



Lesson 15: Community

Psalms 133 (The Message)

¹⁻³ **133** How WONDERFUL, how beautiful,
When brothers and sisters get along!
It's like costly anointing oil
flowing down head and beard,
Flowing down Aaron's beard,
flowing down the collar of his priestly robes.
It's like the dew on Mount Hermon
flowing down the slopes of Zion.
Yes, that's where God commands the blessing,
Ordains eternal life.

I. Living Together In Community

Psalms 133 presents what we are after: "How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along!" People of faith are always members of a community. Creation itself was not complete until there was community, Adam needing Eve before humanity was whole. God never works with individuals in isolation, but always with people in community.

For centuries this Psalm was sung on the road as many people made the ascent to Jerusalem for festival worship. How great to have everyone sharing a common purpose, traveling a common path, striving toward a common goal, that path and purpose and goal being God.

II. Two Ways To Avoid Community

Most Christians have some first-hand experience of what it's like to live with brothers and sisters. They fight. The first story in the Bible about brothers living together is the story of Cain and Abel. And it is a murder story. Much of the literature of the world like novels and plays document this, that living together like brothers and sisters means endless squabbles and angry arguments. And so, if we're going to sing "How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along," we will not do it on our own but with the teachings of Jesus.

Another common way to avoid community is the turn the church into an institution. In this way people are treated not on the basis of relationships but in terms of functions. Somewhere between organization and community there's a place where a person can be taken seriously,

learns to trust others, to depend on others, to be compassionate with others, and to rejoice with others. To be a family living in community.

III. Each Other's Priest

There are two poetic images in Psalm 133 that are rich with insights for helping us live life together in Christ. The first image describes community as “costly anointing oil flowing down head and beard, Flowing down Aaron’s beard, flowing down the collar of his priestly robes.

The picture comes from Exodus 29, where instructions are given for the ordination of Aaron and the other priest. After sacrifices were prepared, Aaron was to be dressed in his priestly garments. Then this direction is given, “You shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him...Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:7,9). Oil, throughout scripture, is a sign of God's presence, a symbol of the spirit of God. When we realize that Christ has anointed us with the Spirit and that we are set apart for service to one another we begin to see each other differently.

In the second image, the community is, “like the dew on Mount Hermon flowing down the slopes of Zion.” Hermon, the highest mountain in that part of the world, rises to a height of over 9,000 feet in the Lebanon range, north of Israel. This image is meant to remind us the newness and freshness of the dew in the morning. A community of faith flourishes when we view each other with expectancy, wondering what God will do today in each one of us. Each day is fresh like dew in the morning.

IV. Good Fellowship

The last line of the Psalm concludes with the good and delightful life together is where, “God commands the blessing, ordains eternal life.” We as Christians want nothing more than a glimpse into heaven. Psalm 133 throws out just a hint of heaven. “How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along...(because) That’s where God commands the blessing, ordains eternal life.”