

Unity in Diversity

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[0 : 00] And if you'll open your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 7. This morning we'll be in Revelation chapter 7, verses 9 through 10. Now we're concluding a series that's been, I don't know, I just found it great fun to work through.

The series has been entitled, Let Earth Receive Her King. And we've essentially just been working through sort of evidence in history that Jesus has changed the world already and is continuing to change the world.

And one of the phrases that we've used to describe this is something John Newton used to describe his own Christian life. He's like, I am not what I should be. I am not what I would like to be.

But by God's grace, I am not what I used to be. And we have been looking at the consequences of the incarnation and the effects of the incarnation on the whole world. And today is the final sermon in this series.

People, the basic idea that we've been working through is something I call moral history. It's just looking back through the development of the values we take for granted today and to see their fundamentally Christian roots.

[1 : 07] And people are beginning to wake up to the key role that Christianity has played in the development of our world. A guy that I'd never heard of, some of you are going to know who this is, a guy named Zuby.

He's a British rapper and podcaster. Y'all know, some of you should, I think I'm cooler than some of you. Daryl Dean knows who Zuby is and I'm not okay with this.

Anyway, one day he rather innocently tweeted, I don't think I've ever said this publicly and directly, but I think the West is absolutely screwed if it loses Christianity.

It's like removing the foundations of a building, but pridefully expecting it to remain forever. And Elon Musk retweeted, I think you're probably right. We've been working through various books that have been dealing with this idea.

And I mentioned a few weeks ago that Tom Holland's book, *Dominion*, is probably the most popular of these books. And as the introduction to his book, he writes, So profound has been the impact of Christianity on the development of Western civilization that it has come to be hidden from view.

[2 : 35] It is the incomplete revolutions which are remembered. The fate of those which triumphed is to be taken for granted. The ambition of dominion is to trace the course of what one Christian, writing in the third century AD, termed the flood tide of Christ.

How the belief that the son of the one God of the Jews had been tortured to death on a cross came to be so enduringly and widely held that today most of us in the West are dulled to just how scandalous it originally was.

This book explores what it was that made Christianity so subversive and disruptive. How completely it came to saturate the mindset of Latin Christendom.

And why, in a West that is often doubtful of religion's claims, so many of its instincts remain, for good or for ill, thoroughly Christian. Now my additional contention in this series is that I want to separate from Holland's idea in one particular respect.

And that is that Holland seems to think it is the ideas of Christendom that have changed the world. And I would say, no, it's Christ that has changed the world.

[3 : 49] I would be with Athanasius, who we saw this last week. For now, Athanasius writing in like 320 AD or so, for now that the Savior works so great things among men, and day by day is invisibly persuading so great a multitude from every side, both from them that dwell in Greece and in foreign lands, to come over to his faith and to obey his teaching.

So Holland seems to put forth that this is just generic gospel ideas that are changing the world. Like, nope, this is Christ who is actively seeking and saving the lost.

And he is actively doing a work that the Bible describes actually quite thoroughly. We just tend to overlook these particular passages. Have you ever heard the phrase or the word narcegesis?

It's the combination of narcissism and exegesis. And essentially, it's when you go to your Bible and you're looking for you, right? But if you take a moment and just hit pause and just look at what the Bible is actually saying, so much of it has to do with this idea that Jesus is actively at work in the world in general.

We used to try to tell people years ago, you know, we were pastoring a lot of young people, we'd say, listen, Jesus loves you. He just doesn't love only you. And a lot of the glory that is out in the world to observe is to see Jesus loving others, not just you.

[5 : 11] And so we escape from this narcegesis and do actual exegesis. And we see that Christ has been at work and is at work in the world. It isn't just the ideas of the gospel that is shaping the world.

It's Christ himself. This lines up perfectly with what the Bible teaches. In Ephesians 2.17, for instance, He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. It's Jesus doing the converting, not the idea of Jesus. It's Jesus doing the converting. This idea is communicated elsewhere by Paul as reconciling.

Jesus is reconciling the world to himself. For instance, at the tail end of that great Christological passage in Colossians 1, we're told in Colossians 1.19, For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things.

All things. Whether on heaven or on earth, making peace by the blood of his cross. And a narcegetical perspective of that passage would just be completely unimpressed by the all things, because you're like, well, what about me?

