

Glory, Glory ... Man United!

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[0 : 00] well martin let me say a huge thank you to you for allowing me the joy of coming up here and being with you this weekend it was great to be with the roots group yesterday i thought that's terrifically encouraging to be with such a great group of young people serious about looking at god's word together and wanting to live it out i found that a great encouragement and a great joy to be with you this morning i don't know whether you know the story of the white anglican clergyman and he was preaching in india and was preaching through an interpreter and the white anglican clergyman's opening sentence went like this the beatific familiarity of this passage traditionally appointed for quinquagesima must not cause us to neglect its profundity the interpreter translated it slightly differently and said so far the preacher hasn't said anything worth remembering when he does i'll let you know i confess to being white anglican and a clergyman it's in your best interest now to bow your heads and pray i'll say something more worthy of your memory let's pray together shall we our loving heavenly father thank you that you speak thank you that you speak to us by your spirit through your word would you be pleased to do that for us now so that we may hear you and then we may live out what you say and we ask it for jesus sake amen i guess over the last 20 or 30 years has seen the development of mission statements virtually every company or organization has a mission statement published so that the staff and customers know exactly what a company or organization stands for it's about 20 years ago now that pepsi cola had its first ever mission statement and it was summarized just two words pepsi cola's mission statement was kill coke well if you wanted to draw up a mission statement for the local church i wonder what you would draw one up for here at saint silas i wonder what you most want for your congregation here what do you most expect church to be like or church to be about in the 2000s the gallup organization did a significant poll asking churchgoers what they thought the purpose of church was and the replies were an interesting mix some said church is time to worship god some said church is a place for the lonely to make friends some said it's a chance to have a good sing somewhere for my wife and children to go on a sunday well i wonder if you were to think of the mission statement of saint silas i wonder whether you'd come up with this as the purpose of church look with me at the very end of chapter 3 and there's a clue in verse 20 and 21 certainly how paul would define it now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us to him be glory in the church to him be glory ultimately the purpose of church is to glorify god now if you've been journeying through these autumn sundays through ephesians you'll have got some grasp of the great plan of god for his people he's described how everything one day in the future will come under the head or rule of king jesus how that people will be drawn together from two groups who in the ancient world would not have associated so how gentiles as well as jews as they come to faith in the lord jesus become united together

paul's explained that his intent in chapter 3 verse 10 god's intent was that now how through the church the manifold wisdom of god would be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms it's an extraordinary thought isn't it you see church so often is a rag bag of us but god's intent is through the church his manifold wisdom gets proclaimed in beyond this world in the heavenly realms it fundamentally means that church is the big thing god is doing in this world that's extraordinary when you look around at us this morning we are the big thing god is doing in the world not only that we are the means by which god's manifold wisdom is proclaimed beyond this world isn't that breathtaking his purpose ultimately is that god should be glorified in the church to him be glory in the church that immediately means doesn't it we're going to have a bigger horizon a broader outlook than the gallop pole suggested very often we treat church don't we

I know that I'm in danger of this temptation we treat church as if it's like Morrison's Tesco's or Asda and we're the consumers we come along and take the things off the shelf as if were that we like we pick and choose the bits that we like about church and if church is doing something we don't particularly like well we don't show up or we don't buy into the activity but church is the big thing god is doing in this world to bring him glory so church ultimately isn't actually about us whereas it's so easy to think that church is about me that I'm the consumer here to be satisfied no god is here to be glorified well how will that happen how is the manifold wisdom of god proclaimed in the heavenly realms through church how is god glorified in the church well really that's what the second half of Ephesians is all about how to pull off glory in the church in practice and three things I want to draw your attention to in verses 1 to 6 together first consistent lives consistent lives as a prisoner in the Lord it's picking up the phrase that was used back in chapter 3 verse 1 where it almost looked as if Paul then made a digression it wasn't a digression but Paul picks up the same idea as chapter 3 verse 1 as a prisoner for the Lord then and here's the

I urge you that's strong in the original it's literally the word that was used back in Mark's gospel of the leper who came to Jesus and begged him in other words this isn't a suggestion from the apostle Paul I urge you I beg you to do what?

to live a life worthy of the calling you have received if you want to glorify God in the church then the way we'll do it is to live lives worthy of what God has called us to and in Ephesians we already know what God has called us to because Paul spelt it out if you turn back a page you'll see it back in chapter 1 in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians so in chapter 1 verse 18 I pray also that the eyes of your hearts may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you and the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints what has God called us to?

