

"WE ALL **ARE** ONE !" by Gregory Busby
(GALATIANS 3:26 – 4:7)

SERMON XCHANGE-Dilworth United Methodist Church
APRIL 25th, 2010

INTRO: THIS MORNING..AS YOUR MINISTER AND I
HAVE EXCHANGED PULPITS. I WANT TO EXCHANGE SOME
IDEAS WITH YOU ON WHAT IT MEANS FOR US TO BE
CHILDREN OF GOD..AS I PREACH TO YOU ON THE
SUBJECT: "WE ALL **ARE** ONE !"

DURING THE TWO THOUSAND-EIGHT PRESIDENTIAL
CAMPAIGN..THERE WERE ALL KINDS OF POLITICAL ADS
RUNNING ON TELEVISION AND THE INTERNET. AND THE
ONE THAT STUCK OUT THE MOST FOR ME WAS ONE THAT
SINGER WILL I. AM PUT OUT ON YOU TUBE. HE CALLED
IT "WE ARE THE ONES."

IT SHOWED DIFFERENT CELEBRITIES. EVERYDAY FOLKS.
PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. DIFFERENT AGES.
GENDERS..AND NATIONALITIES. BUT ALL WERE BRINGING
THEIR HEARTS. MINDS AND VOICES TOGETHER IN
SUPPORT OF BARACK OBAMA'S CANDIDACY FOR THE
HIGHEST OFFICE IN THE LAND.

THOSE WERE HIGH TIMES. HISTORICAL MOMENTS WE'LL NEVER FORGET FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES. BUT PUSH THE FAST FORWARD BUTTON TO TWO THOUSAND - TEN. AND ALL THAT TALK ABOUT LOVE AND UNITY. THOSE FEELINGS OF BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD HAVE DISAPPEARED LIKE THE INVISIBLE MAN..IN JUST A YEAR AND A HALF !

THE GREAT RECESSION AS SOME HAVE CALLED IT HAS MOVED US FROM NATIONAL HARMONY AND GOODWILL TO NAME-CALLING AND FINGER POINTING. THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT SEEM FARTHER FROM COMMON GROUND THAN EVER BEFORE.

AND OUR HOPE OF BECOMING "WE" HAS GONE BACK TO TALKING ABOUT "US" AND "THEM !" WHERE DID WE GO SO WRONG ? AND HOW DID WE GET HERE SO QUICKLY ? OR..WERE WE EVER REALLY RIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE ?

AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO SAY WE WERE GETTING THERE..THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS WE WEREN'T EVEN

CLOSE ! NO CLOSER THAN A THOUSAND COUNTRY MILES FROM REACHING SHALOM. THE PEACE PROCLAIMED BY HEBREW PROPHETS OF OLD. THE BELOVED COMMUNITY DOCTOR MARTIN LUTHER KING PREACHED. MARCHED AND DIED FOR.

WE MAY HAVE ELECTED OUR FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT IN OH-EIGHT. BUT ALL THAT DID WAS BRING THOSE AGE-OLD DEMONS OF RACISM. CLASSISM AND SEXISM OUT OF THEIR SLEEP - INDUCED COMAS..AND INTO WIDE - AWAKE ATTACK MODES !

IF I WERE JUST OFFERING SOCIAL COMMENTARY..I'D BE ON TELEVISION WITH THE OTHER TALKING HEADS WHO MAKE THEIR ROUNDS ON THE SUNDAY MORNING TALK CIRCUIT ! BUT SEEING HOW COMMENTARIE'S AREN'T ON MY SPIRITUAL RADAR SCREEN..WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US AS GOD'S PEOPLE ? WHAT DO THESE DAYS OF OUR LIVES MEAN TO THESE CHURCHES..SWAPPING PULPITS IN DILWORTH AND UPTOWN CHARLOTTE ?