[6 : 20] Or you might just say, well, yeah, the most important thing in all things is me. It's like, well, hold on. Hold on a second. Jesus has been doing a lot. Let's get past our own little perspective and see all that he's doing.

So reconciling all things to himself. Another phrase, I like this one a little better, it makes more sense to my brain, is how Paul talks about this in Ephesians.

Instead of the word reconciling, he uses the word uniting. He is uniting all things to himself. Look at Ephesians 1.9, Making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him.

Things in heaven, things on earth. I like the word unite, because it reminds me of one of these fundamental ideas that we now take for granted that is just so fundamentally Christian.

And it's the idea of unity and diversity. Unity and diversity. This is a big idea, and it means a lot. It has a lot to do with the way our lives work and the way the world works, the way a church works, a city, a nation.

[7 : 36] Sam's parking lot. Unity and diversity. It's a fundamental to the way of life, and this is, again, one of these ideas that Christ has preached to the world that we wouldn't have unless he was teaching us about it.

This idea of unity and diversity is central to the Christian faith in a very unique way. We have the Trinity. Three distinct persons, one substance. We have the Bible.

Sixty-six books written by 40-some authors over 2,000-some years, written in three languages on three continents, all with one message. There's a graphic that represents this idea you may have seen floating around online that just links visually all of the cross-references that are contained in the Bible, a place where one part of the Bible references another part of the Bible, which references another part of the Bible, and so on and so forth.

And what I'm talking about about the Bible, well, this is unity and diversity, right? So what you've got is you've got all of this different data, but it's all connected and cooperating in a way that you would not expect to see naturally occurring.

I like the word harmony, too, to refer to this. I think of Jesus' work as the reconciling the work, the uniting all things to himself work.

[8 : 55] I think of it as like a re-harmonization. Leibniz, you know, the great German genius, he had the same idea. He thought that there was, that God was at work in a harmonizing force in the world.

And he writes, harmony is when many things are restored to some kind of unity. You see, Romans 8 says that we're living in a world that was cursed with futility.

And I think there's a tendency for us to assume that a lot of things that appear to us to not go together were never supposed to go together. But then we start getting language in the New Testament, the new creation of a lion and a lamb laying down together.

We get this idea that things that we think aren't supposed to go together wind up working out together. And that's the incarnation among many other things, right? This idea that God became man.

This idea of unity and diversity, multiplicities of things, having a single kind of commonality. This is a very important idea to the quality of our lives.

[10:00] And I think of this idea of a harmonization. You know, imagine discovering a whole box of musical instruments and not even knowing what musical instruments were and so on and so forth.

And you're just looking at these things and they don't look like they have anything to do with each other. You eventually figure out that they make noise. And when they make noise, you're convinced they have nothing to do with each other.

None of them are tuned. But what if a great tuner appeared 2,000 years ago and is reconciling and uniting all things back to their original tonalities?

And suddenly we find that the world wasn't as fragmented and discordant and unrelated as we thought it was. It was just not tuned properly. It wasn't being played properly.

It wasn't being conducted properly. And if you've ever been to a symphony, there is this period of time that's like chaos when all of the instruments are coming to tune.

[11:03] And then slowly over a few minutes, that discordance, out of that discordance emerges unity. And this is really, I think, what the Bible is teaching about Jesus' role as the king of creation.

As the king of you. We're going to get to that in a moment. We'll do a little narcegesis toward the end. Don't worry. Well, that's all introduction to our text in Revelation chapter 7 because here is an example of unity and diversity that should not be.

Let me read the text to you. Revelation 7, verses 9 through 10. After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

Now, what is the harmony we see? What is the unity we see? What is the diversity we see? What we see in terms of diversity is a wide swath of people from different cultures and different languages.

You know, just one minute, really quickly. We were allowed to criticize culture 20 years ago and we were allowed to say this culture is better than that culture. And we decided, the elites decided we couldn't do that anymore so we had to, you know, grant all cultures equal status and so on and so forth.

[12:47] Do you know where that leads? It leads to racism because race is a visual stand-in, a visual approximation of culture. That's what you're doing when you're noticing color.

You're approximating visual for culture and you're making determinations on the culture, not the race. But when we don't allow people to analyze cultures as being of various goods, right, of some of more value than others, when we don't have any room for what Paul does in Titus, when he says all Cretans are lazy liars, you know, when we don't have any room for like criticizing culture, get ready because what's going to happen is we've taken the true tool of the Tao, you might say, of like determining value.

