



Message: *Is Christ Divided?* | January 25, 2026 | Speaker: Pastor Eddie Eddy

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 New International Version (NIV) A Church Divided Over Leaders

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Christ Crucified Is God's Power and Wisdom

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Leader: *This is the word of God for the people of God* **People: Thanks be to God**

Is Christ Divided?

With everything I see going on in the big church today I ponder this question...

Are Christian communities a reflection of culture as it is...or...are they an example of what the culture should aspire to be? This is an important question for us to ask if we are to continue to claim that we are followers of Jesus Christ. Because let's be honest...To use the name Christian without being Christian is kind of like forgery.

And that premises hold true whether were talking about the Christian society we live in...or the Christian denomination we follow...or even the individual relationship we have with Christ. I guess if we want to be truthful...the only way we can be Christian is to start admitting that we don't always act like a Christian.

So, we could go through our scriptures and pick out all kinds of passages that give us guidelines for what a model Christian should look like. If we were to apply just the beatitudes...we would have a pretty clear image of picture perfect Christian behavior. We could find some direction in any of the parables as well.

But the mesh that holds all those Christian goals together...is his commandment to love one another. This was...and remains...the collective blueprint Jesus gave us for our behavior.

So maybe...this lack of loving each other like Christ taught us to love...is why the Apostle Paul got so upset with the Corinthian church. When this Pharisee...who had proudly been a persecutor of Christians...converted to the very faith community he had victimized... he went all in. He took ownership of Christianity, and he identified with all of it as a whole. He couldn't pick and choose what suited his agenda.

PAUSE

Here's the thing...Corinth was just one of many communities where Paul delivered the Good News of Jesus. In a sense, he had become somewhat of their Godfather. He vowed to help them grow in their oneness with Christ.

Let me ask you...Have you ever worked really really hard to make something happen...and then...watched it fall apart? I know we all share that experience. I think of the church in Mokena and what happened in just a short period of time since Jeanie and I were called away from there.

With your situation in mind... then you might understand some of Paul's frustration as he writes to his beloved church in Corinth. He had given his entire being to these people...and then...having left them in the hands of a sincere believer named Apollos, he found out that what he put together...was now falling apart. This Christian community was no longer a witness to the Christian culture...but instead...it had become a reflection of the worst parts of the culture Christ came to save us from. As a community, those who called themselves Christians...didn't behave any differently than the non-Christians around them. So often in life...we allow details that should unite us...to **define** us...and then...**divide** us.

In our reading today, we hear Paul go after one of these behaviors. He lets us know that he was anything but happy with the **division** that now labeled the people in the Corinthian church.

Baptism. Baptism was the thing being used to drive a wedge through the church. The sacrament which **unites** us in Christ...was being used to break themselves into separate groups. Each group believing that in some way...they were better than the others. Instead of focusing on what they shared...they highlighted the irrelevant detail that separated them. I was baptized by Apollos...well I was baptized by Peter. Who cares...you were all baptized into the life...death ...and resurrection of Jesus Christ! Is Jesus divided?

PAUSE

Perhaps you have already realized that the people of Corinth **are not** alone in this divided mindset. Let's put this in some kind of perspective...We have fun with it here...but there is a cultural divide in this very building between Bears fans and Packer fans. And I am really sorry if you are a Vikings, cowboys or Patriots fan. I struggle to believe that even Jesus would side with the Patriot fans. I'm kidding...but think about it. we find some kind of strength...or security...or comfort when we side with a team. Even if it is the bears. We will argue over coaches...players...fields...owners...tradition...when in reality...it's the love of the game that unites the true fans.

Let's spread that out. Do any of us...any of us completely understanding the all the factions in Iraq. People are still killing each other...and saying it's in the name of religion.

From the view inside our heads...because we tend to see through our own experiences...we look at the battles going on in this world...in this country...in this state...this town...the denomination...in our own church...and we

think...we think we can identify the pettiness and even the sadness behind the reasons that groups... other than our own... justify the divisions that separate them. But...I question...are we really that different?

The Corinthians had already forgotten the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper, when he prayed, "Father, may they be one in us" The oneness that Jesus offered...the unity they shared through baptism...was now shattered by the need to be elevated in some invisible way. And here we are today...our own Christian communities have...for all intents and purposes...followed in these Corinthian footsteps.

PAUSE

If we wander back in the religious history of our own country, we will see the proof that we have lived the Corinthian paradigm over and over again. Right fighters always trying to justify their position. Think about the Salem witch hunts where in the name of religion we rationalize murder... Just the fact that there are different denominations shows that we are still dividing the bride of Christ...the church... when we should be unified through the love of Christ. When I served in Freeport, we had 5 different churches all falling under the umbrella of Methodism within 5 miles of each other. It would appear to those outside the faith...that Christians have still not captured the concept of Christian unity...any more than any other secular community.

A few years ago, Vincent Donovan, who was a missionary in Africa in the 60s and 70s, ran into a stumbling block while attempting to tell the Masai people of a God who loves everyone. Some of the Masai asked Father Donovan if **his** tribe, the Americans, had discovered this Most High God. He writes in his book, Christianity Rediscovered, that when asked that question.... He began to cry, because he thought about white churches and Black churches. He also recalled as a child praying that Christian Americans could kill Christian Germans. He had to admit to the Masai...that we...his tribe...had not yet discovered this Most High God. A God he of whom he spoke of so passionately.

