

12/31/23

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FB 5

**Sermon – Unity of the Spirit (2024 Challenge)**

**Scripture – Luke 12:51, Ephesians 4:1-8, Romans 16:16-20, John 17:20-23**

**Main Message – The world might be getting torn to pieces, but God doesn't want that for His people.**

I'm sticking with my annual challenge to come up with something to work on each year that is important and vital for all Christians. This last year was.... Thy Will be Done. Prior years were, Walk with the Holy Spirit, Prayer, Studying the Bible, and even a year where I said – you choose something to draw closer to God. This year.... Drum role please – Unity of the Spirit!

Does anyone think that the upcoming year isn't going to be filled with division and hatred? It is guaranteed to be this way. Why? Because God is not the central figure in everyone's life. Hear what Jesus says in Luke 23:51-52. That division comes because of the hardness of the hearts of men and some will not believe. For those who believe His Spirit brings unity and without it there will be chaos, division, disrespect, and strife. These are the time-tested tactics of the enemy of all Humanity. Wherever there is strife, you see the success of the enemy of us all. As pastor I have a lot of hopes and desires for the congregation of believers. I want you all to do all those things I've asked of you each year as a focus. The Unity of the Spirit is a bit different. You see, having been through a couple of church melt downs and seeing strife among those who profess to know of God's love and the bad example and reputation that seeps out into the community. I am hyper vigilant with regard to such things. It isn't that people can't disagree or argue over the finer points of things, but it must be done with respect and love. We have an election year and people will throw around endless, "I Hate Name Here" We've heard people say, I'm leaving the country if so and so gets elected again. Well, I will help pack your bags. We are called the United States, but now, we are the Divided States. My sphere of influence is small. What might be in my control to influence is our Church and all those who worship the same Lord as us. That is our strength. When people come in here, they feel acceptance, love and peace. That is what it is supposed to be. Who is going to feel worshipful when they see a bunch of back-biting gossiping, parishioners surrounding them?

**Read Ephesians**

Do we have chronic issues here – no. We have had some briefly acute ones that lost us some folks from time to time though. I want us to reflect what Ephesians is telling us. There are roles for everyone and more work to do so for us to be effective in a world that is stacked against us, we must dig even deeper to hold onto the entirety of the body of Christ. It requires humbleness of heart, difficult, yet loving conversations that respects people's acts of service. None of you do what I would do, but I don't tell you to do it my way. I leave that to the Spirit of God moving you.

**Read Romans**

See, Satan is happy to have us weak, divided, and therefore ineffective. In one sense he has it. We just need to make sure we are bonded in the Unity of the Spirit of God. God's plan will move forward when we are bonded together in love and the Unity of the Spirit. Churches split up, pastors leave or get fired when things are divided. God doesn't want a church divided. He needs it whole even if its smaller. It takes a long time and a lot of work to recover from that. Why? Because people are more interested in what they want than what God wants. Thy will be done is still valid this year, just like all the other desires I have for your Spiritual Growth and relationship to God. This year is a reminder that for us to continue to grow and attract more people to serve the Lord we need to keep demonstrating our Love for one another. Satan will be at the door trying to get in, but your Unity of Spirit will keep him out. Resist Him in this vital way. **Read John 17**

**Amen**