

The Advent Admonition: “Be Like-minded Toward One Another!”

Text: Rom 15:4-13

1) Confess The Same Faith

Suggested Hymns:

2) Receive One Another In Love

2, 17, 486, 340, 797

3) Be Inspired With The Hope Of Life

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 15:4–13, ⁴ *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

⁵ *Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁷ *Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*

⁸ *Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,* ⁹ *and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”*

¹⁰ *And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”* ¹¹ *And again: “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”* ¹² *And again, Isaiah says: “There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.”*

¹³ *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

How does this Epistle suit the season of Advent? Is it not the time of preparation for Christmas, and is not Christ’s coming the great subject

to be discussed in the Advent season? But what does this Epistle, chosen for the Second Sunday in Advent, say about Christ's coming? Nothing whatsoever.

Yet this Epistle has been judiciously selected and contains the right words to be spoken at the right time. We have heard on the First Sunday in Advent that the Lord Jesus comes to us again in the new church-year with His divine Word and His holy Sacraments, that again He stands before the door and knocks desiring to enter the Jerusalem of our hearts.

Now do you think that Jesus can enter into a heart which is filled with ill feeling toward others, with enmity, with hatred, with unbelief, and with the love of this world? No; such a heart is bolted and closed, and before He can enter, these obstacles that are in His way must be removed.

Our Epistle therefore admonishes us to be of one mind, to receive one another, and to abound in the hope of eternal life.

And when, as we are told in the Gospel of the Second Sunday in Advent,¹ the Son of Man shall come in a cloud with power and great glory, when as the Supreme Judge of the world He shall come to judge the living and the dead, do you think that He will set the unbelievers, the quarrelsome, the worldly-minded on His right hand and say to them: "*Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*"? Certainly not! Our Epistle therefore admonishes us to be like-minded toward one another.

As long as you nourish and cherish ill feeling toward others, hatred and malice, in your heart, you are neither duly prepared for Christ's coming in the clouds,² nor for the glorious message of His coming in the flesh which is to be proclaimed to you on Christmas Day.

Let us see, then, that our hearts be cleared of all those obstacles that prevent Christ's entry as He comes to us, and prepare and make ready to receive Him with joy. Let us consider *The Advent Admonition*: "*Be Like-minded Toward One Another!*" May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. This Like-mindedness Suggests That We Confess The Same Faith.

Like-mindedness suggests, first, that we confess the same faith, that we be one in the faith. The tendency of our present generation is to unite in Christian

fellowship without the basis of a common faith, to sneer at creeds and distinctive doctrines whereby the Christians are divided among themselves, to let every man believe what he pleases, and interpret the Bible as he chooses, and, nevertheless, to form a brotherly union among such dissenting Christians.

Such a union is a sham and a building without a foundation. If the hearts are not united, if they are not one in the faith, how can they be like-minded? The first requirement of like-mindedness is to have and to confess the same faith.

And what is the foundation upon which Christians must build their faith? The Apostle says, ***⁴ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.***

What, then, is the ground upon which all Christians should stand together in brotherly unity? It is the written Word of God, the Bible, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible was written for our learning; it contains all that we need to know for our salvation.

The Bible supplies us with patience and comfort in the trials and tribulations of this present life. The Bible inspires us with hope for that life which is to come. To be like-minded with our fellow-Christians, to be one in the faith with all the true followers of our divine Master, we must base our faith on the written Word of God and on nothing else besides.

We must unreservedly believe and accept the Word of God as it reads, and not place human reason above the divine Word, but bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

And what is the object of our Christian faith? The Apostle says, ***⁵ Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

What, then, should be the very heart, the soul and centre, of our common faith? The doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, whose true Father is God in heaven, the Saviour, who came down to us from heaven to seek and to save that which was lost.

In our days there are many people who claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, but what is their attitude towards Jesus? They do not believe in His great redemptive work for the salvation of the sinful world by His suffering and death nor in His divinity, that He is the only-begotten Son of the Father.

To them Jesus is neither God nor Saviour, but nothing more than a respectable man who taught and said some nice things worthy to be admired and followed. Why do they call themselves Christians? What claim have they to the Christian name? Why do they not call themselves what they are — unbelievers?

The person who denies the doctrine which is the soul and centre of Christianity, the doctrine of the God-man and Saviour Jesus, stands outside of the pale of the Christian Church and has no God; for does not John distinctly say in 1 John 2:23, ²³ *Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either?*

Now, in view of this apostasy around us, let us all the more firmly hold together in the one true faith!

Let us be *“like-minded,”* as the Apostle says, *“toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Christian like-mindedness suggests, first of all, that we have and confess the same faith.

