

**The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for
January 25, 2026
1 Corinthians 1:10-18 – “Has Christ Been Divided?”**

O God, take our minds and think through them. Take our lips and speak through them. Take our hearts and set them on fire. Amen.

Things were not going well in the fledgling Corinthian Christian congregation and matters seemed serious enough to occasion a letter from the Apostle Paul. In-fighting and clique-forming were the norm. Factions were splintering the congregation as people claimed allegiance to one leader over another instead of following God's way in the central message of the gospel of Christ. Paul is urging the people to cease their divisions and quarrels and to remember that they were all united by their baptism in the name of Christ. Paul argues that the central message of the gospel is the cross of Christ, and it is through the lens of the cross that Christians are called to regard one another and to treat them accordingly.

We are called to do the same. We are all one in Christ being connected to each other through our baptism in Christ's name. Like the religious people so fiercely denounced by the biblical prophets, some Christian believers have been or continue to be complicit in supporting or perpetuating prejudice and oppression and fostering division. History shows that, rather than recognising the dignity of every human being made in the image and likeness of God, Christians have too often involved themselves in structures of sin such as slavery, colonisation, segregation, and discrimination which have stripped others of their dignity on the spurious grounds of race, gender, sexuality, and so forth. So too within the churches.

Churches must acknowledge how they have been silent or actively complicit regarding social injustice. Racial prejudice has been one of the many causes of Christian division that has torn the Body of Christ. Toxic ideologies, such as White Supremacy and the doctrine of discovery, have caused much harm, particularly in North America and in lands throughout the world colonized by White European powers over the centuries.

Christians throughout history have excluded, persecuted, and killed those they deemed to be different – Jews, Muslims, gays, witches, heretics, and so on. Today, separation and oppression continue to manifest when any single group or class is given privileges above others. The sins of racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia is evident in any beliefs or practices that distinguish or elevate one type of person over another. As Christians we must be willing to disrupt systems of oppression and to advocate for justice. Christians have failed to recognise the dignity of all the baptised and have belittled the dignity of their siblings in Christ on the grounds of “difference”.

Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr memorably said, “It is one of the tragedies of our nation, one of the shameful tragedies, that 11 o’clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hour in Christian America”. This statement demonstrates the disunity of Christians. This division runs counter to the unity that God desires for the whole of creation. Tragically this failure to recognise the dignity of all people is part of what has divided Christians from one another, has caused Christians to worship at separate times, and in separate buildings, and in certain cases has led Christian communities to divide.

Now, not all Christians distrust, demonize, fear, caricature, and separate themselves from each other. We can also find voices of inclusion, embrace, toleration, and even celebration. How can we live our unity as Christians so as to confront the evils and injustices of our time? How can we engage in dialogue, increase awareness, understanding and insight about one another’s lived experiences?

Let us be open to God’s presence in all our encounters with each other as we seek to be transformed, to dismantle the systems of oppression, and to heal the sins of racism. Together, let us engage in the struggle for justice in our society. Oppression is harmful to the entire human race. There can be no unity without justice.

We need to confront all instances of oppression and bring forth justice for all. We are all human and we all deserve the dignity of living the truth of our lives, to live as we are, to embrace our differences in the knowledge that we are all children of God deserving of love, peace, and salvation. And, in this unity, we all belong to Christ. It is the gifts and the life experience of the people of the church that gives the most complete picture and witness of the body of Christ and where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are experienced and exercised.

It is not an act of charity to reach out to those different from us or our way of being Christ’s person in the world, or who have been taught the faith differently. It is an act of faithfulness, an extension of the faith of Jesus, to seek communion with all those who call upon the name of Jesus. If we belong together to Christ, we must belong to one another.

Our church is divided. But it doesn’t have to be. It is up to us to bridge the divides and bring unity as baptized people of Christ. We must find ways to work together as the undivided Body of Christ, not with the goal of all being the same, but to embrace all humanity as they are, in all their differences, and as loved Children of God.

Amen.