



MATTHEW

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

The King's Unity!

Matthew 18:12-20

Message #51 of 80 – S1084

Sermon given on February 11, 2024



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The King's Unity!

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Opening Comments

- **For those of you watching online, we will be partaking of Communion. If you would like to join us, grab some juice and a cracker.**
- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 18**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The Savior-King and His Kingdom**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The King's Unity!**
 - The nature of God is unity.
- Unity: the state of being united or joined as a whole.**
- God is One, represented by three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
 - This is the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity.
 - Jesus told the disciples that He was building His church – one church!
 - The context for verses 12 to 20 are verses 6 to 11.
 - Let's read those first.
 - **Matthew 18:6-11**
 - In today's text is the parable of the Lost Sheep.
 - This parable also appears in Luke 15:1-7.
 - In Luke's gospel Jesus applies this parable to lost sinners.
 - But here in Matthew, He applies it to wandering believers.
 - This reminds us to always interpret Scripture based on its context.

Mark Moore

"Jesus used a similar metaphor in two different parables, in two different contexts, to make two different (albeit similar) points."

- In that text (6 to 11) was a warning about causing one of God's little ones to stray.
- Here is instruction for when one chooses to stray.
- **Matthew 18:12**

- We are a community of forgiven people.
- All of us were lost sheep that Jesus found and rescued from our sins.
- Some sheep will choose to wander away from the flock.
- This parable is about keeping the flock together.
- When someone gets saved, they become a part of God's flock – His one flock.
- Jesus created one church.
- This implies God's design for the church includes unity.
- **Matthew 18:13-14**
- He is especially sensitive to those who lack faith or experience who are more vulnerable to wandering away from Him.
- Jesus cares about every person who has put their faith in Him and if they wander, He is going to seek them out and try to bring them back into the flock.
- While most Bibles put a section break between verses 14 and 15, the original language indicates that it is the same theme.
- **Matthew 18:15**
- 'Moreover if...' is literally 'And if...'
- Sin breaks unity.
- Verses 15 to 17 are often referred to as church discipline.
- The purpose of these verses is not to punish the believer who sins, but to restore unity, first with God and then with one another.
- 'brother' = another believer.
- When a believer sins against another believer, it is the first step to that sinning believer wandering away from Christ's flock.
- These verses are meant to engage the body in doing the hard work with Christ of keeping the flock together, so they do not wander too far.
- We might be tempted to turn away from or reject someone who sins against us.
- The question we need to answer is, 'Am I responsible for the spiritual welfare of that believer?'
- We might automatically respond, 'No!'
- All sin separates. Sin separates us from God and from other people.

- If unity is God's ideal, then rejecting a sinning believer cannot be the right response.
- God may have put you in that sinning believer's life to help them back (**Galatians 6:1**).

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

- 'gained your brother' – The point of going to your fellow believer is to restore unity.
- Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and to love others (Matthew 22:37-40).
- It is not loving to let a wandering believer stay separated from their Savior God.
- We should do everything in our power to restore that believer into the flock.
- God's will is unity.
- The wandering sheep cannot be expected to find their way back to the flock on their own.
- Someone must love them enough to seek them and lead them back (**James 5:19-20**).

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

- Unity in the body of Christ, the church, is achieved through biblical faith and obedience and submission to the will of God as He reveals it.
- Unity can be broken by weakness of faith, or by disobedience, either through ignorance or willfully following one's own desires.
- All sin damages unity.
- It separates the sinner from God and other people.
- The first step is to go to the sinning believer privately and let them know what they have done.
- The desire must be reconciliation through repentance.
- But what do you do if that doesn't work?
- **Matthew 18:16**
- 'will not hear' = Refuses to acknowledge their sin and repent.
- This is not meant to gang up on the sinning believer.

- This also should be done privately.
- The one or two more should be people who are spiritually mature enough to help reconcile and restore unity.
- This is an important step.
- Just because you believe someone has sinned against you doesn't mean they have.
- Illustration: Say Chuck says that I am not a very good singer.
- I go to him privately and he will not repent of his terrible attack on my character and personal identity.
- I ask David and Larry to meet with us to put Chuck in his place.
- They could then let me know that having an opinion that I am not a very good singer is not a sin. And, he is right, you don't sing well.
- A necessary part of reconciliation is humility on both sides.
- Jesus goes to tell us what to do if that doesn't work.
- **Matthew 18:17**
- 'tell it to the church' – If the sinner remains unrepentant, they should be brought before the leadership of the church.
- This could be to the pastor or in some cases to the Board of Elders.
- The purpose is to seek reconciliation for the purpose of restoring unity.
- We might question why Jesus is making such a big deal about this.
- Disunity is like leaven in dough.
- It may start out small, but it will grow and affect the whole church.
- 'like a heathen' – Treat them as you would an unbeliever.
- That doesn't mean you reject them.
- You treat them as someone who needs to meet their Savior.
- Also, you don't expect them to act like a believer. They need Jesus.
- **Matthew 18:18-20**
- The context of verses 18-20 are the previous verses regarding striving toward unity in the body.
- If the church decides on a course of action in disciplining an unrepentant sinner who claims to be a believer, they can do so with the understanding that they have God's agreement.

- This presumes that they are submitted to the leading of God's Word and the Holy Spirit.
- 'in My name' – This speaks of the authority of Christ or in the execution of His will.
- It can be applied to gathering to serve Christ, or to pray or praise Christ, or in obedience to Christ.
- It gives the sense that gathering together is intentional to glorify God.
- God is always everywhere – omnipresent.
- True unity with others happens when we are all in unity with Christ.
- Without Christ there cannot be unity.
- Next time, we will discuss the one thing that makes unity possible.
- One of the ways we symbolize our oneness or unity in Christ is by partaking of Communion.
- I would like to invite the ushers to pass out the elements.
- (Worship Team comes up)
- Please hold your portion and we will partake together.
- The Bible teaches us that we should examine ourselves before we partake to make sure we are doing this in a worthy manner.
- If we have sin, we must repent and receive God's forgiveness.
- If we are in conflict with anyone, we must pray and ask God to help us reconcile.
- While the elements are being passed out, ask God if there is anyone He wants you to reconcile with.
- Let's spend a few moments of reflection.
- **Pray!**
- **Communion**
- Worship Team plays the last song!