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN GALATIA LET'S US KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE. THEY WERE A CONGREGATION WITH STRONG JEWISH ROOTS. ROOTS THAT MANY WANTED TO KEEP AS THEY JOINED THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. THE CLASH OF THEIR FAITH TRADITIONS FOUND FOLKS DIVIDING INTO DIFFERENT CAMPS. CHRISTIAN. JEW. FOLLOWERS OF THE LAW. KEPT BY GOD'S GRACE BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

THE APOSTLE PAUL GETS WIND OF THE CONFLICT. AND HE GETS IN THE MIDDLE OF IT LIKE AN NFL REFEREE ! HE WRITES HIS LETTER TO REMIND THEM GOD WANTS TO STAY IN FELLOWSHIP WITH ALL HUMANITY ! AND WHILE THEY MAY NOT AGREE ON THEIR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES..IT'S THEIR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST THAT'S RESTORED THEIR WALK WITH GOD.

THEIR CONNECTION WITH CHRIST WAS BUILT ON THE FAITH OF THEIR HEBREW FATHERS AND MOTHERS. ALL OF WHICH LED THE APOSTLE TO CONCLUDE: "THERE IS NO LONGER JEW OR GREEK..THERE IS NO LONGER SLAVE OR

FREE..THERE IS NO LONGER MALE AND FEMALE...FOR ALL OF YOU ARE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS. AND IF YOU BELONG TO CHRIST..THEN YOU ARE ABRAHAM'S OFFSPRING..HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE."

PAUL WASN'T PRETENDING THEIR DIFFERENCES WERE NON-EXISTENT. BUT THEIR DIFFERENCES WERE ALSO OPPORTUNITIES FOR CELEBRATING THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALMIGHTY GOD ! IT SPOKE TO THEIR MUTUAL NEED FOR CONNECTING WITH THE LORD..AND WITH EACH OTHER. AND HOW THESE LONGINGS WOULD HELP THEM REACH OUT AND EXPAND THEIR COMMUNITY OF FAITH IN GALATIA..AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD !

THIS CHARGE FROM PAUL IS OUR LEGACY OF FAITH AS CHRISTIANS. IT'S A CHARGE WHICH REMINDS US GOD'S CALLED US TO A MINISTRY OF INCLUSIVENESS. EXCLUSIVITY IS NEVER PART OF THE LORD'S AGENDA (SAY NEVER WITH ME) ! WHICH MEANS IT'S NEVER AN OPTION FOR US EITHER AS TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY DISCIPLES !

SEPARATION ISN'T WRITTEN IN YOUR BOOK OF DISCIPLINE. SEGREGATION ISN'T LISTED IN OUR PRESBYTERIAN BOOK OF ORDER..OR IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS EITHER ! THE HOLY BIBLE. GOD'S REAL BOOK OF RULES TO LIVE BY SAYS WE ALL ARE ONE ! ONE GREAT BIG BODY OF BELIEVERS. CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES WITH A COMMON MISSION AND WITNESS.

A MISSION FROM GOD THAT GOES BEYOND OUR RACE..OR RELIGION. A WITNESS THAT DOESN'T CARE IF WE'RE MEN. WOMEN. BOYS..OR GIRLS ! GOD HAS CALLED US TO MAKE OUR WITNESS FOR AN AFRO-ARAMAIC BROTHER WHO MADE US ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS BY SHEDDING HIS BLOOD TO REDEEM HUMANITY !

(LEARNING BASKETBALL STORY.."SAME TEAM"..CAME FROM DIFFERENT FAMILIES..HOMES..LEFT-HANDED..RIGHT HANDED..SAME TEAM..SAME MISSION OF BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF FAITH IN THIS SPACE WE SHARE IN CHARLOTTE..NORTH CAROLINA !)

SAYING WE'RE ALL ONE WAS MORE THAN PAUL'S WAY OF GETTING THE GALATIANS TO PLAY NICE ! HE'S ALSO CALLING US TO RECONCILE OUR RACIAL. SOCIAL..AND CLASS DIFFERENCES FOR THE SAKE OF CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG. AS GOD'S PEOPLE OF FAITH..WE HAVE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT ALL CMS TEACHERS. STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS GETTING THE RESOURCES THEY NEED..INSTEAD OF JUST THE ONES IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD !

