

Psalm 133 | “The Blessing of Unity”

Preached on February 16, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 133, as we are almost done with our series on the songs of ascents. *[pauseeee]*

“The story is told of two men riding a tandem bicycle up a steep hill, [and] after much effort, they finally made it to the top of the hill. *[pause]*”

The front rider said, ‘That was a tough ride.’

To which the second rider replied, ‘Sure was, and if I hadn’t kept the brake on we might have slipped backwards.’”¹ *[pauseeee]*

Talk about being disunified! *[pause]*

Disunity only makes things harder. *[pauseeee]*

The truth is that we live in a *disunified world*.

People of various nations do not agree with each other on many things, and don’t get along in many ways. *[pause]*

Just consider the number of wars that have happened in our world, and you can tell that the world is most definitely NOT unified.

We have different beliefs, different values, differing governing systems, and so on. *[pauseeee]*

We also live in a *disunified nation*. *[pause]*

Just flip on the news or scroll on social media, and the evidence of discord is everywhere.

People are fighting with one another, and it seems like we as a country can’t agree on anything, even the most trivial and small things. *[pause]*

One side says one thing, and the other side can’t stand it and gets mad, and vice-versa.

Everyone has their own opinion, and tempers flare. *[pause]*

We wonder: will we *ever* live in a unified country because no matter who is in office or what changes (whether good or bad) are made, people are not happy. *[pauseeee]*

Likewise, many of us work or have worked in *disunified companies*. *[pause]*

The leadership in many companies can’t agree, and do not get along.

Board meetings turn into heated exchanges, and resignations are turned in. *[pause]*

¹ Source Unknown. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/unity>.

It's not only the board of a company, though, for you also have the tension between management and those not in management.

And then so often the ordinary workers themselves don't get along with each other. *[pause]*

Everyone wants their own way, and workplaces often teem with tension and animosity. *[pauseeee]*

Many people also experience *disunified families or marriages*. *[pause]*

Families gather to sit and have a nice Thanksgiving dinner, and something is said, and all of a sudden, the dinner table turns into a battleground. *[pause]*

Some family members refuse to talk to or be in the presence of other family members.

And anything—from a table game, to a meal, to watching TV, to just sitting and talking, can easily turn into just another piece of evidence for a family's discord. *[pauseeeee]*

Sadly, the disunity doesn't stop there, for we also witness *disunified churches*. *[pause]*

The number of church fights and church splits that I have heard of is astounding. *[pause]*

The place where there *should be* unity is sometimes the place where there is no unity...

Churches bicker over things from the carpet color to the budget, from the time of the service to what should happen in a service.

And don't get me started on how some churches can't even agree on the music. *[pause]*

They create two different services with two different musical styles to appease both sides, instead of coming to a unified agreement and worshiping together *as one*. *[pauseeee]*

Churches can often become a place of discord rather than wonderful harmony.

But is all of this disunity the way it's supposed to be? *[pause]*

Aren't you tired of all the disharmony that you see in life?

Well David in the psalm this morning will hold up the beauty and blessing of unity for us to see, and he will show us that it is truly something amazing to pursue. *[pause]*

Let's READ it. *[READ]*

As we look closely at this psalm, the main point is up front, and so I'll give the main point up front to you, and it's this...

Unity among God's people is good and pleasant.

David says in verse 1, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”
[pauseeee]

David is holding up unity for all to see, and it’s like he’s pointing a big, flashing arrow towards unity among God’s people, and saying, “It’s so wonderful!” [pauseeee]

Do you believe that?

Do you believe that unity among God’s people is truly good and pleasant? [pauseeee]

He starts out by saying, “Behold,” and when a biblical author does this, it’s because they want to grab our attention to hear something very important or significant.

So this shows us that unity is important and the blessing of unity is wonderful. [pauseeee]

Anytime that true unity is found is a thing to “behold”.

More of our attention should be on unity than it is!

