

## Daily Devotional, March 3, 2021 Agree to Disagree

***For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, Ephesians 2:14***

I just finished reading an op-ed piece that described our national situation in this way, “ *Americans are angrier, more fearful, less trusting of one another and more polarized than at any time in generations. Families, friendships, churches, and communities are being ripped apart by the savagery of our politics.*” While that may be a little overstated for effect, most of us would basically agree with that assessment. We see the division and hear the discord in national politics daily, and we experience it in our own families and relationships, and friend groups. Some of you have told me with sadness “I no longer communicate with that long-time friend after the crazy things he/she posted on social media.”

Let’s step back, can we? This is an ancient challenge! Many centuries before there were a USA or the Constitution had been written, first-century Christian congregations faced this same huge problem that threatened the church’s witness and very existence. Hostility and mistrust, anger and disagreement between believers brought deep division. Against that, church leaders like the Apostle Paul held to a foundational unity in Christ as a God-given reality and calling. Such “belonging to Christ and one another” in Paul’s view was far more decisive of our condition and future than any current disagreements. What did they disagree about in the early church? Surely lots of things! But the basic fight was over whether new Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians would be required to practice Jewish customs like circumcision, dietary restrictions, and purity laws and observe religious holy days.

Just because we disagree about important matters doesn’t mean we have to be disagreeable. Read that passage again from Ephesians above. Hear God’s promise and call that in Christ we are not to be divided into groups, but one people. In Christ, walls of hostility, separation, and fear are broken down! That is our hope, conviction, prayer, and work. That is our calling as a congregation... one body working in harmony with Christ as the head, one body composed of many and diverse individual members.

If we are fortunate, we will allow our current national trauma to catalyze a rededication to the ideals we once cherished in public life: honor, integrity, compassion, decency, and competence. Let us hope and pray for the best.

***Prayer: Father, I ask that they may be one so the worlds nay believe. I ask that the world may be one as we are one.” Today as we close with prayeras Jesus did, I ask that we may “be as one so that the world might believe. As we are one with the triune God, may we be one, completely, with God’s Holy Spirit, ever completely one.” May we be one as you are one. Amen.***