

E pluribus Unum is the Latin motto on most U.S. currency. It's included on the seal for the president, vice president, and on most official documents. Originally it was suggested to mean that many colonies or states come together to form one nation, a United States. In recent years it has come to suggest out of many peoples, races, and cultures a single nation has emerged. *E pluribus Unum*, Latin for "out of many, one."

Sounds like a great thing; many different people coming together to become one. It's the kind of unity the world goes for so why not the church. Across the United States the ecumenical movement seeks to unite churches together. The idea, it's better to unite Christian churches together regardless of beliefs than stay divided. Jesus prays for one church so we must be able to achieve it. It's a grand thought. Many different churches all working together to carry the gospel around the world.

As Jesus prays his high priestly prayer, first for himself, then for his disciples, and finally for disciples yet to come was he thinking of *E pluribus Unum*? Did Jesus really want out of many churches one church? If he did why isn't it happening? Did God not hear his prayer? And how is it that we think we can answer his prayer by working out unity among churches? Maybe Jesus was saying in the gospel that he wants...

**Unity of a different kind
One faith from the Scriptures
Glory revealed in the Father's love**

I think that next week to show our unity we should all wear the same shirt to church. Then if someone comes in they'll see we're all united. But we'll all have to wear it otherwise we won't be unified. We can control that by handing out shirts at the door for people to wear. Imagine how easy it would be to show how unified we are if we did something like that.

That might show unity, but I don't think it would create actual unity. It would certainly make a fashion statement. Individually we might still disagree on certain things. We'd still be individuals with our own ideas of what events we should put on, what Bible studies to offer, and what songs to sing in worship. Besides that's not the kind of unity Jesus was talking about. **"I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity."** Unity is something that grows from our relationship to Jesus. He is in us, but how? That's a connection made through faith in Christ. There's also oneness and unity between the Father and Jesus. Because God the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in us that means we have a relationship with the Father. To create actual true unity we must be connected through Christ by faith to God.

Thursday we celebrated the ascension of Jesus into heaven. But before that, even before he was killed on the cross or rose again from the dead Jesus was praying about us. Jesus spoke as if we were a done deal. **"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."** We are who Jesus meant; you and me. He prayed about how we become his followers. Their message refers to these disciples who would record a divine message. Not their own but the Word of God. Faith is founded and grows only through the Scriptures.

Back in 2000 there were twenty Lutheran churches in Oklahoma County. Wouldn't it be great if all those churches could work together? What's the difference, they're all Lutheran? Or maybe you want to go even further and work together with other churches of other denominations. Imagine what we could do for the gospel if twenty or more churches worked together. And on top of that God wants unity. So where does all the disunity come from. In Oklahoma County alone in 2000 there were 59 different religious bodies that claimed to be Christian. That's not unity.

Remember when I said we should all show unity by wearing the same shirts next week. what if some don't get the message. Immediately there's no unity. What if someone doesn't like the shirt, or forgets to put it on, or decides to wash it Saturday and ruins it. wearing the same shirts, just like wearing the same jersey doesn't mean there's unity. There can't be unity among 59 different denominations without discussing the reasons why we're not in agreement on all doctrines. It would be fake unity. We say baptize babies, but I can't be unified with someone who says baptizing babies is worthless because they can't have faith or someone who says babies aren't human beings until they're physically coming out of the womb. Sinfulness creates the division, so something else must be the measuring stick for true unity.

True unity is a different kind, one faith from the Scriptures. All those who believe in the Scriptures without addition or subtraction and what they say about Christ are the true church. It's not one organization. Not our church body the WELS. Not Lutherans, Roman Catholics, or Baptists. It's individuals trusting the Bible and it's proclamation that Jesus is the only way to be saved. That's oneness of faith, true unity, and it's already happened invisibly. So showing unity also is disassociating with those who don't teach the Word of God purely. Our unity is only as strong as our connection to Word and sacraments. Stay in them, review them, take them to heart, and make use of them often. The more we grow in faith the greater our unity will become.

Ascension Day is in our rear view mirror. Pentecost is just ahead. Today we come to the end of our formal celebration of Christ's resurrection knowing that it never really ends. Every day is a day to remember and celebrate our Savior's resurrection. We listen in today as Jesus prays for us. He prays for unity not based on outward organizations but on the Scriptures. That unity we have. He also

prays for glory, not based on us, but rather on him. Glory is the lasting fruit of Christ's resurrection. It's glory revealed in the Father's love.

People became heroes all over this city last Monday. That's when tornados broke out and people starting helping other people. But they only could do that after the tornados happened. Jesus received glory before anything happened. **"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."** Jesus gets the glory because when the Father gives him an assignment it's as good as done. When the cross came, Jesus completed his mission and his glory was proved right. God gives Christ glory through his work done on the cross and Christ brings glory to God the Father for completing that work.

Jesus received glory for staying on task. Congregations can get all mixed up in their goals and priorities and lose their glory. A congregation might find unity around a certainly political issue they feel needs changing. But that's not unity that brings glory. A congregation can think a certain social issue needs fighting and all can get completely on board. But that's not unity that brings glory. We might think that cancer needs to be cured, or we need to walk for diabetes, or the community needs help painting and mowing lawns. All worthwhile goals, but by themselves they don't unite to bring glory. Unity in Christ is of a different kind.

Our goals are now in line with Christ and God the Father and their goals. **"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me."** This glory comes to us by a direct connection with Christ and his death and resurrection. This glory will only be perfect when we reach heaven, our ultimate goal. Christ's resurrection assures us this goal is attainable through him.

While we wait we want to show ourselves unified. We must have one goal and that's reaching heaven through Christ and helping as many others as we can reach heaven with us. We can demonstrate God's love by helping out brothers and sisters in need. Donating to Holy Cross and the victims of the tornado in the door offering today. Continue to support our worldwide church and the efforts to train pastors and teachers. Keep recent graduates in your prayers as they set out on their mission which is our mission, expressing the glory of God's love. Glory is there when unity expresses itself in love towards others.

A number of years ago a big deal was made at the Super Bowl when one team decided to be announced as a team. No individual names were called out, no numbers read off, no hometowns mentioned. Just one team from one city playing united. We show unity when we gather for specific programs or events. We give offerings towards a general budget that is unified. We say we're unified but where does it come from? Our unity is of a different kind. We have one faith in Christ grounded in the Scriptures. We have glory from Christ revealed through the Father's love. We have true unity given to us as a gift of his grace.