WE HAVE TO BE LEADING THE FIGHT FOR FINDING WAYS TO KEEP ALL BRANCHES OF OUR PUBLIC LIBRARIES OPEN INSTEAD OF CLOSING. RAISING OUR VOICES FOR THOSE WHO'RE NEVER HEARD ON ISSUES LIKE ADEQUATE HOUSING..OR AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE !

A SERMON XCHANGE IS A GOOD PLACE TO START. BUT AS WE LOOK AT THINGS..GOD IS CALLING GOD'S CHURCH TO DO SO MUCH MORE THAN THESE ONCE A YEAR PULPIT SWAPS. GOD IS SAYING START BUILDING COMMUNITY BY GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BROTHERS AND

SISTERS. GET TOGETHER..AND YOU'LL DISCOVER THEY'RE AS WORRIED ABOUT KEEPING A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS AS YOU ARE. YOU'LL FIND THEY'RE JUST AS CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AS YOU ARE. THEY'RE JUST AS OUTRAGED AS YOU ARE ABOUT VIOLENT CRIME RATES GOING UP IN OUR CITY !

OUR LORD IS SAYING GET TOGETHER AS CHRISTIANS. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER AS HUMAN BEINGS. FOR AS WE DO THINGS..DILWORTH METHODIST AND FIRST UNITED..GOD'S GONNA' SHOW US WE ALL ARE ONE ! AND TRUTH BE TOLD..WE ALL **ARE** ONE..BROTHERS AND SISTERS !

(CHILD OF GOD/CLAIM YOUR INHERITANCE ILLUSTRATED ?)

CLAIMED BY CHRIST. ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY. CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE. AND EVEN THOUGH THAT IMAGE LOOKS WHITE. BLACK. BROWN OR AZURE. WE ALL ARE ONE..BECAUSE OF WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE !

AND GOD IS CALLING US TO WALK IN THAT ONENESS AS
GOD'S PEOPLE. TO LIVE IT OUT IN THIS PARTICULAR
PLACE AND SPACE CALLED CHARLOTTE.. NORTH CAROLINA !

GOD IS CALLING US TO SHOW WE ARE ONE IN
DILWORTH AND DERITA. WE ARE ONE IN MYERS PARK
AND MC CRORY HEIGHTS. ONE BODY OF CHRIST IN
UPTOWN AND UNIVERSITY CITY. GRIER HEIGHTS AND
GASTONIA. SOUTHPARK AND SEIGLE AVENUE.

NORTHWOODS AND NO DA. WEST CHARLOTTE OR
WAXHAW. MINT HILL OR MATTHEWS. IT DOESN'T MATTER
WHERE WE ARE..CHURCH ! DOESN'T MATTER WHERE WE
LIVE. OR..WHERE WE WORSHIP. AT THE END OF THE
DAY..WE ALL ARE ONE BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST ! AND
AS WE ARE ONE IN HIM..IT'S TIME WE ACTED AS ONE IN
HIS NAME !

GOING OUT AND TEARING DOWN WALLS THAT DIVIDE
US. BUILDING BRIDGES TO BRING US TOGETHER.
RECONCILING OUR RACES..IN SPITE OF OUR FACES.
KNOWING THAT THE BELOVED COMMUNITY IS FOR HERE..

AND FOR NOW. AND IT WILL HAPPEN AS WE YIELD OUR
WILLS TO THE WILL OF OUR GOD WHO HAS COME TO
SET US ALL FREE !

GOD BLESS YOU AS YOU EMBRACE OUR ONENESS.
LIFT UP THE NAME OF JESUS WHO BRINGS US TOGETHER.
AND WALK OUT FROM THIS SPACE..FILLED AND LED BY
THE HOLY SPIRIT OF OUR LORD WHO MAKES US NEW
PEOPLE IN GOD EVERYDAY !

WITH EVERY HEAD BOWED AND ALL EYES CLOSED..
LET US PRAY...