

Sermon:

One Spirit, One Hope

Ephesians 4:4

He is Risen!  
Hallelujah!

Christ Church of Wiesbaden: Greetings in the name of our victorious Lord Christ Jesus!  
Today is Easter Sunday and we gather *in spirit* to worship God for his greatest victory.  
Christ is risen from the dead.

The Apostle Paul, quoting the Old Testament, writes in 1 Corinthians 15:54:

**54** ...“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

**55** “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

Jesus said in John 10:18:

**18** No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again...”

And take it up again he did.  
Jesus has authority over life and death.  
And because he lives, we also will live.

This is victory! The greatest victory the world has ever seen!  
And oh what an important victory it is for us because now we have hope.

Many of us can think back to a time when we did not believe in the truth of the resurrection.  
We had no hope for eternal life and so we did our level best not to think about death too seriously.  
Because whenever we thought about death truthfully and with sobriety, it caused us to shudder.

There is nothing so ugly, degrading or sad as death.  
Whatever glory we have on earth, whatever beauty or fitness, whatever riches, in death we lose it all.

When we don't know Christ, death is only sad.  
Because, outside of Christ, death wins.  
Death always wins.  
And this is to say nothing about eternal condemnation.  
But in Christ, death doesn't just not win. Death is dead.  
Because Jesus had the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again.

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have **eternal life**.”

Eternal Life is our future because Jesus died and rose again.  
And this is **the most important truth in life** and **the greatest hope** of the Bible.

And so on this Easter Sunday, as we study the bible, our focus will be on a passage that easily relates to the hope of the resurrection.

In Ephesians 4:4, Paul urges us on to unity as a church because unity is vital to our mission.  
And one of our primary missions as a church is to proclaim the message of Christ's resurrection.

And for the church to succeed in this mission, we have to be unified.  
We can't be factional and competitive.  
We can't be arrogant or petty.  
We have to be unified.  
The success of the mission depends upon our unity.

And so, in Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul urges us on to unity by giving us 7 instances where we are, in fact, unified.  
Paul doesn't just give us reason to act unified. He gives us facts.

In a very real sense, he tells us to **act unified** because, in Christ, **we are unified**.

So, Let's read Ephesians 4:1-6.

Our study will be on just the latter half of verse 4.

**Ephesians 4:1** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

This is God's word.

The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.

**[Pray.]**

As a church, our effectiveness at proclaiming the message of the resurrection depends largely upon our unity.

A unified church works efficiently and it is a great recommendation for the gospel.

And so, this morning we are going to consider two more ways that we as Christians are in fact unified.

A sermon outline is available in the downloads section on the website.

It is a PDF file.

In addition to that, there is a complete worship order and also a sermon manuscript for those who find it easier to read along.

And, the first point of our study is...

I. One Spirit

Paul tells us that we should be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

And then he tells us that there is "One Spirit.

The Spirit he is referring to is the Holy Spirit.

He is a person, he is God and he is the third person of the Trinity.

He is not a force.

He is personal and one of the most astounding truths of the Christian faith is that the Holy Spirit is alive in every believer.

In John 14:23, Jesus said:

**John 14:23** "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

In Galatians 4:6, Paul wrote:

**Galatians 4:6** And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

So according to these two verses, the Holy Spirit of God lives in us.

He is in our hearts and this means He is at the very core of our being.

When Paul tells us there is One Spirit, he does so to encourage us to unity.

Because the mere fact of having One Spirit indwelling us does not automatically equate to the church being unified.

We all still have a great deal of indwelling sin.

The Spirit and the flesh do battle with one another.

And all of the dysfunction we see in our churches and in ourselves is because we do not yield ourselves perfectly to the Spirit all the time.

We are all still sinners.

Yet we need to remember that, in the church, there is One Spirit who lives in every believer.

The fact that we have One Spirit speaks to a great opportunity for us as a church- both locally and globally. The Spirit gives us the opportunity to have a great and far reaching unity.

I hope you have had opportunities to experience this.  
Where great numbers of people and churches display the Spirit of unity in the bond of peace.

The Spirit causes unity in many ways and I will name just a few.

**First, the Spirit brings unity through teaching us humility.**

God's Spirit teaches believers to see God for who He really is and ourselves for who we really are.  
God is holy, good and just.