We've taken that away from people. What you're going to get is you're going to get a bunch of racists. You're going to get a bunch of people who no longer see the difference between culture and ethnicity and they just use ethnicity and it's just a train wreck and that's where we are today.

What we see in our text is a whole lot of diversity. And if you know anything about where languages came from, for instance, or just the story that the Bible provides for why the people are where they are and why this group of people distanced from that group of people and so on and so forth, the whole story leading up to this verse is disharmony.

It's discordance. It's fighting, infighting, infighting, infighting. And so what you see here, again, you've got to understand the history of the world enough to realize that it's a unique idea that you would have all of the people of the world gathered in one place and not be punching each other at

the very least.

[14:31] Well, this is one of the main fulfillments of one of the main prophecies in the whole Bible. This is a big part of God's purposes. Again, God loves you.

He just doesn't love only you. One of the things God's been up to all along and that He was excited about with the incarnation was the bringing together of unity in this diversity that has emerged in the world.

And so throughout the Old Testament, you can find passage after passage signaling the day will come when the nations will be gathered before the Lord. Let me just read a few of these to you real quickly.

Malachi 1.11. Zechariah 2.11. Zechariah 2.11. Zechariah 2.11. To its setting, my name will be great among the nations. And in every place, incense will be offered to my name and a pure offering.

For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

[15:37] Zechariah 2.11. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day and shall be my people and I will dwell in their midst and you shall know the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. Isaiah 66.18.

For I know their works and their thoughts and the time is coming to gather all the nations and tongues and they shall come and see my glory. Habakkuk 2.14. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

So you've had these promises throughout the Bible. What you've got in Revelation is essentially what you've got in the New Testament in general and that is how has God determined to bring all of his promises to pass?

And we're told quite clearly the scriptures tell us, Paul tells us, that all the promises are yes in Christ. And so what Revelation is is it's like this is the one who has brought these things to pass. You see the nations gathered, you see the ethnicities, the cultures, however you want to talk about it, you see them all assembled and now you see how it is that people who have been warring against each other for centuries are standing shoulder to shoulder in unity.

[16:46] You see the key to this idea that we all claim as Westerners to value unity and diversity. You see that it is possible. It is possible through Christ.

It is possible through Christ. This isn't something that just happens on its own. We don't become committed to diversity and unity simply because we've decided it.

This is a value system given to us by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And as Tom Holland said, we're so awash in Christian ideas that we assume these things.

We don't understand that this isn't the way the world has worked up until the time of Christ. Christ. This isn't the way the world works in places where Christ is not Lord in the same respect.

I was taking some time this week as I was doing some physical work to learn about the Spanish Civil War and George Orwell was a reporter who was also at the time a young man and a communist and he had sympathies toward the communist side of the Spanish Civil War and so he went and fought as a communist against the Catholics in that war and he was completely disillusioned to communism at the end of the war and really the Orwell we know of as writing 1984 and all that stuff.

[18:06] That all emerged way after this experience. But of his experience in that war, he writes, early in life, I have noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper but in Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie.

I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. I saw troops who had fought bravely, denounced as cowards and traitors and others who had never seen a shot fired, hailed as heroes of imaginary victories.

And I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that never happened. What's that quote doing in this sermon?

The idea of secular humanism, the idea that we can build this world without Christ. Friends, we were born on third base and think we hit a triple. All of these qualities that we now see as valuable came from Christ, not from us.

And if we abandon Christ, we will have the chaos that emerges as a consequence. It is Christianity, Christ in particular, that makes any kind of unity, true unity, within diversity possible.

[19 : 31] We see that in our text, the cause of this unity. Look at verse 9 again with me. After this, I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Now what I want you to see here, the first point is that we have different cultures but a common king. Different cultures but a common king. You've got all of the differences listed at the beginning of the passage.

We've got a great multitude from every nation and tribes and languages and peoples. So all these different cultures but we've got a common king. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb. Now one of the things I would love to talk about more, I'm sure we will throughout the year, is not just any king. A king who has demonstrated kingship through sacrifice.

A king who has demonstrated that there's actually no tension between being a servant and having high status. We have a unique king, a Lamb king, a king who rules with an iron scepter but also as a lamb.

