

Slide Children's Time – Ask children to come up to the front.

TITLE: We Are One

THEME: In unity we show God's love to the world.

OBJECTS: A jigsaw puzzle.

SCRIPTURE: “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

Do you enjoy working jigsaw puzzles? Jigsaw puzzles can be a lot of fun. (*Open the box to reveal the pieces of the puzzle.*) Wow! Look at all the pieces of this puzzle. (*Hold up a piece*) The pieces are in many different sizes, shapes and colors. If you look at one piece of this puzzle, you can't figure out what the picture is – can you? No, the pieces are not very important by themselves, but when they are all joined together and become one, they show us whole picture.

This jigsaw puzzle can teach us an important lesson about the church. The church is made up of many individual people. Like the pieces of this puzzle, the people of a church come in different sizes, shapes, and colors. Jesus himself prayed that the church would be one united community so that the world would see God's love in us. You and I are part of the picture. Jesus wants us to love one another, help one another, and serve one another. When we do that, we become one church, just as Jesus prayed we would be, and when we are one in our love of Jesus, the world can see God's love in us.

Unfortunately, just as it is sometimes difficult to put all of the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together, the individual members of the church sometimes have a hard time

being one with each other. We may hear people in the church saying things like "I don't like the songs we sing" or "The preacher preaches too long." When we say things like that and concentrate on our own likes and dislikes, we are no longer being one with each other. We are like the individual pieces of the puzzle. The world cannot see God's love in us. They only see pieces of the picture, but they don't see the whole picture.

If you ever find yourself thinking about yourself, rather than being united with others in the church, remember that Jesus prayed that we would be one. When we are one, bound together by Christ's love, the world will see God's love through us.

Dear Father, help us to be one so that the world may see your love in us. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Slide **Second Day – Lamb of God**

Blank This section of the Gospel according to John we are working our way through deals with the first week of Jesus' ministry. These first seven days begins with John the Baptist being met by a delegation from Jerusalem. Day two is found in verses 29 to 34, which is our focus this morning and has John the Baptist identifying Jesus as the Lamb of God. The third day is covered in verses 35 to 39 with the testimony of John the Baptist causing two of his disciples to leave and follow Jesus. Day four, seen in verses 40 to 42, talks of the growth in the number of disciples Jesus calls to follow Him. On the fifth day Jesus calls two more disciples in verses 43 to 51. Then there is the journey to Galilee on the sixth day. This first week of Jesus' ministry concludes in chapter 2, verses 1 to 11 and is centered on Jesus, his mother and his disciples at the wedding in Cana.

Pray

In our last teaching we studied the first day of the week with John dealing with the delegation from Jerusalem wanting to know who John was. This morning we will focus on the second day with John testifying who Jesus is. Verse 29 begins with "The next day" this is meant to help the reader understand the sequence of days and that this is day 2. The verse continues with John the Baptist seeing Jesus coming and as the herald of the coming Messiah John immediately calls the crowd's attention to Jesus by exclaiming, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Only Apostle John uses the title "Lamb of God". For the Jewish people the concept of a sacrificial lamb was familiar. The concept of a sacrificial lamb to atone for sin is found in 63 verses throughout the Old Testament. All

through the history of Israel and as we just saw all through the scriptures God had revealed that people were separated from Him by sin. Only by blood sacrifices could people's sin be dealt with. When Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac God provided a lamb or ram instead. In Egypt when the final plague came – the death of the firstborn – the blood of lambs was used to show the angel of death where to “Passover” and spare the firstborn of the Jews. Throughout the Old Testament scriptures God also made it clear that blood sacrifices were not sufficient to permanently take away people's sin. God was concerned about the condition of people's hearts and their faith – not just sacrifices. **Slide** The prophet Isaiah writes the words of God telling people that God was fed up with their sacrifices because of their sins and lack of repentance. ¹⁰“Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah. ¹¹‘What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?’ says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. ¹²When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? ¹³Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. ¹⁴I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing *them*. ¹⁵So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.’ ” (*Isaiah 1:10-15* NASB). God is addressing the condition of the hearts of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. **Blank** All the blood sacrifices meant nothing because in their hearts they loved their sin and their sacrifices were not sincere. The word “sincere” comes from the Latin “*sincerus*” and means to be one of truth or absent of sin. The same is true with Jesus, the Messiah who is the

