

Courageous Conversations

John 17:20-23, I Corinthians 12:4-7

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

"My prayer is not for (my disciples) alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21)

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (I Corinthians 12:4-7)

REFLECTION

This fall with Allen Hilton we'll explore how we as Covenant can be a love letter to our community through seeking strength in our differences. Martin Luther King, Jr., said in 1962, "I am convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they don't communicate with each other, and they don't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other." The outcome of this polarization and substituting tribal loyalty for friendship is that our neighborhoods, families, and communities are coming apart. **How has this kind of fear and separation been present in your family, friends, or community?**

Read John 17:20-23 above. Jesus prays for his disciples that they all may be one, and for us, through our words, that we too all may be one. **Why do you think Jesus wants us to live as one? Who in your life provides balance and fills certain spaces in your life? How do you see Jesus' desire for us to be one through the strength found in your relationships?**

Within church and politics we tend to look at our differences as threats, not assets. Note how Paul believes otherwise as you read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. Of the 12 disciples, Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot could not have been more opposed in their ideology: one catered to the rule of Caesar, the other a rebel. Clearly Jesus benefitted from understanding both sides when he was asked by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, "Should I pay taxes to the Roman empire? He answered, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Rather than hoping that people change their opinions or beliefs, let's think about how we can learn from and love one another across them. **How can this kind of unity can change the way people around us see God?**