[20 : 38] We have a crucified king and so the nations are many cultures gathered before a common king. That's one of the ways we get unity is we get all of the people from different things and we put them in front of Christ and say we're all going to worship this one.

He is worthy and not only that, we're going to learn what leadership looks like from this one and just even that. When the nations learn leadership from Jesus Christ, good things happen.

Okay, so we've got different cultures and a common king. What else do we have? We'll look again at the verse. Verse 9, Next line, Clothed in white robes.

Well, we've got different cultures and same king and we've also got different cultures and a common covering. A common covering. In scriptures, the history of clothing is obviously pretty interesting.

just to give you, if you're not familiar with some of the stories you've got at the beginning, people walking around Adam and Eve naked and unashamed. After sin, they are naked and ashamed, gluing on fig leaves to their privates, I suppose.

[21 : 53] And then we go all the way through. Then there's like, I could talk about Joseph's coat and the ephod of Gideon and so on. It's just all this very interesting stuff. But let's just block this story out and the three main ideas.

Naked and unashamed, naked and ashamed. And they took his clothes and divided it among themselves and cast lots for them. What's that?

That's the Savior. That's the Savior King. That's the Lamb reverting to a state that Adam and Eve brought upon themselves.

This is Christ enduring shame. Right? And then, you know, again, there's a lot more stories going on here. But let's say the third main story is the story we're reading here.

All of the nations, all the different cultures with one common king and one common covering. And what do we mean by covering? Well, they're wearing white robes. Right?

[23 : 00] And what does that tell us? Well, it's white because it's righteousness. It's white because it's forgiveness. It's white because he has taken all of the stains away.

Come now, let his reason together. Though your sins be like scarlet, I'll make them white as wool. Like, white is forgiveness. It's righteousness. It's blamelessness. They are forgiven. All of these people with all of these different cultures, all different sports, all different foods, you know, lots of different cultures gathered together.

But they all have one common covering. And by covering, we mean they have one way of handling their sin. Friends, I want to be respectful of your time.

I don't want to go to every possible thing that could be said here. But man, it's a rough marriage that has two different ways of dealing with sin. That's rough.

You know, because you're going to sin. And that's okay. It won't be fun. It'll be painful. People will be hurt. But if you have a commonality between two people of we both know what to do with sin, we admit it, we ask Jesus for forgiveness, and we count it as done by faith in the righteousness of Christ.

[24 : 13] world difference between two people who have two different strategies for dealing with sin. We could do the same with a family. We could do the same with a church. And we could keep

talking about this fundamental idea all the way through like a civilization, citizenship, so on and so forth.

They have a common king, but they also have a common covering. Why is it white? It's white because it's forgiveness. And why is it a robe? Because that's what priests wear. This is the other factor associated with this unity.

They're not only unified in what they've been forgiven from, but they're unified in what they've been forgiven for. What have they been forgiven for? See, this goes back to the narthegeesis idea. Have you been forgiven for just this easy life in which you love no one else seriously or sacrificially? No. You've been forgiven to become a priest unto the Most High God.

In Revelation chapter 5, we see that theme expressed more clearly. Revelation 5, 9, and they sang a new song. Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign upon the earth.

[25 : 38] Third thing, third cause of unity. Got different cultures, same king, different cultures, same covering, different cultures, same celebration.

After this, I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and here's our phrase, with palm branches in their hands and crying out with loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits at the throne and to the Lamb.

And we could go into even that, but it's just like, well, how are we unified as a people even in this world? Have you ever been at a grocery store after a Chiefs game, the day after a Chiefs game? How are we fundamentally unified as people?

We're unified by how we handle guilt, how we handle righteousness, we're unified by how we submit, by whose authority we obey, and we're unified by what we celebrate.

And here you see this reason, not just do you see unity and diversity, but you see the reason behind it, and that is they're all celebrating the glorious gospel that has brought them out of darkness and placed them into light.

[26 : 50] I think of Jesus with this idea of diversity and unity, I think of it almost like he is the sun in a solar system of many, many objects. And he is of such mass and weightiness and worthiness and glory that all of the other objects in the realm of that kind of gravitational pull align.

They're different still. They're not, one of the lies that secular humanism does, this is where communism leads into, is that diversity, they'll call something diversity when in reality they're just making everybody the same.

