

sermon study summary

STATE OF THE CHURCH – VISION ADDRESS PART 2

Dr. Henry Schorr

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In today's message, Pastor Henry talks about ways Satan tempts us to be **DIVIDED** as Christians and **DISTRACTED** from our God-given mission. Jesus prayed that God would protect His church from disunity and division.

God's will for the church is to be unified in Christ, and one of the fallouts of the pandemic has been disunity/division in our world, nation, our church, families, friendships and small groups; COVID taught us that unity is 'fragile', and can divide any group. We know that achieving and maintaining unity is tough, and it doesn't come to us naturally; however, it is important to Jesus, and His sacrificial death on the cross shows us that we must strive to attain and preserve unity **because** we love Him. God wants His Church to focus on Jesus, love Him, love each other, and NOT allow anything to divide us in this purpose. The Church's true enemy is not those who dislike us or disagree with us – but the division among **us** as **Believers**.

The identifying mark of a genuine Christ follower, and a test of our devotion to Him, is *how we treat **one another*** – how we talk, respond, pray and care for each other. Loving other Christians is not easy because no 'group' is perfect. However, if we focus on the essential things that unite us in **Christ**, like the Scriptures and Christ's mission for us, we can **choose** to focus on Jesus, forgive others and love them as Christ forgives us through His grace and sacrificial love on the cross. A loving church has no elitism, snobbery, unhealthy competition or discrimination of any kind. Only God can give us supernatural love, grace and patience to deal with others, and we must seek God's assistance with genuine humility in order to achieve unity.

God created us for Himself, not for our personal fulfillment, and His purpose is for us to be in a right relationship with Him, through Jesus, and join Him in bringing His spiritually lost children into a close and personal relationship with Him; we achieve this by loving others and sharing Jesus with them. However, Satan wants to **DISTRACT** us from fulfilling God's mission for us by using means such as the overuse of our smartphones, television, social media, desire for power, possessions, etc., basically tempting us to focus primarily on the temporary things of life instead of the eternal. If we allow earthly distractions to consume us, we lose our focus on Jesus, thereby disobeying God.

Jesus calls us to love our enemies, and when people embrace Him as their living Lord, Savior and King they are changed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, from the 'inside out'. As we partner with the Holy Spirit – through prayer, loving God, loving one another and others, and through sharing the Gospel, our world begins to change – *one life at a time!*

Hebrews 12:1 says we are required to: "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles". Because our minds have been renewed through the truth of God's Word, we invest our God-given time, talents and financial resources to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. Holding fast to God's truth – we pray in all our groups, that in obedience to our Lord, Savior and King – Jesus Christ, we will love God, one another, and love others to become *fully devoted followers of Jesus*. This is God's purpose for us!



sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. In a group setting (family, church, friends, work, etc.), what would you say you value most: harmony or truth? Explain.
2. How many different projects, books, hobbies, etc., do you have on the go right now? How easy is it for you to be distracted from them?

UP – PURSUE GOD

Read *John 13:34-35, 17:20-21, Luke 6:32, Acts 2:42-47.*

3. Identify what the early Christians were doing to live out their faith. What was so counter-cultural that people were being saved daily?

Read *Philippians 2:3-4.*

4. What threatens unity amongst Christians? What is the cost of disunity?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Share an experience where you learned to love and live in unity with another believer who was very different from you (e.g., personality, opinions, interests). What was helpful in achieving this?

Read *Luke 19:10, John 20:21, 2 Corinthians 4:18 and Hebrews 12:1.*

6. What does it look like for you (or your group) to be sent by Jesus? What helps you keep focused on the mission? What distracts you?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Is there anything holding you back from loving God, being in community, or restoring a fractured relationship? What is it? Has God placed anyone specifically on your mind to pray for, serve, invite into your community, and share Jesus with? Who is it? Journal your answers, what God is saying, and your intentions. Share this with someone.

The Word (NIV)

John 13:34-35 ³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 17:20-21 ²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Luke 6:32 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

Acts 2:42-47 ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Philippians 2:3-4 ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

John 20:21 ²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

2 Corinthians 4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

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