

## THE REAL MOUNTAIN DEW

### Psalm 133

There are still Chuck Norris jokes floating around about the famous Hollywood martial arts expert with the tough guy image. For instance, fear of spiders is called arachnophobia, fear of tight spaces is called claustrophobia, and fear of Chuck Norris is called...Logic. Superman and Chuck Norris agreed to fight and bet on the results. The bet was that the loser would have to wear his underwear outside his pants. Ghosts sit around the campfire and tell Chuck Norris stories. There used to be a street named Chuck Norris, but nobody crosses Chuck Norris and lives.

One soft drink picked up on the whole Chuck Norris persona and featured it in one of their commercials. It was Mountain Dew. Mountain Dew positions itself as a cool drink associated with adventure, youth, energy and good times. Who would be more cool than Chuck Norris, so he showed up in a commercial confronting two teenagers who make fun of him. They run in terror only to encounter Chuck at every turn. In the end, of course, Chuck is shown drinking Mountain Dew.

Mountain Dew is cool, it can give you energy, make you cool like Chuck Norris and make your life exciting. We all know that's just marketing and it's not true. But there is a mountain dew that in fact is really cool and can have a big and positive impact on all our lives. Psalm 133 tells us about that real mountain dew.

### EXPOSITION

#### PREMISE: UNITY IS A WONDERFUL THING!

The Psalm starts with the simple statement that it is good and pleasant when brothers live together in unity. Literally it is a beautiful thing. The term used speaks of a beauty that touches our souls and brings joy and gladness. This Psalm says that unity is like that. There is something powerful and good about being unified with other people.

Imagine a group of ancient Jewish pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the celebration of a feast. This group of extended family, neighbors and friends walk together for a couple days each way on the round trip. As they go they sing, talk, tell stories, joke with each other, and laugh. At night perhaps they all gather around a fire and talk and sing. At some point in the trip the Psalmist reflects on how much fun he is having. He says "how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity."

I remember a time when I was a kid and my family was staying with some of our closest family friends at Carpinteria Beach up near Santa Barbara. Our accommodations were less than impressive, but I remember happy days of playing in the sand and the water, exploring around the campground with my brother and our friends. Night time after dinner we played cards and sat around talking and telling stories. I remember thinking, “how good it is to be together in unity.” To this day those memories have a sort of soft focus, bathed in a warm glow that makes me feel good. How good it is to live in unity. Why is it so good?

### BECAUSE OF ITS EFFECTS ON US

Unity is like precious oil poured on the head and running down on the beard. That sounds like some weird treatment they might do at some pricey spa. For instance at the Shizuka New York Day Spa you can have a facial of nightingale droppings mixed with rice bran that supposedly is great for the skin. Or in some toney places you can use the Elcina snail slime moisturizer. Is this one of those bizarre kinds of spa treatments?

A specific anointing with oil is in view here. Notice that the verse goes on to speak of oil “**running down on Aaron’s beard.**” Why the mention of Aaron? Aaron and his descendants were priests. The oil spoken of here was used to anoint them into the priesthood. It was “precious oil.” The oil used to anoint priests and inaugurate them in their ministry was very costly and was only used to anoint priests and kings. It was a mixture of expensive spices with olive oil. Such costly oil was used to symbolize something valuable. It symbolized the Spirit of God being present with them. So unity is like the Holy Spirit being poured out on us in abundance. Ephesians 4:3 says, “**Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.**” Where the Spirit of God is working there will be unity. The Spirit always produces unity.

Think of water. Water makes things wet. You can’t have the presence of water on something without it getting wet. That’s how the Spirit is. You can’t have him present in a group of people without those people drawing together in unity. In 1 Corinthians 3:1 Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, “**Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly.**” He went on in verse 3 to say, “**You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?**” They were not spiritual, meaning the Spirit of Jesus was not ruling and working in their lives. They were not full of his Spirit but were acting like everybody else in the world, people who don’t have the Spirit of Jesus. What told Paul that? They were divided and quarreling. Where the

Spirit is working that doesn't exist. Where the Spirit is at work there will always be unity. That doesn't mean there will never be a difference of opinion, there will be no disagreements. Those will happen. But they will be handled in such a way that people are still drawn together. In fact, conflicts will just make the bond stronger between them.

