

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Heber Ticas' Message of February 8, 2009  
"One in Christ"**

**[The cross of Jesus Christ has got to be the centerpiece that will bring healing and an environment where reconciliation can take place.]**

**[Topics: Cultural Reconciliation, Latino Heritage, One in Christ]**

[Heber Ticas, today's guest speaker, is pastor of the Iglesia de Dios Evangelica Ministerios Luz y Verdad congregation in San Fernando, CA.]

**Excerpt:** Pastor Ticas thanked us for inviting he and his family here today as we celebrate "Latino Heritage Day." Pastor Ticas told us that he was born in El Salvador. He came to the States with his mother when he was nine years old. Pastor Ticas comes from a family of 13 siblings; seven from his mother's side and six from his step-father's side.

So often people think that all Latinos are Mexican in their heritage. But that's not the case. Many of the Latinos here in southern California come from countries in Central America as well. So, it's a fact that Latino heritage is deeply rooted here in southern California. But you know as we come to the Lord in Christ, there are no Latinos, there are no whites, there are no African-Americans or Asians. We're all one in the Lord. That's what Paul wrote.

**1 Cor. 12:13 (NLT), "Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit."**

Now if Paul were speaking to us today, he might say something like this. "Some of us are white, some are black and some are Hispanic and Asian. But for Christians those distinctions don't matter. Our relationship with God unites us."

How true that is. When we're in Christ, we become one. Even though Pastor Ticas' heritage and life experiences may be different from ours, but when we sit down together at dinner we have one similar experience that we can talk about and share together. And that is the day we came to Christ. The day we encountered the living Lord.

We are one in Christ. And as we come to him, we are able to see each other as one. What a beautiful thing it is to talk about reconciliation this month. Depending upon our racial background, our struggles are undoubtedly different but we are now baptized into one Spirit. The same blood that was shed for us was shed for others as well, no matter what heritage we are. And that's what unites us all. That's what reconciliation is all about.

Yes, we can be proud of our individual heritage. But let's not lose sight of the fact that it is Christ who has brought us together. He is the one who reconciled us to the Father. It is his work on the cross that we have become one.

Reconciliation is the ability to come together as a group or community and harmonize all our differences and to be able to see one another under the same scope. That's how we can call someone a brother or sister, who is from another race.

In our culture today, especially here in southern California, there are people from so many different cultures and heritages. But for us as Christians, when we come together, it's the cross that's going to unite us. It is in Jesus that we become one.

But others, who may not have a relationship with Christ, or who haven't experienced God as we have, they are one as well, because Jesus died for them on the cross as well. They are one, even though they may not know it.

Now reconciliation can't take place when anger, strife and hatred are present. When these three aspects are present in a community of people with different social, racial and even religious differences, reconciliation is not achievable.

Pastor Ticas believes America is great. It has given him and his family many opportunities. His family came from a country that was torn by civil war. The people in the States have embraced his family especially those of faith. We should see people, who are different than us, through the lens of the cross. We should go beyond the way people speak, dress, and the way they look. We should be able to see that the blood of Jesus was shed on Calvary for them as well.

That's the heritage that we should want to be a part of. That's the heritage we should want to embrace. We can all be proud of our heritage. But let's come together and embrace the cross. That will allow us as different people to become one – through Christ and Christ alone.

When that happens reconciliation will take place. But when there's anger and strife in us, and it turns to hatred then the impact of cross won't be there in our lives. So, the cross has to be the centerpiece that can bring healing and an environment where reconciliation can take place. We need to understand what Jesus has done for us, not just as individuals, but also for all people.

Jesus has reconciled all humanity to the Father. And the Father loves all of us and the Son loves all of us. The cross of Christ is that centerpiece that brings us all together.

Only through Jesus in the power of the Spirit can one transform their thoughts and feelings. True reconciliation starts with an inner transformation; it's an inner reality. There's anger and strife in all communities. For example, those who are of lighter skin color in Mexico and Central America will discriminate against those who are of darker skin color. There are lines of demarcation against those who are from Mayan and Aztec descent.

Only through Jesus can one transform their thoughts and feelings. Reconciliation is an outer reality that can only take place when an inner transformation has occurred. We need to allow God to work in our hearts so that this inner transformation can take place for us to share with one another and to see one each other as one.

We need to experience the cross in our lives and not let the cross just be an intellectual concept. Is the love of Jesus that flowed through him a part of who we are? When the love

of Jesus flows through us, we start seeing people from a different perspective. Our thoughts and feelings towards others become different, because God is doing a work inside of us. The battle that is taking place is in our hearts.

