Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
"United in worship of Jesus!!"
(Sermon IV in "Psalm 22 & the Crucifixion of Jesus")
March 30, 2025

Scripture

Psalm 22:18
Exodus 39:22-23
Mark 15:24
John 19:23-24

Core Idea and purpose

Core ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (03/09/2025) Like Jesus, we can choose to identify with the suffering servant in Psalm 22 by standing up for love, righteousness, and justice.
- (03/16/2025) How Christlike we are is largely shown by how we react to the raging bulls, roaring lions, and wild dogs in our lives.
- (03/23/2025) God thirsts to have a relationship with us.

Core Idea: We must unite in our worship of Jesus.

Purpose: To encourage unity within the church.

The Sermon

In 1858, during the debate with Senator Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln said, "A house divided against itself, cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other"

Wow! When Jesus said, "A house divided cannot stand…", he was quoting from Abraham Lincoln!! I'm just kidding. I know Abraham Lincoln was quoting from Jesus.

The point Jesus and Lincoln was making was that organizations and nations need to unite around something, or it will divide against itself and fall. In the case of the United States, the nation needed to unite either around freedom or around slavery to keep itself from dividing.

The Christian church is no different. We must also unite around something, or rather, someone. We must unite around the worship of Jesus Christ. If we do not unite around the worship of Jesus, we will stop being the Body of Christ. We will stop being the hands, arms, feet, and mouthpiece of Jesus. In other words, we will become nothing more than a social club dressed up in a religious costume. I can imagine John Wesley, the leader of the 18th century Methodist revival,

putting it this way: If we fail to unite around the worship of Jesus, we will have the form of religion without the power thereof.

When the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus, they casted lots for his clothes. It was common practice for Roman Soldiers to take the clothes of the criminals they were crucifying. Back then, clothes were handmade, and most people didn't own a lot of clothes. So, soldiers would take the clothes of the crucified criminals and hang them on the cross naked. Yes, Jesus was likely naked when he died on the cross – rather humiliating for the one who is fully human and fully God.

By mentioning the casting of lots for Jesus' clothes, the Gospel writers were letting us know that Psalm 22 was about Jesus. Because it says in Psalm 22:18, "they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

The casting of lots for Jesus' clothes also shows the importance of the Christian Church uniting around the worship of Jesus. Let me explain.

[Move towards the display of 1st century clothes]

This is a representation of the type of clothes Jesus may have been wearing when the Roman soldiers took him to his crucifixion. According to John's Gospel, there were four soldiers who were dividing up Jesus' clothes. So, they were deciding who would get his sandals, leather belt, cloak, and tunic.

Jesus' tunic was a special tunic. According to John's Gospel, it consisted of one piece of cloth. It had no seams. This is symbolically significant because, according to the Old Testament, God required the High Priest to wear a blue cloak made of just one piece of cloth. It had to be seamless. The New Living Translation (NLT) says this more clearly than the NIV translation that we normally read from. According to the NLT, Exodus 39:22-23 says, "Bezalel made the robe that is worn with the ephod from a single piece of blue woven cloth, **23** with an opening for Aaron's head in the middle of it. The opening was reinforced with a woven collar so it would not tear." By wearing a tunic made from a single piece of cloth, Jesus was showing himself to be our great High Priest. As said in Hebrews 4:14-15, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Jesus can be our High Priest because he is fully human and fully God. As such, he is the mediator between us and God. The Old Testament High Priest sacrificed a lamb as the mediator between the Israelites and God. But that was a

mere foreshadow of Jesus sacrificing himself as the mediator between humanity and God.

If the church looks to Jesus as our High Priest, then the church must be united around the worship of Jesus. This is another symbolic meaning associated with Jesus' tunic. The tunic symbolizes the unity of the church. Just as his tunic is made up of one cloth, the church is united in one faith and this faith is about the worship of Jesus.