firstborn and for that matter the only born of God and John the Baptist is telling people Jesus will be the permanent blood sacrifice, the perfect sacrificial Lamb for all sins for all people, but only if their hearts have turned away from sin and turned back to God by believing in Jesus as the Messiah sincerely. All the “lip service” about Jesus means nothing if one’s heart is not turned towards God and Jesus as one’s Savior. One can often tell the difference between “lip service” and “heart service” towards Jesus by the fruit in one’s life. Let us look at what Apostle Paul, the Beloved, was inspired to say concerning this. **Slide** Turn in you Bibles to the Book of Galatians chapter 5 and read with me beginning at verse 16. “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, *hostilities*, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. ²⁴***Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*** ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.” (*Galatians 5:16-25* NASB) Some things simply do not change with time. Infighting in the new churches planted by Paul quickly sprung up because of people’s sin nature and had to be dealt with. Conflict within churches has been a problem throughout the Church’s history. Richard Baxter was an English Puritan church leader, poet and hymn-writer. He spent

time in prison for his faith and died in 1691. Pastor Baxter knew well the results of those who were in the church that give “lip service” to Jesus, but whose hearts had not changed. **Slide** Baxter said, “One proud, surly, lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing.” As individuals we have great effect on all those around us and on the community of Christ that we belong to. **Blank** Strife and dissension are not part of the “fruit of the Spirit” and they have no place in Jesus’ church. We need to focus on Jesus and others – not ourselves and when we focus on Christ then these problems go away.

So, my beloved, as John the Baptist is a model of being the herald of Jesus as the Messiah or Christ, is this not our calling also? We will not be effective witnesses for Jesus if we place our own needs before others. All our needs are met by God according to His glorious riches in our Lord Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:19, **Slide** “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches (not your wants, but according to God’s riches) in glory in Christ Jesus.” Do you believe this? Are you living this truth? If we, you and I, are not living in faith then we have little to testify to about Jesus to the world. If we do not believe this in our hearts we cannot witness of Christ, for we will lack love and the basis of all witnessing is love of Christ first and the love of others secondly. **Blank** As I shared with the children earlier each of us is precious to God, for He created us; but individually we are not that important, like the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle we only give a small glimpse of the big picture. It is as a community of Christ living for Christ, loving and serving each other and then loving the unsaved of the world that the church is able to bring the big picture into focus and show who Jesus is and how He changes people. Israel made the mistake of looking for a Messiah that was a

prophet, a king and a conqueror to defeat the Romans, but God instead sent Himself to live among people as a sacrificial Lamb; who through love “takes away the sin of the world!” When one studies the breath of the scriptures it teaches something that I find heartbreaking, but true. The Bible teaches that most people will suffer eternal punishment in hell and only a few will be saved – these are the true believers - the remnant. As the Lord Jesus said in the Gospel according to Matthew,

Slide “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Mt. 7:13-14 NASB)

Should not this fact that we are saved and many are not spur us to witness about Christ with fervor? Professor Howard Hendricks who taught for many years at Dallas Theological Seminary and who died and went home to the Lord just a few weeks ago on February 20th said, **Slide** “In the midst of a generation screaming for answers, Christians are stuttering.” If you, my brothers and sisters are attempting to honor Christ by the way you are living then the things you are doing should lead to conversations about Jesus Christ and what He means in your life. **Blank**

If you are to witness to the world about Jesus Christ then clearly you must know something about Him. I did not say know everything about Jesus, for this is impossible. Knowing what the scriptures teach about Jesus is more than enough to be an effective witness. To be a witness one must have a message. **Slide** The message of Christ is a simple one. First, we need to be able to witness as to **Slide** **who Jesus Christ is**. Secondly, we must be able articulate **Slide** **what Jesus has done** for the world and more specifically for us. Finally, we must be able to share how a man or woman may come **Slide** **to know Jesus** personally.

Slide We begin by witnessing of who Jesus Christ is. John the Baptist did this in

verse 30 when he said, “This is He (Jesus) on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ ” John understood it was not about his greatness, but the greatness of Jesus the Messiah. Even though John was born about 6 months prior to Jesus, John also testified that Jesus “existed before me” because Jesus as the Messiah is God incarnate and therefore, has always existed. John affirms this belief again in verse 34 saying, “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.” My beloved this is where we must begin in our witness, because the foundation to all testifying about Christian doctrine is built upon the fact that Jesus Christ is God! If Christ were only a man – his life would have been a good example of how to care for others; his death on the cross might have shown the value and cost of serving others and the value of good works. But, the problem is that there would be no atonement and therefore, no hope. If Jesus was but a mere man, then this means there is **no** living God to worship for we cannot know God apart from Jesus Christ. All other religions are based on dead prophets and a god(s) that are detached from the people. Only, Christianity believes in a living God who lived among the people and continues to live this very day. Then, this is where one begins – knowing and sharing that Jesus is God very God.