Humans have a built-in desire for unity. We were created to live in unity with other people. We see it in movies. One of my favorites is *Field of Dreams* which is all about reconciliation, about estranged people being able to come together in unity. In the final shot you see an immensely long line of cars streaming to the field of dreams, representing people coming from far away, longing for reconciliation, for the dream of unity. For the women there are *Beaches*, *Steel Magnolias* and *The Divine Secret of the Ya Ya Sisterhood*. Add the myriad of romantic comedies that are about people finding love and unity with each other and the many buddy movies that depend on that need for friendship.

Movies tell us something about what people long for, what they dream could happen. They point us to the fact that we long for the ability to connect with each other. We want to be part of a group where there is real love and true fellowship. We were created for it. It is a dream that resonates with our hearts always. It is where we are heading, for in heaven we will experience it as we have always dreamed it could be.

That is why it is so disappointing when a friendship either blows up or just fizzles. The converse of the opening statement of this Psalm might be “***how awful and painful it is when brothers live apart in disunity. It is like car alarms going off continuously in the middle of the night.***” Many of us have become resigned to disunity because we have been so consistently disappointed. In his book, *The 10 Dumbest Things That Christians Do* (p. 105) Mark Atterbury says what he has observed is that people “want nothing more than to be part of a loving church family, but nothing in their experience tells them such a thing exists.”

There is total unity in heaven. We get tiny tastes of that in very brief flashes in some of our experiences here on earth. But the church is to be the place where we actually catch a glimpse of heaven. No, it will never be the full on thing here on earth, but it is to have the flavor of heaven and give us a tantalizing appetizer of it.

There is strength in unity. The whole becomes much stronger than merely the sum of the parts. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, “**Though one may be overpowered, two can**

defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” A cord of three standing together is hard to break.

The Navy Seals say this, “Individuals play the game, but teams beat the odds.” The game Seals play is no game at all. It is life and death. But they know that teamwork and unity is key. Listen to this quote. “The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.” Do you know who said that? It was George Herman Ruth, also known as Babe Ruth, one of the greatest individual talents ever to play the game of baseball. He said a team, people playing together, will always beat a collection of individual talents.

Matthew 10:1 says, “He (Jesus) called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” Then verse 5 says he sent them out to preach. How cool would that be? If Jesus gave you the power to heal every disease you encountered, to deal with demonic possession if you ran into it, you could have such a huge impact. Who wouldn’t have confidence if they had that kind of power? In Mark’s account of that event he recorded a detail that Matthew didn’t give us. Mark 6:7 says, “Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.” Did you notice the added detail? He didn’t send them out alone. He sent them out in pairs! In Luke 10:1 Jesus expanded his ministry even further. “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” They went two by two. Jesus knew there is greater strength in going together.

Together, unified, we are a far more formidable force than we would ever be alone. We need each other. And we know it. We know that when we are together with others and are unified we become much stronger. In their book *Distant Replay* Dick Schaap and Jerry Kramer told stories of the Green Bay Packers dynasty of the 1960’s when the Packer mystique was created under the leadership of famous coach Vince Lombardi, for whom the Super Bowl trophy is now named. One of those stories was about Lee Roy Caffey. He was an outside linebacker who had played one season with Philadelphia then was traded to the Packers. The Packers had a middle linebacker named Ray Nitschke who was one of the greatest ever to play the game. One Sunday the Packers were going to play Detroit. A few minutes before the kickoff Lombardi sought out Caffey and delivered some bad news to him. Nitschke had pulled a hamstring and would not be able to play. Caffey would

have to take over and play middle linebacker, the crucial position in the defense. Lee Roy hadn't practiced that position because Nitschke seemed indestructible.

