

PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear UJCC Family,

“Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose” (1 Corinthians 1:10, NRSV)

Grace and Peace of Christ be with you! As we begin the second month of the new year, the new decade, I hope and pray that we will continue to do our best to fulfill God's calling having the same mind and the same purpose as a church.

But, how is it possible? Can there be any human society where all the people are united in the same mind and the same purpose? I mean, even in my family, it seems almost impossible for all of us to have the same mind at the moment. Tonight, my son wants to play video games, my daughter wants to watch YouTube videos while my wife wants the kids to do their homework. Meanwhile, I want some quiet time to focus on writing this. Everyone wants something different for his/her life. Then, how can we all have the same mind and the same purpose? Why did the Apostle Paul ask the Corinthians to do such an impossible thing? Is the Scripture telling us to do what we are not capable of?

It appears that there were many cliques in the church of Corinth. Some said, “I belong to Paul”, while others said, “I belong to Apollos (the former leader of the church before Paul).” Some claimed to belong to Cephas (Peter) while others claimed to belong to Christ himself. Why this was an important matter? It was so because this was about who/which group has the authenticity and hence the authority over other groups. There were many different groups of people in the church of Corinth. Some were rich, some were poor. Some were Jews, some were Gentiles. Some were men, some were women. Some belonged to the noble class in that hierarchical Greco-Roman society and some were their slaves. They all had different opinions on how things should be done in their beloved church.

Therefore, they wanted to know who was right and who was wrong. Since they could not figure out who has the final authority among them, we can imagine that they started to appeal to higher authorities than themselves. One said, “according to the great apostle Paul, we should all do...” Then someone replied saying, “but, according to the founder of our church, Apollos, we have to do...” Perhaps they all had a point and they all wanted nothing but the best for the church. However, that only furthered the problems and deepened the divisions. They needed a definite answer about what they all were supposed to do.

To this complicated matter, Paul's answer seems to be too simple. Instead of giving them the answer they wanted, which is to plainly tell them who is right and who is wrong, he answers them with this rhetorical question: “Has Christ been divided?” I

believe Paul's intention was to remind them of an important principle, which is that we do not belong to any human being but we all belong to Christ. Therefore, what we are called to do is not to figure out who is right and who is wrong but to honor, respect, and love one another even though we all have different opinions.

We are planning to have a Church Retreat on February 1st. We will talk about our visions as a church for this new year. We would like invite you to come and participate in this important event. We all understand that everyone's opinion on how things should be done in our church can be different. However, we strongly believe that we can still have the same mind, the heart of Christ, and have the same purpose, which is to share God's love. Even if you cannot make it to this retreat, please pray for us with the same mind and the same purpose so that we may all participate in clarifying our goals for this year. May our Lord Christ make us one in His unconditional and unfailing love for all. Amen.

Rae