And the only distinction is color. But every other thing, like the way you talk, the things you value, the rules you obey, like everything else is the same. So they'll give you, they'll say they're giving you diversity when it's just total uniformity.

But what Jesus does is something far more miraculous and supernatural. He, the stuff remains different. the people, even before the throne of God, still have their languages, still have their ethnicity, still have their cultures, they still have their unique values, they're rooting for different football teams, they like different foods.

You know, you can walk into a Japanese candy store and there'll be aisles of seafood-flavored candy. There's no reconciling me with seafood candy.

[28 : 17] So what we're gonna have to do is they're gonna have to stay, like they're, they can live in that, they gotta honor Jesus with their seafood candy and I'll honor Jesus with my root beer barrels and all that stuff, my Twizzlers.

Jesus is glorified when a diversity is unified while it remains a diversity. So I think that solar system idea is an interesting one.

Now, let's apply this as we wrap up. You, dear Christian, as an individual, are a diversity.

Okay? This is, this is key. This is, this is my, trying to be a good friend. You and I are diversities. we can picture all of these different cultures and languages gathered before the throne of God.

It kind of looks like the UN or something like that, only like a good one. Like, I want you to picture yourself because that's, that's you. The Bible's interesting. It talks about that we have desires that compete against each other.

[29 : 30] Our emotions don't often always align with the reality. we have ways of thinking, we have ways of feeling, we have different appetites and even those appetites can sometimes war against

each other.

Here's the thing, you need harmonization, you. You need Jesus to bring you into unity. You need Jesus to grab all of the various parts of your life and conform them into an orbit around a worthy object.

You need all of you to have a common king. You need all of you to have a common cure, a common covering. You need all of you to have a common celebration. And that is actually, in many respects, the trick of the Christian life as it turns out.

I've been a Christian for, I don't know, depending on how you count, 40, maybe 40 years, maybe a little less than 40 years. And it turns out that the basic idea of Christianity as an individual is to get all the sled dogs to pull together and not start biting each other or trying to go, you know, four or five different directions.

It turns out that basically all you're trying to do with the Christian life as an individual is just get the team that is inside of you to all worship Jesus together. Right?

[30 : 54] So this act of harmonization is good news for the world. It's also extremely good news to you. You need this. I need this.

And you might say, well, Chris, that's kind of a stretch with this particular text. I mean, you've got the nations gathered and, you know, now you're talking about individuals. It's like, well, friends, where do you think, how do you think nations are composed?

And what is it that they're celebrating? Are they celebrating that Jesus has shed his blood for their nation? They're celebrating that Jesus has shed his blood for them, individuals.

And individually, collectively, they become a nation, a nation that is celebrating the same thing and going to the same place for their sins and so on and so forth.

Just look back at the text with you one more time. From every nation, from all tribes, peoples, and languages, it says that there was a multitude that no one could number.

[31 : 54] It's like, well, I mean, I know one person that could number it. And in that great multitude that looks to us just like a nation or that looks to us just like a church or that looks to us just like a city, in that great multitude, the one we worship knows every individual, loves every individual, makes a salvific offer to every individual, knows every hair on every individual's, head.

So yeah, I am greatly concerned that we make individualism out to be a bigger boogeyman than it is. I think it can be kind of an intellectual Trojan horse by which we introduce a lot of coercive power and a lot of, like, you do what I say because you don't want to be an individualist.

Well, in some respect, God's an individualist. We all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Christ. It's one by one that we all enter into the kingdom.

And so this salvation that is being celebrated by the nations isn't just a national salvation. If it is at all a national salvation, it is really, fundamentally, individuals saying, something has happened to me.

I have seen my whole life come into conformity to Christ. As you know, I'm not shy about dealing with political issues.

[33 : 19] But I also want to be clear that the kingdom of God, I expect it to manifest itself in the world in tangible ways. I think Jesus tells us to pray for that. The kingdom come that will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

But I want to be clear, it will come through conversion, not coercion. There's a really important article that a great theologian named James Jordan wrote years ago.

And the article title is called The Dominion Trap. And I don't agree with everything he said. But I thought this was worth passing on. Christian activist literature, he writes, too often reduces or even perverts Christianity into an ideology, a set of ideas.

Christianity is not, however, an ideology to be implemented through crusading activism. Rather, Christianity is a new creation. It grows holistically and organically out of the life of faith and prayer. It is as men draw near to God and acquire wisdom and maturity from the scriptures that they are built up and prepared for dominical responsibilities and God will confer these upon his people in due time.

