

Bellaire Community United Methodist Church

September 18, 2016

## **“Being of One Mind”**

*Together We Can Do More, part 1*

1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29:1-19

You are in the right place this morning. This is the place where you can hear from God, where you can experience Christ’s love, and where your life can be changed. I firmly believe that, or I wouldn’t be standing in front of you this morning. You may be here for the first time or the thousandth time, but either way, God is not done with you yet. I wish I could tell you how to be perfect, but I can’t. None of us can. But I can tell you how to love Jesus. And I can promise you that if you follow him he will renew your life.

I invite you to pray with me by holding your hands out in front of you, as a sign that you are ready to receive and respond to God’s word this morning. Let’s pray.

Holy God, we come before you this morning seeking your mercy. We don’t love you perfectly. We make mistakes. But we know, through your Son Jesus Christ, we can experience forgiveness and healing, and using his strength, we can serve you with our whole heart. Help us to be your church this morning, God. Teach us the way you would have us go, and help us not to stray from it. We need your help to be your church. And we ask all this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever played a team sport before? I didn’t much in high school. I played golf, track, and cross-country – we had teams, but everyone pretty much did their own thing, unless you were running a relay.

However, in college, I played in the marching band for five years. This actually gave me a dual reinforcement of the importance of teamwork and being united in your goal. As a band, we wanted to give our audience the best show possible. We each had a job to do, including: memorize our music, stay in shape, march with precision, and help each other when someone was out of formation and not doing their job. It was hard work.

Then we watched the football game itself. It is obvious when a football team is not working together. When someone misses an assignment, when someone fails to do their part of the play, it doesn't lead to success. What is interesting to me, though, is that someone can actually be a good football player and at the same time, a lousy teammate. They can take all the credit for themselves, like a running back saying, "I'm so fast," forgetting that the other players were blocking for him. Or a quarterback saying, "I'm such a great passer," forgetting that if no one caught his passes, he'd be no good at all.

Being united, literally, "being of one mind" as the Bible puts it, is not only advantageous in sports, it's great for life in general. Think about your family, for instance. When mom and dad are united, they are an unstoppable force. Nothing, not even dirty diapers and broken ankles can slow them down! Seriously. My wife broke her ankle this weekend. As a family, we united to cook dinner, do the dishes, fold the laundry, and a whole bunch of other stuff around the house. We were a great team. You know the feeling. When you are at the office, or wherever you work, think of how great it is when your coworkers understand how to work together to accomplish goals for the business, and to make the workplace a fun place to be.

But then, there is real life. Not everyone is on the same page. Just look at all the negative politics surrounding the upcoming election. Look at how families, businesses, and even churches fall apart because people can't learn to serve together, love each other, put others first and swallow their own pride.

In the next four weeks, we are engaging in a stewardship series called, "Together We Can Do More." The main focus of this series is to explain how the church, all of us, can do incredible things for God by being of one mind and using all our resources together. Yes, we will be talking about money. All the churches I know need money to do ministry. But it's not just a series about giving more to the church. It's much broader than that. It's about our time, our willingness to serve, our willingness to listen to each other, to think about what God wants to do in our lives. We are going to ask each other the big question: SO WHAT? We believe God wants to do great things in our lives, so what are WE going to do about it?

This is not a new question. In 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29, King David essentially asked the Israelites the same thing. King David was at the end of his reign. He had all these great plans that were going to be accomplished through his son, Solomon. David had a vision for a temple, a place where the Israelites could forever come and worship God together. But God had told him, "[David,] You are not the one to build the house for my Name." (1<sup>st</sup> Chr. 28:3) So David called the entire country together, and he told them his vision. He introduced Solomon to them – "This is the one God has chosen to succeed me. But he's young. He's a green horn. He's a freshman. The job he has before him is too great to accomplish alone." (See 1<sup>st</sup> Chr. 29:1)

David's vision was to build a house for God, not for people. I love how my NIV Bible puts it. This is a "palatial structure." I've visited some palaces in Europe. They are huge. Some of them took hundreds of years to finish. I can imagine Solomon one night, when King David comes in to say prayers, and Solomon says, "Dad, what do you think I'll do one day when I'm king?" "Well, son, I think you'll build a house for God." Solomon gets huge eyes. "Won't that be kind of big?" "Yes, son. God is big, so his house must be big. In fact, I think it will be palatial." "Oh, OK."

David cast the vision, but he didn't stop there. He told the people first, "This is what I'm going to give." From the scripture we just read, you can see it's a lot. And not just money and gold and silver and wood and stuff from the treasury. David pulled cash out of his own bank account to finance the temple. He says in 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29:3, "Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures."

This is the truth – King David did exactly what a good leader does. He set the vision, and then he set the example. He didn't say, "Here are the plans for the palatial temple. Now, you go figure out how to build it and how to pay for it." No, David took risks with his own personal resources to finance a project he would never see.

Think about that for a moment. Would you be willing to give to a cause that you would never see finished? Would you believe in the future, the future of this church, so that it would impact your giving now?

David's generosity was contagious. When he threw down the challenge, the people responded. Read verse 5 again. "Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?" Note, David did not say, "Who will match this gift?"

“Who will give money to the temple? We’re auctioning off pavers – we’ll engrave your names on them for 1000 shekels.” No, he said, who will consecrate themselves, in other words, who will worship God, who make themselves holy in order to see the project through?

Who responded? They all did, starting with the leaders. Verse 6 says all the leaders stepped up and gave, following David’s example. But catch the end here. This is where it all comes together. Verse 9: “The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.”

Do you see what happened? The leaders’ giving brought joy. Their gift was not forced, coerced, or demanded. It was freely given. And when the regular people saw it, they rejoiced. They were encouraged. They believed that anything was possible, even building this huge house for God.

May I be blunt? Does your giving bring joy to others? When you give your offering, literally, does the money you put in the plate or give online bring encouragement to others? We are not giving to impress anyone – not God, not the pastor. It’s not about competing in our giving. It’s about lifting up others by how we give.

We have a job to do in this church. No, we are not going to build a literal temple. But we are supporting a place where God is worshipped. We give to projects that bring people joy, love, peace, hope. Our gifts sponsor scholarships, clean water, clothing drives. We give to spread the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ by supporting Vacation Bible School, summer camp, Sunday School, and youth ministry. We give to pay the electric and heating bills and all the staff salaries, including mine, because we believe that it is part of what it means to

belong to a church. Do you call yourself a member? If you do, do you know what that means? It's right there in the front of your hymnal. You promise to support the church with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness. We have all made that vow to each other. If you don't believe that is part of being a church member, I have to honestly ask you, what do you think it is? Belonging to a club? Getting your name on a list that gets you into heaven? It's not. Membership is about loving Jesus Christ so much that you do anything possible to support his bride, the church.

Together we can do more. Together we can give more. Together we can serve more. Together we can love more. Together.

Each of the next four Sundays you will note that the offering comes after the message. Why? Simply because I believe the response of our worship should include giving.

Please watch this short video as we each consider what our response to God's word will be. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyqYB3Q8v78>

### Memory verse

Acts 2:44-45 "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."

### Reflection questions

1. Does your giving provide joy to others? Does it enable others to worship God?
2. What causes outside of the church do you support? Why do you support them?
3. Why do you give what you give?
4. If you were to increase your giving, what would you hope would happen?