Galatians, Pt. 3: Kingdom Collaboration

Overview

An important priority of the early church was protecting its unity. We see this in Galatians 2, with Paul's visit to the Church Leaders. We see different parts of the church (Peter and Paul) having different callings, yet the same mission. Making Disciples of Jesus Christ. But in an age of social media, 24-hour news, and bipartisan politics, unity is more difficult than ever. Families, communities, and tribes are split apart by divisive discourse that asks, "Are others really on my team?" But the invitation of Kingdom Collaboration is to see brothers and sisters in Christ. To see where God is working in their lives, through them, for his kingdom.

Seeing what God is doing is just the beginning. Unity requires that we humble ourselves in order to see what God is up to around us. Getting outside our own personal bubbles and seeing what God is doing through other people, organizations, and churches. If we were honest, we often instead become suspicious of what others are doing, or feel the need to view others as competition. We have to be people who get past ourselves and see God's fingerprints on the world around us. When we only view others as competition or a threat, we will become

blinded to God's movement in our city. But when we humble ourselves and get to know our brothers and sisters, we become a part of something bigger than ourselves. When we seek Kingdom Unity, we begin to work alongside God and his vision for our city.

This week we want to recover a vision of "unusual unity" among our churches in our city.

Discussion

- Why do you think Christians/churches stay divided? What kinds of things separate us?
- What is your response to the idea of Kingdom Unity? Does it bring up cynicism? Do you long for it? Maybe both?
- Do you have ways that you seek unity with others in your life? What might that look like?

Kingdom Unity

Last week, we explored the idea that we all have a calling. Now, we want to talk about how, while all of us have different callings, we are on the same mission.

As a band or group, open the Scriptures to Galatians 2:1-10. Have someone read it aloud slowly. Sit with the passage. What sticks out? What do you notcice?

Take some time to meditate together on the idea that your calling fits into a grander mission.

- What ideas do I have for my personal calling?

- What other callings can you identify in other people or churches in your life that are different than your own?
- What might God be doing through them? Even if you disagree, how might God be calling them into the same mission?
- What is most difficult about seeking unity with others? Persons or Churches? What is most difficult for you personally
- What changes could you make to your life that would open space for more unity?

Practice for the Week Ahead: Examen of Envy & Comparison.

1. Become Present to God. Find a quiet place, take a few deep breaths, and become aware of God's presence. Remember that you are deeply loved by God, not because of your accomplishments, reputation, or success, but because of his grace. Begin by thanking God for the gifts, relationships, and opportunities he has given you today. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you honestly examine your heart without shame or self-condemnation.

2. Notice Envy and Comparison. Slowly review your day, paying attention to moments when you compared yourself with someone else. Did someone's success make you feel insecure? Did you struggle to celebrate another person's accomplishments? Did you feel overlooked, jealous, superior, or threatened? When a moment comes to mind, pause and ask: What was I feeling? What was I wanting? What was I believing about myself or God? Don't rush to fix these feelings. Simply acknowledge them honestly before Jesus.

3. Receive God's Grace. Bring whatever you've noticed into the loving presence of Jesus. Confess any envy, pride, or resentment, and invite

God to heal the insecurities underneath them. Remember Galatians 2:8: God was at work through both Peter and Paul, even though their callings were different. Another person's success does not diminish God's love or calling for you. Take a moment to rest in the truth that you have nothing to prove and that God's grace is enough.

4. Practice Blessing Instead of Comparing. Bring to mind someone you've compared yourself with or struggled to celebrate. Thank God for the gifts and opportunities he's given them. Pray specifically for their flourishing, asking God to bless their life and work. Then consider one practical way you could encourage or celebrate them this week. Repeat this Examen each evening, asking the Holy Spirit to gradually transform comparison into celebration, competition into partnership, and envy into love.

Close in Prayer

Before you end your time together, pray, asking the Spirit of God to fill and empower you to see what he is doing in the city around you. To be able to celebrate, bless, and support other people and churches. Take some time to pray for other prayer requests as they come up.