of God to His people to be shared with the world.

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