And we are created in his image and yet we sinful and justly deserving of God's wrath.

The Spirit teaches us that the only way of salvation is in Jesus Christ.

And so on the basis of these three facts, every Christian has a fundamental humility about them.

Notice I didn't say, Christians SHOULD have a fundamental humility about them.

No, Christians do have a fundamental humility about them.

If a person lacks this fundamental humility, I would seriously question whether they are a Christian at all.

For to be a Christian is to be one who recognizes God's holiness, our sinfulness and Christ as the Rescuer.

When we have taken these truths to heart, the foundation of our life shifts from trust in self to dependence upon God.

The center of our spiritual gravity is no longer over our fear and pride, but rather over trust and dependence upon Christ.

It's as noticeable as the difference in attitudes of the self-made man and the dependent child.

The self-made man is proud and self-assured.

The dependent child knows he needs to be led.

And therefore, humility is perhaps the first and most important accomplishment of the Spirit of God.

Now Christians can still be proud and arrogant, but hopefully that is just a veneer.

Hopefully it's just an inconsistency and an instance of remaining sin.

Pride and self-confidence cannot define a Christian **fundamentally**.

Because if you are a Christian, then you know that you made a mess that you couldn't clean up. Only God could.

And to clean up the mess required the blood of Jesus Christ.

This is the offense of the cross.

To be a Christian means to profess: "I need that. I need the cross."

And more than that, I need the resurrection.

Faith in the message of the cross and the resurrection breeds a fundamental humility in every believer.

This humility is not the product of any human virtue.

It the work of God's Spirit alone.

Now, it's not hard to see how humility leads to unity.

Because when we are humble, we do not think first of ourselves and our own honor or ease.

Instead we consider others as more important than ourselves.

When we are humble, we give the highest priority to the interests of Christ.

Have you ever had to solve a problem with a proud person?

In those instances, it's all about them retaining their position or being proved right.

But when we have to solve a problem with a humble person, it's not about them and their reputation.

They are willing to relinquish control.

And in Christ we are united by one Spirit who teaches us humility.

**The second main influence of the Spirit** is love for God and for Jesus Christ.

The one Spirit in us motivates us to have one common first love.

When we have this common love, working together and doing life together in the church is a delight.  
Because there is a common devotion.  
There is a common appreciation for the work Christ has done for us and a common desire to fulfill the work he has for us.

In Colossians 1, Paul tells us what Epaphras has said about the church there.

Paul writes:

**Colossians 1:7** Epaphras is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf **8** and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

This love is not just a feeling or a vibe.

It is the work of God in a group of believers who are committed to Christ and to one another.

In **Colossians 2:2**, Paul prays that the Colossians hearts would be **“knit together in love.”**

And as a church, this love in the Spirit ought to always be evident.

In our worship, teaching, fellowship and in the way we care for one another.

I've been to many churches, I'm sure you have to, where I didn't agree with some doctrinal point or some element of style.

But if love for Christ and for people was evident, then those other differences became much smaller.

The Holy Spirit works in us to produce love for God and people.

And as we are led by the Spirit, we will have this love and unity will be the result.

One more work of the Spirit that promotes unity is **a Christ-like disposition or attitude.**

In Galatians 5:22, Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit.

And this fruit of the Spirit produces **unity** but not **uniformity.**

Every Christian has a unique personality and unique gifts.

And the Spirit works in us to purify our personalities and gifts so that they are Spiritual.

Therefore, as we are conformed to Christ, we don't cease to be ourselves.

We don't become uniform and indistinguishable from one another.

Rather as we are Spiritual, the true colors of our personalities really shine with all the vibrancy they were meant to shine with.

And so as we walk by the Spirit, we have the essential qualities of:

**Galatians 5:22 ...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control;**

None of these qualities nullify our individual personalities. They don't make us uniform.

But they do make us unified.

Additionally, they cause us to be good recommendations to the outside world on what it means to be a Christian.

There is one Spirit.

The second point in the outline is...

## II. One Hope

As believers, we all are called to One Hope.

Hope is one of those words which can be a noun or a verb.

Hope is something you can do and it is something you can have.

You can hope for heaven and you can have hope for heaven.

But hope can also refer to the thing hoped for.