It's the shed blood of Jesus that makes the difference. We may embrace each other here in church. But what about those in your work place, in your community? We're ambassadors of the kingdom. We're representing Christ to others.

This separation and strife is pointed out in the Bible. We can even see it in the life of John and James – two of Jesus' disciples. Let's read about it in the Gospel of Mark.

**Mark 10:35-37 (NKJV), "Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him saying, 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' 36) And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' 37) They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.'"**

Now two of the 12 disciples are asking for a special favor. Their minds and hearts are set on the glory of the kingdom. Now what about the rest of the disciples, the other ten? What were they going to do in the kingdom? Where John and James even concerned about them?

Their petition to Jesus was born out of selfishness, arrogance and a feeling of superiority. They simply wanted to be greater than the others. Now let's look at the response of the ten. **41) "And when the ten heard it, they became greatly displeased with James and John."**

If you or I were there, we, too, would become greatly displeased with James and John. How do you think Peter felt? He probably thought since he was the leader, he should be sitting on Jesus' right hand in the kingdom. We can see how separation had started even among the 12, those who had encountered the living God. Their human nature took over.

James and John didn't forget about the ten. They really didn't care about them. They only cared about themselves. They didn't think about the feelings of the others. They were just being selfish and they started planting the seed of separation.

The same thing happened earlier. **Mark 9: 33-34 (NKJV), "Then He came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house, he asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' 34) But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. "**

Those are seeds that create divisiveness. Those are seeds that create separation. Selfishness and arrogance are birthed from the inside. Those are the things that need to be transformed. Those are the things that we need to take to Christ and say, "Lord, I need you to change my mind. I need you to change the way I feel about other people. I need you to change the way I think about other cultures. I need to see them under the same lens you see me – where there's no Jew, no Gentile, there's no slave nor free; we're all one in you!"

The centerpiece of the gospel message is that Jesus died for all. We need to not only understand that message, but we need to live that message. We need to flow in that message so we can impact our communities, our work places, and those around us. When we do that, guess who will be exalted? Jesus will be exalted! But if we take the attitude of the 12 with their arguments and divisiveness, it's going to create strife.

So reconciliation comes about when the centerpiece of our message becomes the cross of Jesus, which impacts the way we live our lives. The same ingredients that have caused divisiveness throughout history continue to divide our culture. And let's not be deceived about this. Our cultures are divided.

Those same thoughts and feelings that we can't accept someone else because they are different from us are the seeds of strife that separate us. And when we see those seeds in us we need to render our thoughts and feelings to the Lord and ask him to transform them.

Now we need to be a light to our community and in our work place because so many do have those thoughts that divide people. What are we doing to reach out to others? One of the core values of the church Heber Ticas pastors is that they value the immigrant Hispanic community of San Fernando Valley. That doesn't mean they don't value the Latinos that were born here in the States. They do. But they have a commitment to reach out to the recent Latino immigrants outside of the church as well as inside the church.

All of us should have a commitment to reach out to others no matter if they are different from us. And we can only reach out to others if our thoughts and feelings are flowing with Jesus and have been transformed by him.

Reconciliation is inclusion. We are all included in the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through Jesus. It's a life of love, peace and harmony. It's more than just a theological reality. It's a practical reality as well – as we allow Jesus Christ to unite us all as one. That inclusion says that God loves everyone, no matter what our heritage may be. God loves you and everyone else in your community as well.

And some may not know that they are loved by the Father. So you may be that vehicle that Jesus is going to use to reach them – so that they will be able to flow in that love and harmony that the cross brings to them.

So let's finish up where we started. **"Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit."**

Some of us are white, some of us are black, some of us are Hispanic and some of us are Asian. But for those of us who have come to the cross, those distinctions don't matter.

**Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NLT), "Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit."**

**General Group Question:** How can racial and cultural reconciliation be achieved?

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. Explain how the cross of Christ is the centerpiece that brings us all together.
2. What are some of the things we can discuss that will bring people of different cultures together who are in the body of Christ?

3. What three conditions of the human heart make it impossible for reconciliation to take place? Briefly explain how they sabotage reconciliation.
4. How can any of us get rid of or overcome any or all of those conditions?
5. What was the motivation of James and John to ask Jesus for special consideration? Did it help unify them the rest of the disciples? Why or why not?
6. What can we do to help ease the cultural divisiveness that exists in our society today?
7. What should be our commitment to others in the work place and community who don't know about the love of God for them?