[34 : 22] The dumb Chris way of saying it is young Christians in particular and older Christians, too. If you want to see Christ's kingdom advance in the world, take great care to see it advance in your inner world.

If you want to see Christ reign over all things and make all enemies his footstool, start in your own heart. And that's my charge to you this year leading into the new year.

It's a call for you, an encouragement for you to be unified as we see in this passage. All the contingent parts of you, all the various roles that you occupy, could they all gather together this year with a common king and a common celebration.

That's not always the way that we live our lives. I'd say the majority of the time there are parts of us that are not in allegiance to Jesus. There are parts of us, if you picture all the different parts of our lives, all the different ways we think and our emotions and the times of day and so on and so forth. If you think back to our Christmas pageants, there's always one kid who's looking that way. There's parts of you that aren't centered on Christ.

[35 : 52] If he could do a harmonizing work in us so that every little soldier in our lives is oriented toward the common king.

There's parts of us that don't use the gospel for our hope. We use other stuff. We even have different gospels inside of our highly complicated selves. What I want to call you to this morning, this last day of the year, is to plead with Jesus to have all of you be all for him. that every part of you would have the same king, that every part of you would have the same way of handling sin, that every part of you would have the same great thing to celebrate.

You like Patrick of Ireland, who famously prayed, Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I rise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

This is the kind of thing that saints do from time to time, friends. I'm calling you to do nothing novel this morning. This is the thing that saints must do from time to time.

[37 : 23] They must periodically, like I said, get all their, have a sit down with all the sled dogs and say, hey, we're all gonna worship Christ. Not too often I see men who say, as for me and my house, we will worship the Lord.

It's like, how about you and your temper worship the Lord first? Not first, that's not quite right, but you get what I'm saying. So we have records throughout church history of these instances when just saints would take a moment and just rededicate themselves to be all in for Christ.

Here's an account of Jonathan Edwards that sums it all up quite well. He wrote, I have this day solemnly renewed my baptismal covenant and self-dedication, which I renewed when I was taken into the community of the church.

I have been before God and have given myself all that I am and have to God so that I am not in any respect my own. I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will, these affections which are in me.

Neither have I any right to this body or any of its members. No right to this tongue, these hands, these feet. No right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell or this taste.

[38 : 47] I've given myself clear away and have not retained anything as my own. So wouldn't it be fitting and proper as our first step into the new year instead of looking out into all of the places we would love to see unified, look inwardly and say, you know, I'd really like to worship Christ with the way I eat.

I'd really like to worship Christ with my finances. I'd really like to worship Christ in all my roles as a worker, as a father, as a husband, as a church member, as a neighbor.

I'd really like to worship Christ with my intellectual life. I let my brain drift in places it shouldn't go and while the things I think of I would never actually do, I want my mind to be Christ's mind.

wouldn't it be appropriate as we lean into this next year to just take a moment, we don't need drama, right, just take a moment and solemnly, soberly say, no, no, no, I really want all of me to be for Christ.

All of me for all of Christ. And then we just gave ourselves to that as we started this new year. So what I'd like to do before we take communion is I'd just like to pray for us, have a moment to give you time to pray.

[40 : 13] And Ben, you can come on up now, please. And then we will partake in communion. Just take a moment. Bow your head before the Lord.

I'll reread this Edwards thing. You can feel free to ignore me or you can listen if it would help you. I have no right to this body or its members, no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet, no right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell or this taste.

I have given myself clear away and have not retained anything as my own. I have given myself clear away and have not retained anything as my own.

Father, I trust that in this room right now, your people are asking for the grace of a unified life, of unified affections, of a unified thought life, perhaps emerged over times of distraction, particular sins, habits, or vices that are not in conformity to you.

today, Lord, we just want to signal or just speak to you soberly that we want all of us to worship you.

So, Lord, we renew our commitment to you across the board and we say we have nothing to claim of our own, but we give ourselves clear away.

[42 : 22] in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So, we come today to the one who has given himself clear away. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread.

And when he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant of my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ and he's your plan for eternal joy and he's your king whom you desire to worship and serve, would you come and partake of this table and just be reminded that the one you've chosen to trust is trustworthy and he gave himself up for you so that you could love him.

In Jesus' name.