

Sermon, August 1, 2021
Psalm 51:1-12 & Ephesians 4:1-16
“What’s So Amazing about Grace? Grace Brings Unity”
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Muscle memory is a fascinating thing to me. Muscle memory means you can do something so often that your body can go on automatic pilot and perform tasks while your mind is occupied elsewhere. It's funny, though, how it can work even when you don't mean for it to do so. The other evening, we were, as I imagine many of you were, watching the Olympics. And I noticed that every time they cut to a commercial, I reached over and grabbed the remote. Almost every time. I was trying to fast forward through the commercials.

The way my schedule is, we don't often get to watch something when it's originally on. We have to record what we want to watch and see it later if and when we get a chance. That means we can watch things at our convenience, and also, we can fast forward through the commercials. I was so used to this that I was, by muscle memory, automatically trying to fast forward through a live event, which of course you can't do.

But it got me to think about commercials, iconic commercials from my childhood that, had we had the ability to fast forward then, I might never have known about. Good commercials are supposed to be iconic, memorable. An image or jingle stuck in your head. Take a moment, and I want you to think of a commercial from your childhood or youth. You're welcome, you will now have that in your head for the rest of the day.

Just seeing the image will bring back the entire commercial experience for you, won't it? Let's try one and see who remembers it. Not all of you will, but many of you will, for sure. Yes, Krazy Glue. It's not that clear an image, and you still knew what it was. This comes from a commercial showing how powerful Krazy Glue was, this guy glued his hard hat to a girder and hung from it. Can your glue do that? And he would swing from the hard hat now seemingly permanently fixed to the underside of the girder. They even upped their game and hung a bunch of guys looking like figures from the barrel of monkeys game. Not only is the glue phenomenal, but let's take a moment and appreciate the grip strength of this first guy holding up his weight and three other guys by his fingers.

The idea of the glue, whether we buy into the hype of the commercial or not, was that this glue was the strongest bonding agent ever. There wasn't anything this glue couldn't bind together. It could take a broken handle of a mug and glue it back on like new. It could put a vase back together. You could glue a chair leg to the chair or even take things that didn't go together yet by adding the bonding agent of the glue would be permanently attached to one another. Like the girder and the hard hat. In some ways, they became one. Merely because the binding agent had been applied to them.

Things that don't go together, things that have been broken, put back together, attached to one another. Becoming something completely different. Not losing individuality. The hat is still a hat, the girder is still the girder, yet now they have become one together because to the application of the glue.

That's not a bad analogy for the church as Paul sees it. In his letter to the Church in Ephesus, Paul begins to talk about several different types of relationships. Parent, child, husband and wife, and the church. He actually starts with the church as we see in today's Scripture, and then begins to draw ever tightening concentric circles of relationship and intimacy. Spouse, children, and parents. He'll eventually even add relationships that they wouldn't have thought of as relationships, owner of the home and servants.

And in each case, we see the theme remains the same. There will be some adjustments because obviously your relationship with the church is different than a parent child relationship. But in each case, Paul talks about oneness, about unity. We may not see it as Paul writes it, but if you go backward, it becomes very clear. You and your child are one literally sharing DNA, they are your creation born out of love and intimacy, you are one with your parents literally, at one point different, yet one. Marriages, you are

one, we see this from Genesis on. Two completely different people yet made one, made into something new that you were not before you were married. It's the same, Paul says, for the church, you are separate and yet you're now one made into something new, the body of Christ. You have been bound together.

But what is it that binds us together? Because it's not automatic. What is it that makes us one, that binds us together? What is the glue that holds and connects us? It is the grace of God. We continue today to look at the Amazing Grace of God. We are exploring all sorts of ways and venues in which the grace of God touches and changes us, what happens when we open ourselves up to the Grace of God. Paul says Grace is the glue that makes us one. Now, please hear this because Paul says this will hold true across all of the relationships in your life. One of the signs that you are experiencing the grace of God will be unity in your relationships. You will be bound together, the body of Christ in all of them.

But how? How does the Grace of God allow us to remain ourselves yet become one with people who are so different than we are? What does the Holy Spirit in the grace of God do to all us to become one with our children, parents, our spouses, and as the body of Christ?

One of the things that happens is the grace of God calls us to be in mutual submission with one another and to God. Yeah, I know submission is a dirty word today. Sounds like giving up. The person in an MMA fight loses when he submits. But the reality is, there can be no real unity in any relationship if we aren't willing to submit, to give everything up. As a parent, I lay everything I am at Your feet, I submit to You that I can be the parent You need me to be to help my child become who You are calling them to be. God, help me to understand and feel what they are feeling, God, help me to speak when I need to and submit my tongue when You call me to be silent, that we might be one. As parents, you submit your sleep, your energy, sometimes your snacks. As a married couple the Bible speaks of mutual submission. There can be no unity in marriage if you aren't diligently submitting to God and to one another, putting the other person first. I remember a prayer I heard someone pray once that in only a few words spoke eloquently to this idea. A man shared that he prayed this prayer every morning. Lord, make me into the man and husband my wife deserves. Submission. And out of that comes unity. It's the same for the church. If you can't lay aside yourself to God and lift up your brothers and sisters, you will never be one as God calls you to be.

Secondly, we must adopt a foundation of forgiveness. The grace of God cannot make us one, we cannot have unity if we are not building our relationships on a foundation of forgiveness. Does that make sense? You can't have unity with people if you are bearing grievances against them. Unity cannot grow out of a spirit of resentment and bitterness. Not in families or spousal relationships, with the people you worked with, or in the church. As you look at your relationships, are you living out of a foundation of forgiveness?

Thirdly, Paul says the person you are able to become one with one another? The glue that binds you together? It's love. It's love. Paul says here look, put aside childish things, put away anything keeping you from loving one another. Endeavor to love one another. Endeavor, sometimes you have to work at it. That's how it works some days. Unity doesn't come if you only love when it's easy. You have to endeavor to love one another.

Are you experiencing the unity that comes from being covered in the amazing Grace of God? What will it take for you to become one? Allow God's grace to move in your life. Let us submit to God and one another, have a foundation of forgiveness and above everything else, love. Amen.