

NORTH BALWYN UNITING CHURCH

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Psalm 133

“The Dew of Hermon”

These days, oil and water are so common for us that we can easily get them anywhere, but in the old days, it was different.

In Bible times, some people were anointed with oil for a special purpose. They may be anointed to be a king, a prophet or some other reasons. Aaron and other priests were not admitted to ministry until they were anointed. They used actual oil for anointing purposes. This was usually olive oil mixed with spices. According to the scriptures, oil was poured on the head, running down on the beard and upon the collar of his robes.

You can imagine that, the fragrance of the oil was so rich that it could be smelt metres away. Such fragrance actually implies the abundance of spiritual grace; therefore, those who smell the fragrance can easily associate it with the blessing of God. The person who was anointed was considered to be set apart as a channel of the grace of God. Whether you like the feeling of having oil all over you or not, at that time it was such a grace that many people longed to experience it. I think the anointed person could never express in words how he felt about it.

Apart from oil, water was also another precious thing in the old days, because the livestock and vegetation were all dependent on the supply of water. Water therefore indicates life and joy. You will understand why it means joy when you see kids playing in the water.

The psalmist used water in the form of dew to illustrate such unspeakable joy. Even today, scientists are excited to see some signs of the presence of water on the bare land of Mars, because where there is water, there is life. Water brings life and refreshment to everyone, especially farmers. This is not alien to Australians as we have experienced drought recently. It is not possible for a farmer to express his joy when he sees dew and rain coming down from the sky to nourish his cracked soil.

When people saw how Aaron was anointed with oil, and how the dew fell on the mountain of their homeland, they associated it with the blessing of God. The joy they experienced could never be explained in words. Just like a wedding couple in front of the celebrant, looking at each other, not the celebrant, in the eyes, without a word in their mouths, for words can never describe their joy.

If you have forgotten that feeling, you may imagine when you brought a mobile phone, or a dream car, the kind of joy that flows out from your eyes, not your mouth. This is the kind of feeling that the psalmist wants us to experience when brothers and sisters live together in unity. It is a sweet and blessed experience from God that cannot be expressed in words.

Here, the psalmist was King David. The tribes of Israel had long ago separated during the time of Judges. Such separation had caused distrust, competition, and even war against each other, to a stage that they had forgotten that they were from the same family.

Now, under the rule of David, everything was reunited, and they all shared the same worship place. They now shared the same resources and worshipped the same God together once again. It was the

kind of unity which King David and his people had been longing for. Here, the psalmist used two illustrations to explain how sweet unity among people can be. Oil is a symbol of God's presence, and water is a symbol of life. Both are graces and blessings from God.

Unity among people is a grace, it is like the oil running down from the head to the garment of the high priest. It is like the dew descending from above to the dry land. All blessings came from above and were made visible in the unity among the children of God.

David wanted everyone to know that the blessing of God upon different tribes and people is the same. However God has blessed one tribe, He has blessed the other tribes equally well.

The dew which fell on Hermon also fell on Mount Zion, giving Mount Zion life and nourishment as well. Hermon was a place with more moisture, because it was situated at a higher altitude. It had plenty of precipitations in the forms of rain, snow and dew, which nourished the growth of vegetation. The blessing of these moistures also came to Zion. The Psalmist reminds us that the grace of God does not discriminate. People living in Zion were as blessed as those living in Hermon. It is not the place that matters, but the love of God that came upon our brothers and sisters.

Frankly speaking, it is never easy to dwell together, when we have different lifestyles. Sometimes it may lead to funny stories. For example:

A few times each year, the Chinese congregation of our church has combined worship with the English congregation. After worship we usually have a feast together. The Chinese congregation provides the hot dishes, while the English congregation provides the dessert for the feast. Initially, when the time to eat came, while the English congregation was trying hard to queue for the hot Chinese dishes, the Chinese congregation had already started to taste the dessert. They were both enthusiastic about their choice of food. What happened was that some people ended up having no main course, while others ended up having no dessert.

The question was, should we still have combined lunches? The answer is simple; it is a matter of choice, actually. Why? If we see this as an interesting experience which has room for improvement, we will be creating friendship and unity. We will enjoy both dessert and main course next time. But if we see this as an embarrassing and cultural clash, we will be drifting away from each other and can never enjoy each other's contribution. The food we eat is just a channel of blessing, but the will of God in unity is the driving force.

The Jews sang this psalm as they journeyed to Jerusalem, they had all come from different walks of life, but they sang it together in both joy and hope during their journey. We are all pilgrims in our life journey but we don't travel alone. We may see others having a better life than we do. We don't know why, but other people may seem to have more blessings. But the psalmist reminded us: do not think that Hermon is the only place that received God's blessing, God is going to give us a shower of blessings like Hermon, for the children of Zion are the same as the children of Hermon, and the children of Melbourne are the same as the children of Bangladesh and Somalia, since God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are the same to everyone.

When different people live under the same roof of God's house in unity, the Lord will grant them even more blessing as the psalmist said. We are a community rooted in the same blessing of Christ, so, how good and pleasant it is when we live together in unity.

The dew unites Hermon with Mount Zion in the past. It also unites Australia with China, the Middle East, Africa and South America today. We are pilgrims, but we don't walk alone. The grace of God reaches to different groups of people equally and abundantly. Disregarding the grace of God to

other people is to disregard the will of God.

This psalm is a song of ascents, which people sang together while they were on their way to the Holy city. It is also a song for us today while we are driving, walking, or even eating in the food court of a shopping mall.

Actually, it is a miracle that God has prepared this scripture at such a time for our church. Do you see the grace and care of God upon us at this moment? God's will is to see his children live in a joyful life in unity with one another. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand and fulfill his message, and let the dew of Hermon fall on everyone of us and those outside this church.

Amen.