Lee Roy was inexperienced and simply not prepared. Later he said this of what happened in the first half, "Detroit is killing me...everything I do is wrong, and they know it, and they're working on me. At the half we're behind 21-3. I come in and sit down at my locker, and I've got tears running out of my eyes. And I just know that all the guys are looking at me and thinking that I'm losing the ball game." The first player to speak to him was Nitschke. He patiently and calmly explained to Caffey what he was doing wrong and gave him a quick course in playing middle linebacker. Then Bart Starr, the famous quarterback, came over, patted Lee Roy on the back and said, "Don't worry, we're going to win." One by one every teammate let Lee Roy know they shared his agony, appreciated his effort and supported him. Not one said anything negative to him. He went out and had a dynamite second half, doing everything right. The team came back and won 31-21, probably the best half of football they ever played. Caffey said, "From then on I realized what the Green Bay Packers were. It was all the guys, working together. We never got down on one of our teammates when he wasn't playing well." Doesn't that resonate with you? Don't you want that? All of us want to be a part of something like that. We want and need unity!

#### BECAUSE IT HONORS GOD

John 17 is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus. In John 17:23 he prayed this about his followers, "**I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**" He prayed that we would have complete unity because that unity would convince people that the Father had, in fact, sent Jesus. The thing that tells people that Jesus is who he claimed, God in the flesh, is complete unity of Christians!

How will unity convince the world that Jesus is who he claimed to be? I think there are a couple of aspects of the answer to that. First, it has to do with the nature of God. The New Testament picture of God is mystifying, to say the least. God is one being, yet he exists as three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That sounds like double speak. How can three persons be one being? I have no categories or words to understand or explain that. But is it possible for a being to exist in ways that are not comprehensible to me? Of course. The triune nature of God means within his own being God experiences community and unity. Back in John 17:22 in Jesus' prayer he said, "**I have given them (his followers) the glory**

that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.” Jesus experienced unity with the Father and he wanted us to experience that same unity.

God has relationship as an inherent part of his being, and he has built relationship into his creation. Our desire for unity is in us because God created us in his image. God wants us to glorify him and one way we do that is by proclaiming his character. God is honored when we proclaim that he is good, merciful, wise, holy, loving, and just. He is also honored when our unity depicts the unity of His character.

Another way our unity is an effective apologetic for Jesus Christ is that it displays the power of God in a visible way. In Psalm 133:4 the Psalmist said unity is “as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.” Mt. Hermon was a mountain in the north of Israel. It stands 9,200 feet high and is typically snow covered. Its sides are well watered and covered with trees and vineyards. Zion in Jerusalem is considerably more arid. This verse pictures the precipitation that Hermon experiences also falling on Zion so that it would be lush and green instead of arid and mostly dry.

The Psalm ends by pointing out that it is on Zion that the Lord “bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.” Are you getting the picture? Where do people experience the Lord’s blessing of eternal life? The church of Jesus Christ! I don’t mean they have to go to worship services to have eternal life, but that it is through the church that God communicates his message of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. What this Psalm pictures is the church becoming lush, full and healthy, bringing many into eternal life. According to this Psalm unity is key to that. ***Unity is the real mountain dew that we long for!***

People long to be a part of something that is full of love, they want to belong. When the church is unified it will be refreshing and beautiful and will draw people into it. But unity is a rare thing. The reason unity displays God’s power is that it is impossible for humans to accomplish it except for very brief periods of time. Unity over time requires God’s power doing the impossible – bringing fallen humans together in unity. This is something we just cannot seem to do, as evidence by all the conflict, division and war in the world.

A year ago the *New York Times* ran an article about two famous musicians who are exhibiting the problem of the human race. Helene Grimaud, brilliant pianist, and Claudio Abbado, well-known conductor, have performed together numerous times.