But how often do we focus on and pay attention to the *blessings* of unity? [pause]

Sometimes we can take it for granted, when we should be seeing how remarkable it really is in a world of division and discord. [pauseeeee]

Now what exactly is unity?...

Unity is the idea of oneness or togetherness. [pauseeee]

My grandmother would make these really neat quilts with various colors.

And the different colored fabrics are all separate to begin with, but when you put all of the various colors into one quilt, it becomes a unified, beautiful whole. [pause]

That’s the idea—what was once separate is now together. [pauseeee]

When you are dwelling in unity, there is harmony—you come together with the same mindset, mission, and purpose. [pause]

In the presence of unity, there is an absence of fighting, strife, and hostility, and don’t we all want that?

No wonder David says that this unity is “good and pleasant”. [pauseeeeeee]

Unity among God’s people is *good*.

It is right, commendable, and praiseworthy, but that’s not all, for it’s valuable, useful, and something positive. [pause]

Unity is *objectively good*. [pauseeeee]

In the beginning, when God created the world, He said that it was good,² so also, God says here that unity among brothers is good. *[pause]*

When we live in unity, we are living in the way that we were meant to live.

When you pursue unity, you are pursuing something good. *[pauseeee]*

Anytime true unity is present, it is a good thing.

So how could we neglect unity when it is something so good? *[pause]*

Don't we all want to strive for good things?

We seek after good things like love, happiness, and things like that, but do we strive for unity? *[pauseeee]*

God, through His Word, is lifting up unity as a good thing for us this morning.

It's like he has put it front and center and is pointing to it and saying, "Unity is good. Pursue it!" *[pause]*

Will we pay attention or zone out? *[pauseeee]*

God loves unity, for He created us for it, and has called it good.

And whatever God calls good is truly and objectively—good—and when we live in unity, we are living according to God's good purposes. *[pause]*

Living in unity is the way that God's people *ought to live*. *[pause]*

It's not just a nice little side benefit, but it's a good thing that God wants us to behold. *[pauseeee]*

Not only is unity among God's people good, but it's pleasant, too. *[pause]*

It's something that when you have it, it's experientially pleasant...

It is lovely and delightful, and so something to be desired. *[pauseeee]*

That's the case, isn't it? *[pause]*

Division, strife, and discord are NOT pleasant, but unpleasant—they make life miserable, but unity is something pleasant to experience. *[pause]*

Disunity causes people to leave their time with others thinking, "Ugh, that was a disaster!"

But unity causes people to leave their time together with others thinking, "Now that was pleasant." *[pauseeee]*

² A reference to Genesis 1:31.

Unity is undoubtedly good and pleasant, and as the writer says, “Behold, *how* good and pleasant it is.” [pause]

It is *very* good and pleasant; what a great thing!

That means that when God’s people are not unified, they are missing out on something very good and very pleasant. [pauseeee]

We all seek out pleasant things, and so unity should likewise be something that we seek out.

But do you seek it? And do you view it as pleasant? [pauseeeee]

Now you may wonder why I keep talking about the unity of *God’s people*, and it’s because the text talks about *brothers* dwelling in unity. [pause]

This is not merely talking about biological brothers, but rather, it’s speaking of the brotherhood that we find in being among God’s people. [pause]

Israel would sing this song together, and it would remind them that they were all brothers and sisters together under the Lord.

And the New Testament, likewise, speaks of the church as being brothers and sisters with each other. [pause]

Jesus says, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.’”³ [pause]

The Bible also speaks of how we, who believe in Christ, are all children of God together,⁴ and we are called to show “brotherly love”.⁵ [pauseeee]

We are truly brothers and sisters in Christ, so that means that we can experience this unity!

We can feel this good and pleasant unity among each other because we are genuinely brothers and sisters in the faith. [pauseeee]

As a spiritual family, we *should* be unified, for we have so much to be united around—we have the same faith, the same Father, the same Spirit.⁶ [pause]

If anyone in this world should be unified, it’s us. [pauseeeee]

Usually people are unified around some common thing, and we have so much in common to be unified around...