[8 : 17] he's called us to the riches of his glorious inheritance he's called us to glory he's called us for heaven have you ever been in one of those posh restaurants you know where you get to read the menu kind of by the bar area and you choose what you want and then a waiter comes and calls you to the dining area to tell you that you can now be seated for the food well we have been called to the eternal banquet as it were the rich inheritance of God's kindness and we're to live consistent with that calling Paul's saying that there ought to be a consistency between what God has called us to which is eternity with him in a new creation and the way we live now and the way we live now should mirror where it is we're heading to so when the waiter calls you to the dining room you act consistently with that call you get up from your seats you follow the waiter along we should live lives in line with our calling an undeserved calling because notice it's a calling you have received in other words it wasn't about us deciding we would waltz in one day on the day we die or the day Jesus returns it wasn't that we decided we would waltz in to the presence of God forever and ever no it's all received as a gift from God

Paul's made exactly that same point back in chapter 2 by grace you have been saved through faith this is not your own doing not because of work so that we've got nothing to boast about consistent lives the opposite of course is something that we all dislike because the opposite of consistent lives is hypocritical lives and I think most of us when we see hypocrisy we dislike it earlier this year I've had one or two little health scares and so I have been making regular visits to doctors and practice nurses I've got to know most of the staff at our local GP's surgery and it's very ironic because in my first visit they put me on the scales we've got a rather forthright practice manager and she said

Mr. Mote you are obese I wanted to use the old Churchill line back to her do you know that I wanted to say madam you're ugly but at least I can lose weight but I didn't say that because that would not have been kind or terribly helpful but as she put me on the scales and then told me I've got to lose three stone I did just notice her size and just wanted to think is there a little bit of inconsistency going on here because it was rather at one level interesting that she was telling me to lose three stone but I actually thought she could have lost three stone too but again I didn't say that to her but we don't like we don't like someone telling us to do things that they don't do themselves yes we don't like hypocrisy and hypocrisy in the church does not glorify God that is when we've been called to something and we don't live consistently with it consistent lives but what does that look like how do we live consistent lives well in verses 2 and 3 notice 2 united relationships united relationships verse 2 is how to do it and verse 3 is the command to do it united relationships in the church is the consistent life worthy of our calling because what's we going to experience in glory forever and ever we are going to be united as

God's people that's the whole push of what Ephesians has been about so far so in chapter 1 verse 10 what God is doing is bringing everything under the head or rule of Jesus in chapter 2 Paul has told us that Jew and Gentile have been brought together as one new man or one new humanity in chapter 2 he ended the chapter by telling us that all believers are being built into a single household or temple in which God would live for all eternity unity is what we're going to experience in glory forever and ever and therefore that is verse 3 what Paul commands us to do now make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace it's obligation and notice it's make every effort or be flat out for would be a good translation in other words when a local church is divided it ought to it ought to make us uncomfortable a church full of factions a church full of cliques a church that's not living in united relationship well is not consistent with a

God who in Jesus is restoring from what happened as a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion in the garden restoring things to the Eden like unity where the writer of Genesis could write about Adam and Eve they were naked and they felt no shame which I'm sure you know doesn't just mean they were nude it means that they've got nothing to cover up no secrets they were totally united together we're to make every effort for that and how is that done that unity is the bond of peace being at peace with one another it's translating the Greek word or in the Old Testament the Hebrew word would be shalom which doesn't just mean the absence of hostility it means absolutely proper restored relationship you'll have noticed in

[15 : 31] Syria over the last year that from time to time there have been efforts to broker a cease fire it's not worked that well but for a few days there's peace but when we say that there's peace in Aleppo for a few days we just mean they're not shooting each other or bombing each other it doesn't mean that there's proper relationship does it but that's what we're being called to proper relationship well that God can bring that about amongst you is an extraordinary miracle I was going to say this sounds a bit rude I was going to say you are a very odd lot here this morning but by that I mean you're a very diverse congregation you're male and female you're from different nations

I can see that from skin colour you're from different nations you're older and you're younger presumably you come from the west side of Glasgow but some of you I've heard come from the east side of Glasgow so economically different backgrounds and yet God expects you at St Silas to live in peace Shalom or to make every effort for that to happen well how do you do that well verse two is the answer for qualities that Paul mentions be completely humble Paul chooses a specific Greek word for humility there it's one where we're not to think of ourselves as more important than other people so it means literally we will think of one another as being more important than ourselves yet in my experience pride lurks behind most discord in the local church

I'm not speaking to them until they speak to me first I've been coming to this church for years and I know what's best for the church I don't dot dot dot nearly all sentences that begin with I give away that humility is not what we are by nature gentleness second there we have trouble with that word often because it conjures up weakness or insipidness John Stott in his commentary translates it as the gentleness of the strong or the person whose strength is under control that's a good translation isn't it the gentle person is the person who gives way says dot on the things that are not essential and yet he goes on to comment that isn't it striking that so much discord in the local church happens not over the essentials but over things that don't matter that much it's true isn't it have you noticed that that's so often how it is the church