Slide Secondly, we need to be able to witness to what Jesus Christ has done. I am not speaking of all that Jesus has done – for this would be overwhelming. Jesus is God, therefore, all that God has done Jesus has done. However, there is a sense in which the work of Christ focuses on a more limited scope and is therefore easier to share with people. Without the crucifixion and more importantly Jesus’ resurrection then the meaning of Jesus’ life is lost and there is no proof that He is God. And, then there is no atonement for the sins of mankind. This is why John the Baptist began with testifying in verse 29, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John used the centuries of teaching and understanding of the Jewish people

about what the lamb of sacrifice in order to show them what Jesus the Messiah would do. All the lambs sacrificed over a thousand years were but a temporary atonement for sin. John identifies Jesus as the sin-bearing Lamb that is the complete and final atonement. All men will physically die and most will die spiritually because they do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior – this spiritual death is the second eternal death. But, as believers we will not experience the second death. Does not the knowledge of this fact about eternal spiritual death give you concern for the souls of others? Does not this knowledge spur you to action to share the gospel – for the consequences are eternal.

Slide Then the final part of our witness is to share how a man or woman may come to know, trust and believe in Jesus for himself or herself. John the Baptist did this by pointing out that it is Jesus who gives the Spirit that indwells the souls of mankind. In verse 31 John says, “I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” This verse seems to momentarily indicate that although John knew Jesus as his cousin he did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. John knew his baptisms were of water signifying a person’s repentant heart and desire to turn back to God and prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah. Then we read in verse 32, John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him (Jesus).” Apostle John does not say John the Baptist baptized Jesus. We then must assume that the Apostle felt his readers were familiar with Matthew 3:13 and Mark 1:10 or the physical act of baptism was not important here because the point the Apostle was making is it was not about John the Baptist, but about Jesus. However, John Baptist knew that when he baptized Jesus and saw the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and the Spirit remained on Jesus that Jesus was indeed the Messiah sent by God. This is why John then states in verses 33 and 34, “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me

to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." This means that when one believes in Jesus as the Christ they receive the Holy Spirit from Jesus to live in their soul and change who they are. Paul the Beloved explained this well in 2 Corinthians. Please turn to 2 Corinthians **Slide** chapter 5 and follow me as I read beginning at verse 16. "Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (*New things - atonement, salvation and spiritual life*). ¹⁸Now **all these** things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹He (*God*) made Him (*Jesus*) who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (*Christ*)."

So today, as in the time of John, when we share the gospel of Jesus we need to tell people who Jesus is; God incarnate. Also remembering that God did **not counting their** (our) **trespasses against them** (us), so we need to have grace towards the sins of the unbelievers – for they need Jesus – He is their only hope. **Blank** We need to tell people what Jesus has done for mankind – brought salvation, and for those who believe, the simple way a person can accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior; by repenting of their sins, by believing faith in Jesus as God and then they will be reconciled back to God the Father and be His child for all eternity. However, there can be a problem with Christians

witnessing about Jesus. This problem reminds me of a court case I read about that was lost because of the silence of an attorney. The distinguished lawyer **Samuel Hoar** who lived from 1778 to 1856 was representing the defendant in a lawsuit. When it was time to present his case, he told the jurors that the facts favoring his client were so evident that he would not insult their intelligence by presenting and arguing the evidence. The jury retired to deliberate and returned in just a few minutes with a verdict of guilty. Samuel Hoar was astonished! "How," he asked, "How could you have reached such a verdict?" The foreman of the jury rose and replied, "We all agreed that if anything could be said for a case, you should and would say it. But since you didn't present any evidence, we decided to rule against you." Silence had lost the case. God is evident in all nature, how often the opportunity to speak a word of testimony for Christ is lost because we remain silent. Those who need to hear the gospel may conclude that salvation is not important enough to talk about. Speak of Christ from your heart with love, faith, passion and conviction for the world's jury is listening.

So the second day of the first week of Jesus' ministry ends as it started with John the Baptist declaring, **Slide** "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" in verse 29 and concluding with John testifying in verse 34, "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." The narrative of the Gospel according to John now will transition from John the Baptist to Jesus the Christ. How does each day begin and end for you? I hope each day for you is like this day we just examined with John demonstrating his relationship and faithfulness to Jesus through his life and witnessing, declaring Jesus as Lord and Savior.

My beloved, may you be an instrument of God's peace in a world that knows no peace. Go and tell people every day about our amazing God – our Lord Jesus!