

June 14 2020 James Gallaher The Kingdom of God Series: Kingdom Unity

The Kingdom of God is about relationship - with God and with one another. We were created to need relationship for each other from the beginning of creation. That relationship was severed between God and man. Years later, Jesus comes to restore the Kingdom. When the Kingdom of God came back into the church at Pentecost and into people, then people are brought back into relationship with each other.

That first week after Pentecost, Peter focuses on what he has, not on what he doesn't have. How can we get back to focus on what we have in common as the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom has not surrendered its power. The Kingdom of God is just as powerful today - but our conviction is what has changed. The Kingdom of God and its power are for each one of us who calls upon the name of Jesus.

As long as we attempt to solve spiritual problems with physical solutions, we will never experience the power of the Kingdom. The more we focus on the problems here, the less we can see the solutions in the Kingdom - the less we will see the power of the Kingdom displayed.

Acts 2:1-4 *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

Pentecost was the beginning of the church – the Holy Spirit came. **Verse 1** says that *they were all together in one place*. The word for "together" means of one mind, a unity of mind, to be of one soul. They were there for the same purpose. Unity has lost some understanding today - it does not mean that we will agree on everything. Unity is knowing that above all else that Jesus is the Son of God and apart from His death and resurrection, we have no hope in this life.

John 17:20-21 *I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.* Our oneness is the basis and foundation for our witness. How much do we identify each other by our differences rather than our sameness? We miss relationships as we claim these differences. Unity is not found in being the same in everything but in the one truth of Jesus who died for our sins.

Acts 2:2, 5-6 *And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.*

God uses a variety of noise or sounds to get our attention - trials, pandemics, relationships, challenges, struggles, hardships, difficulties, pressures. Sometimes we get caught up in the sound instead of what God has prepared. The sound of the rushing wind drew people from all around.

Pastor James admits to a time when he made an unexpected loud explosion that drew the police and people from blocks around. (You just have to listen to the sermon video to get the full effect). The sound of the explosion drew attention to what was going on. The sounds in our own lives can point us to what God is doing, sometimes for the benefit of those around us.

Pastor James, at 14, had the diagnosis of a family friend with a tumor and 6 months to live, change the trajectory of his life. This family was prayed over and many in the family came to know Jesus. On the other side, the Lord did a great work in this lady's life and many have been affected up to today - 28 years later. This sound, that looked like tragedy, greatly affected many. And there is still more to come from her life.

James 1:2-4 *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

When all looks like it is falling apart, our perspective directs our posture. Does the moment give confidence with believing God will use it or will it offer pain and disappointment? Do we have confidence knowing that God is in control of what we are facing? God is building through this process His perfect will. How we perceive our circumstances serves to direct our response to it. Approach with expectation.

Philippians 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Acts 2:5-12 *...bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished...*

God used second-rate citizens to speak to and begin a work in first-rate citizens. How often do we allow our own prejudices to keep us from hearing what God is doing? There is so much inner fighting in our churches today of things that don't matter that it hurts the testimony of Jesus. On this Pentecost day, God opened mouths to speak and ears to hear for the purpose of unity.

Do we cut off relationships and our hearing because another is broken? Unity is more important that the world might know that the Father has sent the Son. Our prejudices prevent the unity that the Holy Spirit came to establish. When we allow the Holy Spirit to direct us, then we can hear and see what we couldn't hear and see before. Our goal is to bring the Kingdom of God into this broken place. The entire emphasis of the Kingdom is to be one and usher in the Kingdom of God to those around us.

John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.*

The church grew as the result of the sound. **Acts 2:41** *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.* They gave up preferences and the emphasis was on the sacrifice of Jesus and the unity began to change the world. **Philippians 1:6** *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.* Allow the Holy Spirit to open our ears to hear what He is speaking.

What noise is bringing attention to your life today?

How do I view that noise? devastating? hopeful? Does it need a different perspective? an eternal emphasis?

What is a preference that is keeping you from hearing God? Or that is hindering a relationship?