

“Eph 4:1-6: Guard our unity”

Trinity Sunday – May 30, 2021

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Scripture reading

Eph 4:1-6

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Introduction

- Today we resume our exploration of Ephesians with Chapter 4:1-6.
- The text provides important reminder against the backdrop of current climate of cultural divisiveness: race, sexuality, gender, party affiliation, religion, socio-economic status.
- Our times are disconcerting and require that we pray! But they also provide a perfect opportunity to show our distinctiveness as a new community of love.

Some observations of Eph 4:1-6

- Verse 1 is the “hinge point” of the letter. “Then” is *oun*, “therefore”, an inferential conjunction.
- **“live worthy of the calling you have received”** – Described in chapters 1-3. “live” is *peripateo*, “walk” a Semitic idiom (cf. 2:1, 10; 4:17; 5:1,15).
- Verses 1-6 comprise one long sentence. Two parts to this text:
 1. An urgent admonition to preserve their unity – vv. 1-3
 2. A theological rationale for doing so – vv. 4-6

Verses 1-3: “Guard our unity that God has created!”

- Paul then lists four social virtues that help us guard it:
 1. **“Be humble”** – have an honest assessment of oneself: strengths, weaknesses.
 2. **“[Be] gentle”** – Opposite of “rough”. Gk. *proutes*: an equestrian term.
 3. **“Be patient”** – compound of *thumos*, “anger” and *markos*, “a long time.”
 4. **“Bearing with one another in love”** – lit. “putting up with”. **“In love”**, *agape* – a love that seeks the best of the one loved, not ourselves.
 5. **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”**. A few things to note: **“the unity of the Spirit”** is the oneness God creates (cf. Eph 2:13-14). **“Keep”** – we keep or guard: we don’t create it. **“Make every effort”** – requires intention, effort, perseverance. It’s not easy.

Verses 4-6: “Here’s Why!” The theological rationale

- **“one”** used 7x in these three verses. Echoes John 17:22-23.
- **Reference to the Holy Trinity.** Spirit (v.4), Lord (v.5: Jesus, cf. 1:2, 3, 15, 17; 3:11; 5:20; 6:23, 24), Father (v.6).
- **“one body** (Paul’s metaphor: Jews and Gentiles together)... **one Spirit** (vs. *paredroi*, familiar spirits subordinate to the gods but accessible) ... **one hope** (vs. fate)... **one Lord** (vs. Zeus or Artemis, called “Lord”) ... **one faith** (common set of beliefs and practices)... **one baptism** (the identity marker that set Christians apart)...**one God and Father of all”**.
- **“who is over all** (sovereignty) **and through all** (works in all things-synergy) **and in all** (omnipresence).”

Take away

- In the midst of our particular cultural moment, we are being given the opportunity to model a very different way of living in community. This week, ask yourself: How can I be more intentional about loving my brothers and sisters, sharing life together, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, being more patient, more forgiving?