They were scheduled last year to have concerts in Switzerland and London. The concerts had to be canceled. It seems that they differed over how to perform a 1 minute 20 second long cadenza from Mozart's concerto No. 23. One official said their relationship was "just somehow sort of dead." That's humanity for you. They argue over fine points of a short piece of music to the point that they destroy their relationship. It is easy to understand that they might have a difference of opinion about how to perform a piece of music. Why not just agree not to do that particular piece? Instead of that reasonable solution their whole relationship blew apart. That's the human race in a nutshell.

Back in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a musical group named the Kingston Trio that became popular for a time. They sang folk music and had some songs that became huge hits. One of them has lyrics that still seem appropriate today. The song was titled *The Merry Minuet*. Here are some of the lyrics:

The whole world is festering with unhappy souls,  
The French hate the Germans, the Germans hate the Poles,  
Italians hate Yugoslavs, South Africans hate the Dutch,  
And I don't like anybody very much.  
But we can be tranquil and thankful and proud,  
That man's been endowed with a mushroom shaped cloud  
And we know for certain that some lovely day,  
Someone will set the spark off, and we will all be blown away.

Unfortunately in the decades that have come and gone since that song was popular it has not gotten any less apropos. It still describes the human race! We struggle even having unity in our families. Unity is a miracle. It is a work we all long to see, and if it happens for more than brief periods among a group of people, we know that something extraordinary is happening, something beyond human ability.

## APPLICATION

Great, so you're in favor of unity. So what? Who isn't? Being for unity is kind of like being for mothers loving their children or being against cancer. Who isn't? Why would you preach a sermon about that? I do it for two reasons:

- To remind you of what you already know because we so easily forget.
- To motivate you. I want to raise the importance of unity in your consciousness and light a fire under your desire to make it happen.



What will it take for us in our families and in our church to have unity?

### MAKE UNITY A PRIORITY

Ephesians 4:3 says, “**make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.**” Make every effort speaks of working at it. The *Good News* translation rendered that verse “do your best.” This says unity is important enough to work towards, but that we will need to make deliberate choices to have it. We will have to think about it and work at it.

Unity doesn't happen naturally. I think of it like a nice lawn. For me that has been an elusive thing. We lived in a rented house for years where the lawns were pathetic. Our lawns in our house now are better. The front actually looks pretty good, but the back is marginal. But from one vantage point in our house I can see my neighbor's back yard. He does zero in regard to a lawn. Absolutely nothing. He hasn't planted anything. He doesn't water. Do you think he has a nice, lush, green lawn? No, he has dirt with a few brown weeds here and there. In San Diego County a lawn is not natural. It requires purposeful effort to create and maintain it. It must be watered, fed, mown. That's how unity is for us. It's not our natural state. Our natural state is division and disunity. For proof, just look around in the world.

The natural course of life will divide us. We disagree about things. We ail and disappoint each other. We find unattractive traits and actions in each other. We pursue our different interests and ideas. We just naturally pull apart from each other. Life will do this to us. In order for us to have unity we will have to value it so much that we will fight for it, protect it and nurture it.

### HAVE A COMMON VISION

The New American Standard translation of Philippians 1:27 says, “**Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.**” With one mind? How is that possible?

We can't even have one mind between two people in a marriage. Laurie and I are very much alike. But we are not exactly alike. We have a television upstairs that I watch when I ride the exercise bike. Laurie will sometimes turn it on when she is getting dressed or doing some chore during the day that allows divided attention. Almost every time I turn that TV on it is on the LMN network, the Lifetime Movie Network. Laurie loves that channel. It boggles my mind that she does. They only



have one story. It's about how some trusting woman marries some guy she thinks is great, but comes to find out that in fact he leads a double life, has some other woman and is trying to kill her. They change actors, settings and vary some of the circumstances, but it's always the same story. How can she watch such drivel over and over? Meanwhile, she looks at me and says, "You're watching *another* football game? Shouldn't anyone who watches 3 football games in one day be declared legally dead?"

