

Singing the Psalms of Ascent

The Blessing of Unity

Seventh Lent Reflection: **Psalm 133**

April 5, 2020

Today's Big Idea:

Unity among God's family members "stands in the gap" and "completes the circuit" like a "bridge" between heaven's grace reservoir and human need that exists in the world of time and space.

ONE: Ruling Idea of Psalm 133

Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity: v.1

- This language might be rooted in the goodness of the extended family living together
- In this context it is spiritualized to represent God's family gathered at a great festival

TWO: The Ruling Idea Described in Figurative Language in Order to Make a Point

This familial unity figuratively compared to two things:

- *The consecration of the High Priest Aaron: v. 2 (see Exodus 29:7; 30:23-30; Leviticus 8:12)*
- *High mountain dew: v.3*

What is similar about both figures?

- They are pictures of heaven and earth connecting through a mediator bringing blessing
- Aaron was Israel's high priest, standing between God and the people
- Lifting up the people's repentance and worship, bringing down forgiveness and blessing.
- Aaron as an agent of blessing: see **Leviticus 9:22-24** and **Numbers 6:22-27**
- Dew is the water vapor in the skies forming on earth, the cool mountain as the in-between
- Dew would form on the cooler mountains when it might not on the hot valley floor

Add to this observation the stylistic effect of a 3-time repetition of "coming down"

This imagery, then, reinforces this idea that **unity** is something which connects heaven to earth

THREE: The Key Point Made Explicit in the Final Verse

For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life evermore: v.3

Does this refer to the immediately antecedent reference of Mt. Zion? Yes.

Psalm 133 is companion to 132 and 134, both which extol Mt. Zion as the grace place!

Remember this is a pilgrimage festival psalm.

Imagine the poet looking out at the Temple with a great gathering of God's people

But there is more to it!

In the poetic structure, dew on Mt. Zion is modifying the big ruling idea of familial unity.

So in a similar way that God has blessed Mt. Zion, so He has blessed the place of unity

In what way did people experience God's blessing at the temple on Mt. Zion?

Journey Signs: Lament as a Map > Wrapped in the Coat of God's Keeping > Our Feet on a Rock > Sweet Drink from the Canteen > An Apple on the Tree > The Sure and Steady Compass > The Clear Walkie-Talkie

(Continued on back!)

The temple is where they encountered God!

And received forgiveness and promises of goodness, mediated by human priests.

The temple was the tangible place of tasting the grace of God!

The temple was the connection point between heaven and earth!

So then, how is unity among God's family members like the temple?

It too is a place where we encounter heaven's grace materializing on the earth!

This is how I think it works:

- Creation is fundamentally relational in nature as created by the Trinity
- Unity is relational health/harmony/rightness/congruence
- This creates "kingdom-aligned spaces" in the created world on which God chooses to inhabit
- He is enthroned on the praise of His people: **Psalm 22:3**
- When two or three are gathered, He is there: **Matthew 18:20**
- The church as His body: **1 Corinthians 12:4-13**
- The "7 unities" passage followed by the falling of grace in **Ephesians 4:1-7**
- Jesus' high priestly prayer: **John 17:20-23**

How Do We Practically Define Unity?

Unity is not uniformity (culture, personality, taste, convictions of understanding)

The Four Grounds of Unity:

- We are all equally broken and in need: **Romans 3:23; Psalm 14:3; Isaiah 64:6**
- We are all equally loved in God's eyes: **John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11**
- We are levelled in our baptismal surrender: **Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13**
- We are all under Jesus' new command to love one another as He loved: **John 13:34,35; 15:12**

All of our differences offer on-going opportunities to test and prove unity over and over again!

The Pilgrimage Symbol of the Walkie Talkie

Staying together on the trail when we get physically separated.

Connecting two separate entities, like we are doing through this video service today!

Even when physically quarantined and separate, we are one and together in Christ, and in our unity grace is extending to us, and through us to the world around us!!

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