For instance, as Christians, heaven is our hope.

And so hope can be used in a number of ways in the bible.

And as believers, we are called to one hope.  
This means that we should all be headed in the same direction in our hearts and minds.

To hope in heaven is to invest your heart there.  
It means longing for heaven more than you long for anything else.

Now of course this is made much easier when life is going poorly for us.  
If you are in a bad marriage or your job is extremely difficult or your ill health is making you miserable, hope for heaven is easier.  
Yet hope for heaven is difficult when things seem to be going well.

It's no wonder that Jesus said: Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  
To be poor in spirit is to recognize that nothing in this world can satisfy.  
And that our deepest longings will only be finally fulfilled in heaven.

Jesus also said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Because when we are rich, we are comfortably numbed by our riches.  
The rich are not contented by their wealth.  
Wealth never brings contentment.  
But wealth can bring just enough satisfaction to keep us from going outside of our comfort zones and hoping for heaven.

I have heard it said that "some Christians are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good."  
Now I must confess, and I mean this in all honesty, that I have never met such a Christian.  
I have never met a Christian whose hope was firmly fixed on eternal life who was not also extremely generous and diligent in this world.

It is impossible to be too heavenly minded.  
Because to have our hope set completely on heaven is to finally be able to put the joys and sorrows of this life in their proper place.  
If our hope is in heaven, then when our health fails or when we face poverty, these losses are not ultimate things for us.  
We can never be brought too low by these difficulties because our hope was not finally in our health or wealth.  
And when things go well, if our hope is in heaven, we won't foolishly set our hearts on these easier and more comfortable times.

Hope stabilizes us spiritually and even psychologically.  
By it we do not despair when things go poorly and we don't become deluded when things go well.

In Psalm 62:10, David wrote:

**10** ...if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:17:

**1 Timothy 6:17** As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

To hope in God is never something we can do too much.

In 1 Peter 1:13, Peter commands us to:

**1 Peter 1:13** set your hope **fully** on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This means we are to be **unreserved** in our hope for heaven.  
I believe that as Christians, we have an aversion to hoping in heaven too much.  
Perhaps we have bought the lie that such hope will render us less useful in this world.  
But what is more probably the case is that we are rich and we just don't want to give up comfort and control.

C. S. Lewis wrote:

“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most for the next. The Apostles themselves, who set foot on the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’ : aim at earth and you will get neither. It seems a strange rule, but something like it can be seen at work in other matters. Health is a great blessing, but the moment you make health one of your main, direct objects you start becoming a crank and imagining there is something wrong with you. You are only likely to get health provided you want other things more – food, games, work, fun, open air. In the same way, we shall never save civilization as long as civilization is our main object. We must learn to want something even more.”

When our hope is primarily on the pleasures of this world, then our ability to enjoy those pleasures is diminished.

When our desire is just to have the next thing or the next experience, then we are never really able to enjoy anything.

But when our hope is in heaven, we can finally put the pleasures of this world in their proper place.

We learn that everything we have is a gift- from the roof over our heads to the air we breathe.

It's all a gift.

And therefore we don't have to be consumed with the hunt for bigger, better, and faster.

We don't constantly need to upgrade our lives.

Because we know that heaven is the only upgrade that will truly make us content.

In Acts 23:6, Paul was on trial and in his defense he said:

**It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.**

The resurrection and our hope for eternal life is to be **the orientation** of every believer.

It's the direction of hope that all of us are to run in.

And this common orientation produces unity.

Because when our hope is fixed upon heaven, we aren't aiming at any worldly kingdom.

Not for ourselves individually, and not for the church corporately.

And so I ask you, where is your hope?

Is your hope primarily on the next thing you desire to accomplish?

Or is your hope set on heaven?

On an inheritance that can never spoil, perish or fade.

This season of quarantine and travel restrictions has upended many lives.

And it forces us to question where our hope really is.

Where is your hope when you cannot see your friends? When you cannot make travel plans?

When there is so much uncertainty, where is your hope?

Pandemics will come and go.

Wars will come and go.

Riches, health, family, friends.

All of these things can and will be lost.

But our heavenly hope will never perish spoil or fade.

And as believers we have One Spirit and One Hope.

Amen.

Benediction:

**Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.