PAUSE

So why do we tend to be divided? Why were there disharmonies among the Corinthians? Why were there fractions in the early Christian history in this country? Why do we maintain any kind of division today?

Maybe there is some truth in a story I read:

There is a long line of people who have died. They are waiting at the pearly gates for St. Peter to let them in. One particular gentleman was sizing up the crowd, which is a polite way of saying that he was judging all the people around him. When St. Peter finally came to the gate, this man, who had appointed himself judge and Jury, pointed out one particular person in the crowd and complained to Peter. He said, "I'm not going into any heaven that would have that guy!" All Peter could say was, "Well, that is your choice."

This poor man did not want to share heaven with the person who was the object of **his** judgment because, while on earth, he had not learned that our true identity is not our denomination or our race or our gender. It had nothing to do with any of the other differences by which **we** define ourselves...and others. He hadn't learned the truth of what Paul was conveying when he wrote to the Romans...saying...that in the end... we all stand before the same Lord.

When this truth...the truth that we all stand before the same Lord...is forgotten, division is not far away. Our true and deepest identity is not that we shall all be judged by the same God, it's that we all belong to ...and are loved by one true God. While there is much that we can do that will prevent us from recognizing God's love for us and for everyone else around us...there is nothing we can do to diminish the love that God has for us. To think any other way...would be to claim a power that we simply don't have.

For some of us this is a hard truth to swallow. It is hard to swallow because it takes away the self-appointed privilege we would like to have...just so we can continue our personal judgments. And if we are entitled to judge...then we can validate the differences by which we identify ourselves.

And we only do that because we have yet to understand the undivided love that God has for us...all of us. Failure to understand this truth prevented so many from accepting Jesus when he walked this earth and preached this message.

So many people wanted to continue to see themselves and others by labels: you were either a Jew...or a Samaritan...or a Gentile. Or you were tagged as lepers or blind people...clean and unclean. They couldn't comprehend any more than the Masai...a God who could love beyond their demographic. They couldn't fathom a God who could love people...in spite of people.

Today...maybe more than ever... the divisions that **we create** run the gamut of blatant behaviors. You can pick: racism, sexism, ageism, classism, you can fill this in with any divisive conduct you want. Look at the ways in which the news is reported to us. Think about foreign war casualties are headlined: "Twenty killed...including 10 Americans." I wonder what might happen to our view of war, if these headlines were to leave out the information on nationality?

Because does it matter to the widows or the orphans? Does it matter to God? Does God divide the victims of war by the flag under which they lived or fought? As Christians...hopefully we know...down deep... that these titles don't matter to God. But...the truth remains...we have not yet learned to recognize the silliness and the sadness of our divisions. So...we continue to defend the divisions...rather than surrender to the undivided Love of Jesus.

So...As we...the global Methodist church moves toward the opportunities that will arise after in 2026...I want us to ponder...I challenge you to make a conscious effort to identify the feelings you have when you are in the presence of someone whom you have deemed different. This isn't a race issue or a sexuality or a political issue. But just be aware of any situation where you feel that shiver in your soul that makes you sit up and take notice. What is the thing that divides us in that moment?

And then think of what Paul might write to you in a letter. What if he wrote to you instead of the Corinthians? What would he write if he were to observe you and what you allow to divide the Body of Christ...the church...the people of God? Would he need to remind us...any of us...like he did the Corinthians...would he be compelled to ask us...Is Christ Divided?

Maybe...just maybe...if we could reflect on and come to appreciate how much God loves each one of us, Paul might not be able to find so many divisions to write about. Not only would Paul be a happier camper than when he wrote to the divided Corinthians, but we would actually live in a different kind of world.

To God be the Glory: Amen

Closing Prayer

Loving God, we come before you aware of how easily our hearts drift toward division. We confess that we often define ourselves by labels, loyalties, and differences rather than by the cross of Christ that unites us all.

Forgive us for the ways we have allowed pride, fear, or judgment to fracture the Body of Christ.

Teach us again the wisdom of the cross...a wisdom that looks foolish to the world, but is your power for love, reconciliation, and new life.

Strip away our need to elevate ourselves over others, and replace it with humility, compassion, and grace.

Send us from this place committed not to defending our divisions, but to surrendering ourselves more fully to Christ...so that in our words, our choices, and our relationships...the world might see not a divided church, but a people made one in your love. We pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified for us all.

Amen.

Benediction

Go now in the power of the cross,
not claiming Christ for yourselves,
but offering yourselves to Christ.

May the love that knows no divisions guard your hearts,
may the grace of Jesus Christ shape your lives,
and may the Holy Spirit bind you together in unity and peace.

Go in love. Go in humility. Go in peace as one body...
for Christ is not divided.

Amen.

Next Steps:

- I will "Come and see" what Jesus is doing"
- I will pray for the kids and caretakers of Interhope
- I will pray about a financial gift for Interhope before January 25