No two married people agree on everything. If unity means they always agree, there is no hope. If not even two people can agree on everything, what are we going to do with 100 people or 200 people or more? It seems impossible. Unity doesn't come from focusing on unity and community. It comes from focusing on a common goal bigger than yourself. You become unified with other people who care so much about that same goal that the inevitable differences don't matter. Paul pointed that out in Philippians 1:27. With one mind "**striving together for the faith of the gospel.**" He called on them to agree that what mattered was the faith of the gospel. He called on them to work toward that, and as they did so their little differences would be overcome.

The old movie *Independence Day* is a classic alien invasion movie. In the end when the humans finally find a way to fight back there are Arabs and Israelis fighting side by side. No one cared about what someone's religion or ethnic makeup was. All that mattered was defeating the common enemy, and unity was found in that.

Laurie and I went to Idaho a couple of years ago. Our trip did not begin well. I forgot my wallet, a fact I didn't realize until we were at the airport. Trying to get through security without ID was not a trivial event. We did manage to make it through, but when we got to Idaho Laurie had to drive the rental car because I did not have my driver's license. She was driving a new car in a new place, so I tried to help her by giving her directions. For some reason this got on her nerves. In fact my helpful comments so irritated her I quit making them and just pointed where I thought she should turn. This seemed to irritate her even more. I tried to stop, but I couldn't help myself. How did we get over this irritation? We care about some other things more than that minor annoyance. As we focus on the more important things in our marriage and our lives we see this thing for the trivial matter that it is and continue loving each other. And I try not to point out where Laurie should go.

We must be so focused on the grace of Jesus Christ, on his glory and on others experiencing that grace that we won't care so much about our inevitable differences and hurts. Seeking him as our goal can make this body a taste of heaven because God's grace rules and pervades here.

#### RELATE TO PEOPLE AS GOD DOES

Ephesians 4 is in part an explanation of what it takes to have unity. IT tells us to, **"be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love"** (verse 2). **"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up"** (verse 29). **"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you"** (verse 32). In other words, treat each other the way God treats you.

Several years ago Laurie was painting the cabinets in our kitchen. She knew if I tried to do it we'd have an unmitigated disaster on our hands. Putting me in the house with paint is asking for trouble. Now that is a laborious job. I felt guilty that she was doing it instead of me. I came into the kitchen and asked if I could help. She said, "No, I've got this. You don't need to worry about it." It was a gracious way of trying to get me out of the room. But noticing some trash on the counter I figured I could at least clean it up. I said, "I'll throw this trash away." She said, "It's okay, Rick. I'll take care of it." I said, "I'll be careful. Don't worry." Our trash can is under the sink, but the cabinet door, which she had painted, was open. I saw this and figured I could just stick the trash in the can without touching anything. In the process of throwing away the trash I unconsciously rested my hand on the top of that cabinet door. In so doing I got paint on my hand and put my hand print on the wet paint on the cabinet door. So Laurie had to stop what she had been doing, help clean the paint off my hand so I didn't mess up anything else, then go back and smooth out the paint on the cabinet. The normal response would be exasperation. It's hard enough to do that job but to have a husband working against you even when you've asked him to just go away is way over the top. But she did not show an ounce of impatience, frustration or exasperation. Instead she just laughed and said, "Maybe you should go in the living room and watch something on TV." No angry words, no tone of impatience, just kindness and good humor. She was bearing with me with humility, patience and gentleness. That's how God relates to us. That is what will be required in the body of Christ.

#### LIVE IN THE SPIRIT OF JESUS

I said earlier that unity is not natural. That being true, what does that tell you about unity among us? It is *supernatural*. It will not be something that we can produce easily or merely by trying harder.

Romans 8:6 says, “**the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.**” The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of peace and unity. Having a common goal is necessary for us to be unified, but it is not sufficient. It will require more than that. It will require that the Spirit of Jesus rule in each and every one of us. It will require that he control our minds and our hearts. Which mean each of us needs to walk each day in his Spirit. To the degree that we do we will have the chance to experience real unity.

So let's do the Dew by walking continually in the Spirit of Jesus!