

**Sermon Notes of  
Senior Pastor Glen Weber's Sermon on March 13, 2016  
"The Tree of Unity or Division?"**

**[Connecting with God and with Others Series]**

**[In today's sermon, "The Tree of Unity or Division?", part nine of a series "Connecting with God and with Others", Senior Pastor Glen Weber shows that when we connect with others, we need to focus on the trunk of the tree – Jesus Christ and not on twigs or leaves of minor doctrinal issues.]**

Notes:

Introduction:

- How has the church become so divided?
- The many divisions in Christianity are the reasons why religion is so bad to atheists and agnostics.
  
- Pastor Glen is reading a book by a scientist and atheist, Dr. Jerry A. Coyne.
- Dr. Coyne cites many examples of Christian disunity and divisions in his book.

Important questions:

- How do we approach people who don't think like us?
- How do we "connect with others" and understand where they are in their spiritual walk?
- We have to be careful how we disagree with them when they bring up religious issues.
- Many become instantly hostile if you disagree with them or have a different doctrinal viewpoint than they do.

The divided church:

- How has the Church of Jesus Christ become so divided?
- The divisions are growing.
- For example, the term "Evangelical" no longer has any unified meaning today.
- Their viewpoints are now all over the place.

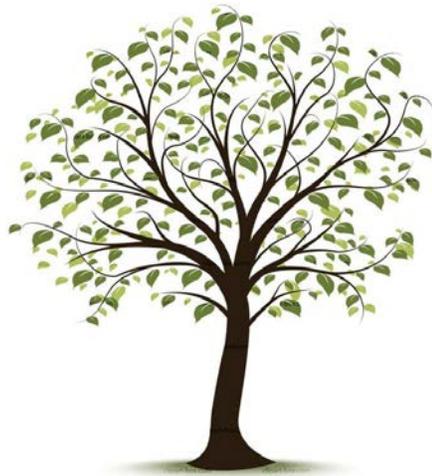
**Jude 3, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people."**

- What WAS once entrusted to God's Holy people?
- Some say that you need to hold on to the Old Covenant.
- Others say, as Paul did, it is about Christ and him crucified.

- 1 Cor. 15:3, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

### Tree of Unity or Division:

- Pastor Glen’s visual for how he perceives the faith once entrusted versus how the church has developed divisions over the last 2,000 years.



## Triune God

- The root system of the tree is the Triune God.
- The trunk of the tree is the Incarnate Jesus.
- The trunk of the tree is also the Gospel about Jesus.
- We need to know who Jesus is and what He has accomplished for all humanity.
- The first branch of the tree was the East-West division of the churches in 1054 AD.
  - The Eastern Church based in Constantinople believes that the Holy Spirit only flows from the Father.
  - The Western Church based in Rome believes that the Holy Spirit flows from both the Father and the Son.
- Next branch was the Reformation in 1517.
  - Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis (changes he thought the church should make) to the door of the All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany.
  - Luther had no intention of splitting the church when he wrote his thesis.
- Then came the branch of Greek, Russian, Armenian etc. Orthodox churches based on country location.
- Next came the branch of denominational differences within the Western churches based on doctrinal differences.
- Next came the branches of the Rapture theory and pre-millennial and post-millennial tribulation.

- Next came the latest branch of old earth versus young earth belief.
- Christians take sides on so many of these twiggy and leaf issues.
- We need to keep our focus on Jesus – the trunk of the tree.

List of doctrinal issues about which Christians disagree:

- Musical instruments – whether to have them in church services.
- Ever-burning hell, annihilation, or neither
- Salvation for all or a selected few.
- What days do we worship – Saturday or Sunday?
- Baptism – immersion or sprinkling
- Baptism – children or adults only
- Communion – open or closed to members of that church only
- Marriage issues – Can divorced people remarry?
- Marriage issues – what about gay weddings?
- Clergy – can they marry or must they be celibate?
- Women in ministry – some say “yes” others say “no.”
- Tithing – required, optional, or obsolete
- What to wear to church – dressed up or casual?
- Can a person with a tattoo come to services?
- Is the rapture going to happen?
- Length of hair for both men and women.
- Drinking of alcohol

Concluding comments:

- We even have people in our congregation who don’t understand all of our Biblical teachings – and that’s OK.
- There are around 20 million Christians who quit attending church because they got into trouble over these picky issues.
- So, what should we focus on when talking to other believers, or even non-believers?
  - We need to realize that branches, twigs and leaves have nothing to do with the trunk of the tree.
  - They are not worth fighting over.
  - We need to build relationships with others and move them to the trunk of the tree – Jesus and the core issues of His Gospel.

**Closing Prayer**