What does it mean for the church to unite in worship of Jesus? It means three things:

First: We acknowledge that Jesus is above everything. This includes politics. Jesus is above all political parties. He's neither a democrat nor a republican. Do not demote him from his divine status by making him out to be either one. Jesus is above all economic or governing systems. He is neither a capitalist nor a socialist. Again, do not demote him from his divine status by making him out to be either one.

Our political opinions should conform to the life and wisdom of Jesus. Remember, Jesus is all about love and justice and our political opinions should reflect that. This, however, does not mean we will all have the same political opinions and that is ok. We should be able to share with each other how Jesus' wisdom influences our opinions while still loving and respecting each other.

Second: The church uniting in worship of Jesus means that we don't always insist on having our own way. Sometimes a congregation makes a decision that we don't agree with. When that happens, we need to remember what's most important – worshipping Jesus.

Third: The church uniting in worship of Jesus means that we love and respect everyone. In everything we do, in every word we say, we do so in a way that shows love and respect for each other. Now, I know that everyone here already knows this. But we all sometimes need a reminder. I know I do.

My wife, Donna, experienced firsthand what happens when a divided church changes and begins to unite in its worship of Jesus. It happened when she went on a mission trip to Europe, where she worked on a United Methodist Church in London, England. Her mission team consisted of 7 people - 2 married couples and 3 women not accompanied by a spouse (including Donna).

Based on past mission trips, Donna and her team were expecting a warm welcome from the church. That, however, is not what happened with this London

congregation. The team arrived on a Saturday morning and, upon their arrival, the newly appointed pastor, Jerry, had to explain a few things to them. He said:

1. They really don't want you here, and don't trust the 3 single women.
    - Only the two married couples will be housed with congregation members.
    - The 3 single women will stay in the Central Park Hotel at my expense (the pastor's expense). You will have your breakfast and dinner there.
2. The congregation consists of six ethnic groups 3 continents.
    - Most congregants are refugees from genocide, apartheid, flowing volcanoes or war-torn villages.
    - Each group is proud and stubborn and refuses to interact AT ALL with the other groups.
3. I have told the entire congregation I am depleting the coffers. I am using all the money it took them 5 years to save to renovate the sanctuary.
4. The church approved the expenditure, but not one church member wants to help with the project.
    - That's why you are here – to do the work of renovating the sanctuary.
5. Don't expect the congregants to welcome, entertain or appreciate you.

The pastor's words rang true when the mission team attended church the next Sunday morning. When Pastor Jerry introduced them to the congregation, no one welcomed them. There was little eye contact and not one hug was doled out.

So, Donna's group got to work at 6 am the next day (Monday) and had only an Irishman named Fergel (who acted as the project foreman) to guide them to supplies and instruct them in their work. Donna sanded herself into pneumonia and kept going, as did the others. By the end of day one, they had grabbed cold sandwiches in the kitchen (because the pastor, not the congregants, had provided bread and deli meat), worked through dinner, and decided they were ready to begin painting the next day.

On day two, a funny thing happened. They arrived at the church in the early morning again and found a bag of shop clothes or scrap rags on the doorstep. Because supplies were low and it had been hard to clean up the day before, the

group eagerly accepted the anonymous gift, looked around for the donor and went inside to keep working.

By the end of day two, a large elderly man and a small child had pulled up folding chairs and watched the work, that again went into the evening hours.

On day three, the mission team found paint rollers on the doorstep. At lunchtime, the weary workers began to migrate to the kitchen to try to make a sandwich but were shooed away by a cheerful congregant who smiled while making hot pasta to be served with the cold cuts. In addition, for the rest of the week, bags of fresh cherries and cheeses were anonymously deposited in the kitchen to be served with lunch, which, by then, included hot coffee and fresh pasties.

By the end of day three, 11 or 12 congregation members sat watching the workers. The elderly man who started the observation no longer sat with his arms crossed.

By day four, the group was met each morning by fresh coffee, lavender hand soap that my wife still loves and fresh pastries.

