

## Minister's letter

Dear Friends,

A world falling apart needs to see a Church coming together! Jesus prayed: May they be one so that the world may believe. (John 17:23)

In the early 1970's Jean Darnell shared a prophetic picture, which went something like this: the Lord showed her Beachy Head in East Sussex near Eastbourne. As she watched she could see hundreds and hundreds of men and women walking up the cliff from the town, as she focused in she saw that they had no faces, they just walked and walked getting ever closer to the edge: eventually they walked to the edge and fell over to their death. She pleaded with the Lord to let her go and save them and He allowed her to go down onto the Cliffside. She stopped a lady going to certain death and sat her down. She went to save another but the previous lady got up and walked again this time falling to her death. Frustrated she looked around. Then she saw small groups of people in circles. As she looked closer she saw they were making daisy chains. She went and told them to stop and help but they were so wrapped up in their daisy chains that they ignored her...

The daisy chainers were the Church; the fallers were the thousands who every day go to a lost eternity without Christ. Jean Darnell commented: as long as we remain an irrelevant introverted sect the world will continue to ignore us and go headlong into a godless future.

What we need, what the Lord desires is a church that will join hands on the edge of the cliff so that no one can ignore us or Christ anymore and no one can not hear and know about his love for them. Unity so that the world will believe. A World falling apart needs to see a Church coming together!

Jesus prays, yearns, longs and has a passion for the unity of His people. If we know the heart of Jesus, if we spend time, even for a few minutes a day, at the heart of the Almighty, listening to Him, we cannot avoid the fact that the passion of the Lord's heart is the same as it was two thousand years ago: 'Father, I pray that they may be one...' (John 17:21). Unity lies at the very heart and depth of God's being.

The unity we are talking about is not the unity of an Islamic, Buddhist or any other monistic God. It is a unity which is uniquely Christian: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – at the heart of the universe, sharing together, enjoying one another together, never at variance, the Son doing the Father's will but knowing that if He asks for twelve legions of angels the Father will change His will because they work together in their intimate unity. This is the kind of Unity we are talking about when we speak of the Unity of God's people.

When we talk about building unity or working for unity it often seems almost an insult. We cannot create unity, we cannot invent it, we cannot add to it. It's something that God gives – and when He gives it to us and we gladly and willingly receive it, the world sees something that it has never seen before. It sees Protestant and Catholic, High Church and Low Church, Poor and Rich, becoming one because they have given their lives to Jesus. Unity is a gift that God gives us.

It is not surprising therefore, that our unity is going to be one of the most important areas of defence for us and one of the most important strategic places for attack from the Enemy. The Enemy is bound to attack your relationship with the persons you closest to, the people you are working alongside. He would be a fool not to. We have got to discover how to live not in the naturalness of our own unities, within our churches and congregations and across the boundaries of denominations and groupings but in the gift that God gives us of love for one another, for the household of God, as well as for the whole human race.

We don't work for unity, it is a gift. This doesn't mean to say we shouldn't seek the Lord to find out how that oneness is expressed in us. Of course we must do! The 22,000 or so denominations in the world of Christianity give us first of all an opportunity to understand the God who is a unity but a diversity, who has a variety within Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and yet in Himself is a unity. You see any sort of unity we could achieve for ourselves would be rather bland and insipid, if it is without variation. That's not the sort of unity that the church is meant to have. There are bound to be differences and varieties.

The unity that we are talking about is a relationship where  $1 \times 1 \times 1$  equals 1. It's a relationship of multiplication not of addition. And the one God, whom we worship, is the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all equal but taking different functions within the one God. We want this variety because Jesus said Catholics can love Catholics, Methodists can love Methodists, and Baptists can love Baptists because Tax collectors can love Tax collectors without any grace at all (Luke 6:32-34, Matthew 5:42). It's when you meet somebody different from yourself that you demonstrate whether you have got grace or not. It's when you love across the barriers of sameness into different ness. That's the demonstration of the grace of God and that is why it's a grace that God has to give us to love one another. And you can't love people without meeting them, can you?

You do have to spend some time with people and get to know them if you are going to love them. We need to obey the Lord and to love one another across these boundaries. Outdo one another in love. I don't owe anyone anything but to love them. Jesus is longing to see masses of different people in different movements in different expressions of Christianity so loving one another that they join hands and refuse to budge until they see at least the Good News carried into all the world then the end will come.

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Every blessing,

Mark Cheetham