2. This Like-mindedness Suggests That We Receive One Another In Love.

And it secondly suggests that we receive one another in love. The Apostle says, ⁷ *Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.* What kind of a reception does the Apostle mean here?

He tells us in Romans 15:1 that ¹ *We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* Scruples means infirmities, weakness, failings, hesitation, and doubts.

His admonition is, that we should receive one another in love, as Christ also, in spite of all our shortcomings, our weakness and sins, has received us unto Himself to be members of His glorious body.

Oh, what harm and injury is caused to the Church of God by the haughtiness of those who should be humble servants of the Lord, and by the refusal of the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak!

Is there a Christian who is perfect in every respect? Have you not your faults which others see and notice, though you are blind to them, and which they must bear to get along with you? Why, then, do you refuse to do to others as you would have them do to you? Why do you refuse to bear their infirmities? Why do you judge and condemn them for the same thing of which you are guilty yourself?

Be *“be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus* that is, ⁵*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷*but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* ⁸*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*³

Bear the infirmities of those that are weak, meet them, receive them in Christian love, and let Christian love reign supreme in your dealings with others, especially when they have wronged you.

This does not mean that we should hush and say nothing when serious offences have been committed. If you really love your brother, can you see him walk head-long into eternal destruction? No; love must induce you to speak to him about his sin, to warn him, and to try to convert him from the error of his way.

But this should be done in proper language, not with harsh words, but with kindness, as the Apostle says in Galatians 6:1, ¹*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

No better example could be held up to us how to receive one another in love than that of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle says, ⁸*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,* ⁹*and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”*

¹⁰*And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”* ¹¹*And again: “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”* ¹²

And again, Isaiah says: “There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.”

We must bear in mind that there were two kinds of Christians in the congregation at Rome, those who had formerly been Jews, and those who had formerly been heathen. We can well imagine that sometimes these two different elements in the Church could not agree, and that there were dissensions and disputes.

Now the Apostle holds up to them the example of the Saviour Jesus and says: Why do you not receive one another in love as Jesus received us? Did Christ discriminate between the Jews and the Gentiles? Did He not embrace all in the arms of His love? Was He not a minister of the circumcision? Did He not redeem the Jews, His own people? And did He not redeem the Gentiles also, whom the Prophets in the Old Testament invited them to rejoice with His people and trust in Him?

Be like-minded, then, one toward another, consider that you are all made one in Christ Jesus, one mystical body, the head of which is Christ, and, therefore, receive one another in love as members of the same family. Be kind among yourselves, generous, forgiving, and reconciled!

3. This Like-mindedness Suggests That We Be Inspired With The Hope Of Life.

Lastly, Christian like-mindedness suggests that we be inspired with the hope of eternal life. The Apostle says, ¹³ ***Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.***

Every one will admit that like-mindedness and true harmony, will exist where the hearts are inspired with the same hope, where all are joined together to make for the same goal. There, the present is forgotten in expectation of the future, and the joy over the good thing which is to come enables us to subdue our passions and to overcome the greatest difficulties.

But our hopes must not be fixed on earthly things. Many people are expecting the so-called millennium. Their hope is, that before the end of the world a glorious time will come upon this earth, an age when all creeds and confessions will be wiped out, and the Church of Christ will be one organised

body without doctrinal difference, an age when the swords shall be turned into plough-shears and the spears into pruning-hooks, and no more wars shall be, an age when all the nations of the earth shall bow before Christ, an age to begin with Christ's coming upon this earth to rule the whole world as an earthly King for a period of one thousand years. Then His promise would be made true, that there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.

But this doctrine of the millennium is nothing but a wild dream which has no foundation whatever in the Scriptures. Does not the Bible tell us that the Lord's day will come as a thief in the night, and that in the last days there shall come scoffers walking after their own lusts?

No; our hope is not fixed on an earthly kingdom of Christ with all sorts of earthly pleasures and enjoyments, but on a heavenly kingdom, in which God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and where neither sin, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor death shall be, where we shall be more than recompensed for all the sufferings of this present time, and where we shall see those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, but which God has prepared for those who love Him.⁴

The heavenly Jerusalem, with its crystal portals, and its gates of pearls, and its streets of gold, where the sun never ceases to shine, and where there are pleasures for evermore before the throne of God and the Lamb — this is the goal for which we Christians are making and straining every muscle to reach.

Let us be of one mind, then, in the hope of eternal life. Let us run, and we shall surely win. Let us be faithful unto death, and we shall receive the crown of life. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 21:25-33

² Mark 13:26

³ Philippians 2:5-8

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9