³ Mark 3:33–35.

⁴ See Romans 8:16–17.

⁵ Hebrews 13:1.

⁶ An allusion to Ephesians 4:4–6.

We are all under the Lord, under the authority of His Word, and empowered by His Spirit.
[pauseeee]

Now there's something that I haven't touched on in verse 1 yet, and it's the word "dwell".
[pause]

The verse says, "how good and pleasant it is when brothers *dwell* in unity." [pause]

Some families can get along for a short time, like a family reunion or dinner.

They can put up with each other for the hour or two that they are together, but ask them to be together longer, and an explosion occurs. [pause]

Some family members can't even take being in the same room or house as another family member for longer than 5 minutes. [pause]

That's not what it's talking about here...

This verse is not talking about a mere moment in time of being together in unity, but being able to dwell or live together for a long time. [pause]

It implies that the people in unity are living life, side-by-side.

And this is much harder than a mere brief moment of unity at a meal or event. [pause]

As one commentator put it, "Aiming at real unity within a church is a much greater challenge than attending ecumenical events between churches."⁷ [pauseeee]

Dwelling in unity as a local church is more challenging because you have to live life together in close proximity, seeing each other often.

But when you have unity among those who you dwell together with, it's much more beautiful and wonderful. [pauseeee]

Imagine a church that has been through the ups and downs of life together and is still unified.

Imagine a church that knows the flaws and sins of each other, and yet they love each other still.
[pause]

They have seen each other at their worst, and have been through the deepest valleys together, yet they still come together in unity.

Now that's beautiful! [pause]

⁷ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, ed. J. A. Motyer, vol. 2, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 244.

I'll take that anyday over the shallow, superficial, fleeting "unity" that is found in the world.
[pauseeee]

Unity among God's people is good and pleasant, and David goes on to give two illustrations of what this unity is like.

And by doing so, he shows us that unity is...

I. Abundantly sweet and refreshing.

David says in verse 2 that this unity "is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!" *[pauseeee]*

Now this image is very foreign to us, for we don't live in the Old Covenant days.

We don't have set apart priests, or use this anointing oil, so we have to sort of transport ourselves back to that day in our minds. *[pause]*

In the Old Testament time, they had to make this special, fragrant oil that would be poured on the priests to consecrate them for service.⁸

And it was special, in that you couldn't make it for common use, but it was made specifically for the purpose of anointing the priests and the tabernacle items to consecrate them as holy. *[pause]*

It was a very fragrant oil, too, for it had all of these finest spices in it like "sweet-smelling cinnamon". [pauseeee]

Now that we have that understanding in our minds, let's go back to the image...

It's this image of that precious oil running down Aaron's beard and collar. [pause]

So this oil is abundant and touches everything—that's what unity among brothers is like, David says. *[pause]*

Like the oil touching everything, so unity touches all involved.

It's not just a couple of us over here, but it includes all of us. *[pause]*

When someone walks into our church, they should sense an abundance of unity among us all, as we show love to each other. [pauseeee]

Like the oil being fragrant and sweet, so unity among God's people is like smelling something sweet. *[pause]*

Have you ever walked into a room that is filled with a fragrant, sweet smell?

⁸ See Exodus 30:22ff & Leviticus 8:12.

It's pleasant and delightful—that's what unity among God's people is like! *[pause]*

When you walk into a church that is unified, you should think, "Wow, this is pleasant!"

It should be a delight to be among us!

It should be a place, where someone thinks, "There's something about this gathering, it's so sweet and pleasant, I want to go back." *[pauseeee]*

And like Aaron being anointed as holy, so unity among God's people is a holy, good thing—it sets us apart from the world. *[pause]*

Our relationships with one another should not look exactly like the world, but there should be something among us that sets us apart, and one of those things should be our unity.

