

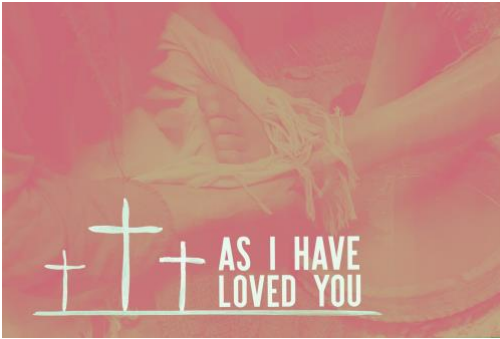
Sermon #12: Harmony in HIM

July 9, 2023

Text: **Romans 15:1-7**

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Sermon Open

Our unity in Christ bridges our differences and cultivates harmony in our relationships within the body. In this 12th and final sermon on the 'Family of God', we explore how welcoming one another, despite our differences, reinforces this unity. Those who are in Christ – the church - are called by him to strengthen the weak, endure one another, and labor for each other's joy. This we do because Christ has done it for us. When our life is joined to His, we will live as He does. So we are reminded again that the strength of our church community will always be determined by the maturity of our fellowship with Jesus. As we seek to build up the church, our call is love Christ better, together.

Exposition of the Text

The heart of our passage for this lesson is **Romans 15:7, Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God**. To **welcome** here means *to accept or to admit kindly into ones society or friendship*. The command is that Christians are supposed to welcome other Christians, while the qualifier is **AS Christ welcomes you**. So the first question we should ask is "How does Christ welcome us"? Does Jesus welcome us with our flaws? Does he welcome us even when we have offended him? Does he welcome us despite our differences with him? And the answer to all of those questions is a resounding YES! Therefore we must welcome each other in the same manner. If you want to test the maturity of your fellowship with Jesus, then consider how willing you are to welcome Christians who have offended you the most OR who are the most unlike yourself. Sharing in the life of Jesus, we are to bring other believers close to us without partiality.

Weak and Strong

The Apostle Paul mentions in **15:1** that **the strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves**. In that day Jewish Christians were coming to Christ but also holding onto some of their traditions – through their diet or the observance of religious days. While Paul was vehemently opposed to false teachers that required observance of the law to be saved, he showed grace to those who saw their practices not as necessary to salvation but as a way of honoring the Lord (**Romans 14:6**). At the same time, division was rising up among those Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who felt they honored God through the celebration of freedom from Jewish restrictions (**Romans 14:1-6**). Paul's reminder was that the Kingdom of God was about Christ and the Spirit of God living in all who believed in Him (**Romans 14:17**). He urged Christians to stay focused on the essentials of their faith and to maintain their unity in Christ by not quarreling over non-essential items.

Application

While in our day, dietary laws and religious observances are not a point of conflict for most believers, many differing opinions still exist on non-essential matters. We need to remind ourselves that Christian fellowship is about Jesus. We may differ on our views of alcohol, participating in worldly holidays, politics, medicine, or raising children – but we can (and must) agree on Jesus (**Rom 15:5-6**). The more (or less) harmony – like mindedness - we have with Jesus, the more (or less) harmony we will have with one another. If we want to glorify God, then we must be willing to receive one another – with all of our differences – and to labor for one another's joy (**Rom 15:2**) just as Christ has done for us. This type of love is the one debt that we are obligated to pay one another (**Rom 15:1, Rom 13:8**). This is fitting for the church.