By day five, over 20 people were present and were heard laughing and conversing for the first time all week. Children were delighted to be invited to use a paintbrush on lower portions of the walls.

The mission team completed the work by 10:00 pm Saturday night. The weary group collapsed in bed and wondered if they even wanted to attend church on Sunday.

On Sunday morning, the group arrived dressed for church, eager to see the results of their labor. What greeted them, however, was a far more lovely site. The factions that had separated themselves by ethnicity the prior Sunday (just seven days before), were now all mixed up together. There was loud chatter, lots of men being clapped on the back, and many women giving out hugs. There was no doubt that Jerry’s vision and dream of transforming several world-weary groups of diverse Christians into a church family had been realized.

What happened? Well, God used the mission team to encourage the church to unite around the worship of Jesus. Uniting around the worship of Jesus is really

all about loving God with all your heart, souls, mind & strength and loving your neighbors as yourself. At that moment, the neighbor to this congregation was the mission team. Once they started to love the mission team, they started to unite around the worship of Jesus, and that made all the difference.

When you see a picture of Jesus, look at his seamless tunic and remember that we, the church, must unite around the worship of Jesus.

Let’s pray.

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I. In 1858, during the debate with Senator Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln said, "A house divided against itself, cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other"

   A. Wow! When Jesus said, "A house divided cannot stand…", he was quoting from Abraham Lincoln!!

      - I'm just kidding. I know Abraham Lincoln was quoting from Jesus.

   B. The point Jesus and Lincoln was making was that organizations and nations need to unite around something, or it will divide against itself and fall.

      - In the case of the United States, the nation needed to unite either around freedom or around slavery to keep itself from dividing.
      - The Christian church is no different.

   C. We (the church) must also unite around something, or rather, someone.

      - We must unite around the worship of Jesus Christ.
      - If we do not unite around the worship of Jesus, we will stop being the Body of Christ.
        - We will stop being the hands, arms, feet, and mouthpiece of Jesus.
        - In other words, we will become nothing more than a social club garbed in religious costumes.
        - I can imagine John Wesley, the leader of the 18th century Methodist revival, putting it this way: If we fail to unite around the worship of Jesus, we will have the form of religion without the power thereof.

II. When the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus, they casted lots for his clothes.

A. It was common practice for Roman Soldiers to take the clothes of the criminal they were crucifying.
    - Back then, clothes were handmade, and most people didn't own a lot of clothes.
    - So, soldiers would take the clothes of the crucified criminal and hang the person on the cross naked.
        - Yes, Jesus was likely naked when he died on the cross – rather humiliating for the one who is fully human and fully God.

B. By mentioning the casting of lots for Jesus' clothes, the Gospel writers were letting us know that Psalm 22 was about Jesus.
    - Because it says in Psalm 22:18, "they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

III. The casting of lots for Jesus' clothes also shows the importance of the Christian Church uniting around the worship of Jesus. Let me explain.

A. [Move towards the display of 1st century clothes]

B. This is a representation of the type of clothes Jesus may have been wearing when the Roman soldiers took him to his crucifixion.
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    - So, they were deciding who would get his sandals, leather belt, cloak, and tunic.

C. Jesus' tunic was a special tunic.
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- By wearing a tunic made from a single piece of cloth, Jesus was showing himself to be our great High Priest.
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IV. Jesus can be our High Priest because he is fully human and fully God.

A. As such, he is the mediator between us and God.
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B. If the church looks to Jesus as our High Priest, then the church must be united in worship around Jesus.

C. This is another symbolic meaning associated with Jesus' tunic.
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VII. When you see a picture of Jesus, look at his seamless tunic and remember that we, the church, must unite around the worship of Jesus.

Let's pray.

<u>863 398 4431 Lanita battles</u>

1. Email coming

2. Ask for judicial warrant signed by a local judge (search or arrest warrnt) if arrest warrant it needs particular individuals name. This is different from an administrative warrant.

205 521 8389 – Law Office

205 218 5038 – Keith Covington

Athanas, Bill – 205 532 3006