I go to I reckon the vicar of the church I've been going to for the last 12 years gets most headaches over things like the hymns we sing the music style the liturgy we use the church furniture we sit on and all kinds of things like that which really in the big scheme of things don't matter that much do they third quality patience it literally has the idea of being long suffering with aggravating people do you know I don't find it hard to be patient with people who are non aggravating it's the people I find the pain that I find it hard to be patient with and yet they're very much the people I have to be patient with it's worked out perhaps in the fourth quality that Paul mentions there in verse two bearing one another in love it's got the idea of mutually tolerating or making loving allowances for one another tolerance in not minding if somebody else gets their way four qualities evident in a church will mean that the church is united and that will bring about the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace how will how will

God be glorified through a local church like yours consistent lives united relationships I was going to give this morning's sermon title the outline of glory glory man united but you might have misheard that and if you knew where I live and you were a city supporter you would have probably walked out of the church even at that point glory glory glory man united yes it's glory glory to God through humans united consistent lifestyle in united relationships but what motivates that unity or put another way what is the basis of that unity and it's where we were mentioning in the interview it is through shared fundamentals shared fundamentals as we passionately desire to glorify

[21 : 35] God as we make every effort to live in unity together the basis or the foundation of that unity is then spelt out in verses 4 to 6 there is one body and one spirit just as you were called to one hope when you were called one Lord one faith one baptism one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all you may have picked up already that I was not a great lover of physics when I was at school I was also not a great lover of mathematics I didn't really understand it I guess I could do it but I didn't understand what was going on but I did understand when we were doing fractions and when we were multiplying fractions and adding fractions and subtracting fractions we always had to work out what the lowest common denominator was and when you can work out the lowest common denominator you can add fractions together or you can subtract fractions from one another some people think that unity is something that we should have at any price

Paul the apostle doesn't think in those terms there are seven here seven shared fundamentals that are the foundational basis on which we can live united relationships in which it's hard to live in shalom if we don't agree on these seven fundamentals and it's not just the apostle Paul who believes like this the apostle John at the beginning of his first letter says that we come into fellowship with God the father through having fellowship with the apostolic teaching and if you won't come into fellowship with the apostles ultimately you can't together come in fellowship with the father so what are the seven common fundamentals you'll notice there's a lovely trinitarian feel to them as

God the father God the son and God the Holy Spirit are all mentioned but here are the seven we belong to one body Jesus is the head we are the body if you don't believe that Jesus ultimately is the head of the body that he is the head to which God will bring all things together it's very hard to be in unity with other people who don't share that foundation you don't need to center too much on

Jesus I said I thought he was fairly central to Christianity he said well he's important but I don't believe he's God God oh I said I thought that was pretty well the foundation of Christianity and he looked at me as if I was on another planet as if I was a bit naive it's very hard to have unity in this kind of sense with people who don't believe Jesus is God of course I'm not his judge but I wonder if you don't believe Jesus is God whether actually you will be in the final place of unity amongst all of God's people there's only one body Jesus only has one body the church one body one spirit there is only one Holy Spirit and the spirit who works in me if you're

Christian is the spirit who works in you he's not at work in one person in one way and another person in a totally inconsistent way notice in verse 3 it is the unity of the spirit or the unity that comes as a result of being in the spirit third called to one hope so as we've already seen we have one destination where we're all heading together so it makes no sense to live apart there's only one Lord that's the Lord Jesus there's only one faith almost certainly there Paul using it in the sense of there is one already by this time in the first century one set of established doctrinal truths that are objective that all

[27:19] Christians are expected to believe there's there's only one baptism whichever way it was done for you and however whatever quantity of water was used for you we are baptized into the trinitarian God Father Son and Holy Spirit and we all ultimately seventhly only have one God and Father we together are brothers and sisters of one God and Father there are not many different gods in this world the only God that there is is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chapter one verse three these seven these seven foundation stones these seven fundamentals are true for all real

Christians and if we agree on those seven fundamentals they are the basis and the motivation for us then living united relationships which are the consistent lifestyle with what God has called us to for the future and when we live like that as we make every effort to do so we bring glory to God in the church and we proclaim the manifold wisdom out of this world I hope you love and enjoy your local church because the local church is what God is doing in this world it is his plan A and there is no plan

B glory to o'clock the church it matters it ought to matter to us because it matters to God it's his plan of how he receives glory. So why don't we bow our heads and pray that that'll be the case.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for everything you have done in Jesus. Thank you that you've brought a diverse group of people like us together, sharing these seven fundamentals of truth. And because they're ours together, we pray therefore that we would make every effort to live in unity together, living lives consistently with what you've called us to in Jesus. And we want to do that, not for our benefit, but ultimately so you, the great God, are given glory and seen as the great God and wise God that you are. And so we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.