They should think, "How is it that so many different people with differing backgrounds, jobs, and life situations could be so unified?"

And the only answer is that it's because of the Lord. *[pause]*

Like the special, anointing oil, so our unity should be something that is not just found everywhere, for its God-given. *[pauseeeee]*

The next illustration is one of the dew of Hermon falling on the mountains of Zion. *[pause]*

The mountain of Hermon was a much larger mountain than Zion and it was to the north of Jerusalem.

And since the mountain of Hermon was much larger, then for the dew of Hermon to fall on Zion would mean it would be an *abundant* thing. *[pause]*

There would be a lot of it!—It would certainly and easily cover Zion with dew. *[pause]*

That's like the unity of God's people, it should cover all of us, as we are unified *together*. *[pauseeee]*

Think also of what dew does—it refreshes, invigorates, and gives life to plants.

So also, our unity is a refreshing, invigorating thing. *[pause]*

In a world filled with discord and division, walking in to be among us should be refreshing. *[pauseeee]*

A pastor friend of mine put it this way, "Unity is like stepping into an air conditioned home after being outside in the sweltering heat."⁹ *[pauseeee]*

⁹ Matthew C. Mitchell, *Resisting Gossip: Winning the War of the Wagging Tongue* (CLC Publications, 2013), 157.

Sadly, that is not what people always experience when it comes to church. *[pause]*

Too often, churches are characterized by conflict, strife, and dissension.

But that's not the way it ought to be, rather, people should see our unity and feel that it is abundantly sweet and refreshing, after experiencing so much chaos in the world around them. *[pauseeee]*

True unity is possible among God's people—that's what we see here in this text!

And one key to pursuing it is to remember how wonderful it really is. *[pause]*

Do we truly remind ourselves of how good and pleasant unity is among God's people?

Do we strive for it?

Like Paul tells us to do, are we, "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?¹⁰ *[pauseeee]*

As we saw so far—unity is good and pleasant, for it is abundantly sweet and refreshing, but what else do we see about unity here?...

II. It comes from the life-giving Lord.

A.W. Tozer once gave an illustration of unity using pianos being tuned, and he said...

"Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? *[pause]*

They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow."¹¹ *[pauseeee]*

The only way that we can have unity is because it comes from the Lord, as we are "tuned" to Him, so to say.

It must come from Him. *[pauseee]*

Consider the two illustrations that David gave—the oil and the dew.

What is something common about them? *[pause]*

They both highlight that this unity is something that comes down...

The oil 'runs down' the beard, and 'runs down' the collar of the robe, and the dew 'falls' on the mountains of Zion. *[pause]*

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:3.

¹¹ A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/unity>.

That imagery is intentional, not coincidental—unity must come down upon us from above.
[pauseeee]

What’s interesting is that this psalm is one of the songs of ascents, where the people would ascend to worship at the Temple.

And so we see that as the people ascended to worship God, it’s God who brought the blessing of unity down. *[pauseeee]*

If we desire our unity to strengthen, we cannot look inward to find the solution.

We cannot just look around at each other, and just hope that it will magically appear, or arrive somehow by our own devising.

No, we must all look up to the Lord, who will bring unity down to us. *[pauseeee]*

Unity runs down and falls upon us from the Lord, who is the giver of unity.

No wonder the unity we can have is good and pleasant because HE is good and pleasant!

As Psalm 135 says, “Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant!”¹²
[pauseeee]

Genuine, biblical unity cannot be found by making up some common ground, or deciding what we want to be all about together.

No, genuine, biblical unity comes as we turn to our Lord, who in His grace, gives us abundantly sweet and refreshing unity. *[pause]*

So really, any and all unity that we have is only and ever a testament to His matchless grace—it’s pure grace coming down to us from the Lord.

