***As it is in Heaven*:** A Study Through Philippians (Political Series)

Mike Colaw

Week 2: We are One in Christ: Philippians 1:12-21

Review:

We are in a series where we study through the book of Philippians. We are specifically looking how Christians should engage in culture when there is political tension.

Week 1: As Christians we acknowledge the limitations of government. Human made governments cannot save our soul or make our hearts whole. Jesus saves.

Week 2: We are one in Christ.

Introduction:

Anyone ever heard of this phrase? *E pluribus unum.*

It is Latin for out of man, one. *E pluribus unum* first appeared in 1776 on the initial design for the Great Seal of the United States, proposed by the polymath Pierre Eugène du Simitière. Once you know it you will see it everywhere. From the Great Seal of the United States, U.S. coins, passports, state and federal institutions, senate seal and state flags, even the monuments will have somewhere, *E pluribus unum*.

To be clear: *E pluribus unum* creatively embodies the vast diversity of immigrants coming together to identify as unified citizens of the United States. Out of many (pluribus), we become one (unum).

Let’s take an honest look at the cultural moment we are in.

Recently, there has been a movement to reject the 'one' that this phrase represents. Whether justified or not, some have come to a shared consensus on rejecting this unity. While it would be interesting to explore the reasons behind this shift, that’s not my focus here. I simply want to draw attention to what happens after we reject the 'one.'

Jean-Jacques Rousseau explores the necessity of a social contract to prevent fragmentation in *The Social Contract*, arguing that without unity, society devolves into competing factions.[[1]](#footnote-2)

In *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis suggests that abandoning common moral values creates division and leads to societal breakdown, resulting in factionalism or "tribalism." [[2]](#footnote-3)

In *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama discusses the risk of societies falling into tribalism when ideological or national unity dissolves, predicting a resurgence of identity-based conflict. [[3]](#footnote-4)

Jonathan Haidt, in *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, examines how the loss of shared values and the rise of identity-based loyalties can lead to tribalism in modern society. [[4]](#footnote-5)

Look. All it takes is a bachelors degree in History and you won’t be surprised with the conflict we faced today. All through history, this is what humans do.

Here is the bottom line: Rejecting what unifies us drives people into smaller, insular groups, each with its own narrow interests and alliances. Tribalism.

Let’s make this personal.

The Church and Christians are in great danger of fragmenting too, if we think the core of the church is a national identity instead of a supernatural identity.

Lectio:

Philippians 1:12–21 (ESV)

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. [[5]](#footnote-6)

Meditatio:

* *“…what has happened to me…”* Paul was writing from a Roman prison awaiting trial for causing civil and political unrest among the Jews and Roman occupiers.
* *“…it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.”* Paul is trying to win Romans to Jesus.
* *“And most of the brothers…”* Paul is using unity language about Christians who were formally enemies. Jews, Romans and Gentiles are “brothers” under Christ.
* *“Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry… (and) selfish ambition… in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.”* Paul is even trying to build unity among disagreeing believers under the banner of Jesus.
* *“I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.”* Paul counts following Jesus as superior to his reputation and even life. Jesus is above all things.
* *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Jesus is above all things.

Actio:

You are my brothers and sisters and no government, political power, education level, ethnicity, new popular fad, or even financial divide can take that away. We are one in Christ.

*E pluribus unum*… This may be contentious politically, but Christ as King holds and will hold all the way to our eternal home.

Next Steps:

Is there any identity that competes with Christ? Today, set it aside to be unified in God’s family.

Mark 10:29–30 (ESV) Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” [[6]](#footnote-7)

Let me say it really clear.

If the only thing you share with others in this room is Jesus, then you’re still family!

Our diversity song as Christians is the unique way each of us has found Jesus. The Apostle Paul is right, Jesus above all!

Communion:

* Today at the table we offer this reminder. In Christ we are one family. You come to the common table as forever brothers and sisters in Jesus.
* We practice “open communion” which simply means that this act can be your first act as a new believer. If you want to accept Jesus, come to the table and accept Jesus and meet with one of our pastors.
* **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** (ESV): *"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 had 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 in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes."*

1. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. The Social Contract. Translated by G.D.H. Cole. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Lewis, C.S. The Abolition of Man. New York: HarperOne, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Fukuyama, Francis. The End of History and the Last Man. New York: Free Press, 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Haidt, Jonathan. The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Php1.12-21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Mk10.29-30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)