So whenever we experience the marvelous feeling of unity here at First Baptist should be a moment of praise to the Lord for His grace. *[pause]*

It’s not because we are just so amazing at unifying or that we found some unifying common ground of our own making, but because He gives it to His people, who simply look to Him in faith. *[pauseeeee]*

Want further proof that this unity comes from the Lord? Look there at the second part of verse 3...

David just described how unity is like dew falling upon the mountains of Zion, and says, “For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.” *[pause]*

It’s Zion that God has commanded to be the place of blessing.

¹² Psalm 135:3.

Why? Because it's in Zion that the people were to gather together to worship Him, and where His presence was. *[pause]*

The Lord determined the place to give the blessing of unity, for it ultimately comes from Him!

He determined *that* we will receive unity from Him, and He determined *where* we will receive this unity. *[pauseeee]*

For the Israelites, they had to go to the literal mountain of Zion, but now we as the church are the Temple of God, so as we come together to worship Him, we can experience this blessing of unity. *[pauseeee]*

We were not meant to live the Christian life alone, rather, our greatest unity and greatest blessings are found when we gather as a community to serve and worship the Lord together. *[pause]*

If you do not have a church that you regularly attend and a part of, you are missing out on a great blessing, the blessing of unity.

There's just something about being among God's people. *[pause]*

I remember going on a mission trip to Mexico City and there was a unity among us Christians, even though we didn't even speak the same language. *[pauseeee]*

Now if people come together and they are all about themselves, their preferences, their desires, and their wants...

They will not experience this unity, for they are not focused on the Lord, but they are focused on themselves.

But when you truly worship the Lord together, being about Him and His kingdom, unity falls down upon you and runs over everyone and everything. *[pauseeee]*

David ends by saying that this blessing that God gives is "life forevermore." *[pause]*

In one sense, those who have unity experience life forevermore, for they reveal that they are true Christ-followers.

So our harmony is evidence that we have eternal life. *[pause]*

But in another sense, it's unity that brings life to a community of people—meaning—there's health, strength, happiness, and joy there. *[pause]*

Squabbles are dealt with quickly, wounds are healed, and we come together in joyous, refreshing unity. *[pauseeee]*

Unity among God's people is good and pleasant, and it comes from the Lord. *[pause]*

We can receive this blessing of unity, as we come together to worship the Lord and seek Him first.

So ‘behold’ the blessing of unity, seeing how beautiful and wonderful it really is. *[pauseeee]*

What a wonderful and beautiful picture of unity that the Lord has given us here in this psalm.

This unity is possible, and it’s a great thing—what a thing to *pursue!* *[pauseeee]*

This summer, it will be 8 years of being your pastor, and I can say that there is unity here. *[pause]*

Of course, we have had our own opinions and preferences about different things over the years, but we are unified. *[pause]*

Even when there were hard decisions to make, or difficult topics to discuss, we have had a special unity through it all.

I love that about this church. *[pause]*

There have been no divisions since I’ve been the pastor, and no disunity present.

It’s refreshing to walk into church, knowing that there’s no strife or conflict going on. *[pause]*

But that doesn’t mean that we just sit back and cruise, rather, we keep striving that we would never lose this unity, and we strive for our unity to get *even better!* *[pause]*

We do this by reminding ourselves of the blessing of unity, and how it *must* come from the Lord.

If we lose sight of those things, then we can’t expect the blessing of unity here. *[pause]*

So we fall on our knees in humble dependence upon the grace of Christ, who must give us unity, as we look to Him—our Leader and Head.

For it’s all because of Him that we are what we are and that we have what we have. *[pause]*

He is our *everything*, for “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”¹³ *[pause]*

We didn’t deserve anything good, yet through Christ, He has given us all the good that we have—so how could we lose sight of Him? *[pause]*

Let’s keep looking to Him, praying for unity at our church, and just watch our unity grow! *[pauseeee]*

Unity runs down and falls down upon God’s people, but it’s only because Christ’s blood ran down from the Cross for us.

Talk about something being good and pleasant!

¹³ Romans 5:8.