

“Greet One Another with a Holy Kiss”

Special Edition

1 Corinthians 16:19-20

The Rev. Ted Wood

August 2, 2019

Ted: Good morning.

Brave Men: Good morning.

Ted: The Lord be with you.

Brave Men: And also with you.

Ted: Let us pray.

*“It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
To sing praises to Your name, O Most High,
To declare Your steadfast love in the morning,
And Your faithfulness by night,
To the music of the lute and the lyre,
And the harp and the melody of the harp,
For You, O LORD, have made me glad by Your work.
At the works of Your hands I sing for joy.
How great are Your works, O Lord.”*

Lord, we would especially remember Your works today in Jeff’s appointment at the seminary and the gifts You have given him. Also we give thanks for Your great works in Bruce’s life. We pray that You would be with him in a supernatural way. We pray for Harry Hinch’s dad as he has to be alone now. We thank You for Tom Smith’s recovery. We thank You for the good news of Nancy’s improvement, or at least her improved condition. And we pray also for Sandy Cohn and her asthma.

Lord, all these things You’ve given us, and we thank You, undeserving, in Jesus name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Ted: As I was speaking and listening to the prayer requests and thinking about the sicknesses that were reported, I went to a very interesting talk at the church we’re attending now. And it was a pastor. Our pastor’s friend is a pastor. And he came up to talk to the congregation at an evening meeting about his dealing with cancer. He’s probably in his 50s. He has late teen or early adult children. And he has a very rare form of cancer where tumors keep coming back to his body cavity within him. And he’s already gone through a very difficult series of tests and he’s on immunotherapy now.

But he’s decided not to go through the second round of chemo, because the thing that he wanted to talk to the congregation about is that he wanted to talk about how long you keep trying to live. And one of the problems I think that we face is that we all are living much too long. If nothing else, we’ll run out of money before we die. That’s a concern. Those of you who are younger are not thinking about that. Those of us who are older are. Most of us run out of money after we pay for our children’s education. *(Laughter)*

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But he was asking the question. “Why are we clinging so tenaciously to life? I’ve made a decision to let it just go ahead as it will.” And I was very touched and moved by the pastor’s sincere and genuine wrestling with this question.

So as I hear these prayer requests, you know it’s interesting, because we cheer when somebody gets better and we mourn when somebody gets worse. But maybe sometimes we have that all mixed up. So I just thought I would start with an uplifting thought.

(Laughter)

As a fundraiser, and I’ve been a professional fundraising consultant for 36 years, Kirk. And when you pass the bucket you never call it “a little offering.” *(Laughter)*

Kirk: Do you want me to acknowledge it?

Ted: Yes. You would say, “Give until it hurts and beyond.” *(Laughter)* Give until it quits hurting.

I just also want to make an observation. Sig and I have been in a fair amount of communication recently. And we don’t know how much we owe to Sig. I mean, he comes up here, he does his shtick. Often it’s over the top it’s silly and everything else. But we’re in his heart all the time. And he’s always concerned about how we’re doing. And I just think that God gave us Sig, and God gave us Bruce, and God gave us Jeff. So I think that some of us, including myself, take that for granted. And it’s easy enough to lose.

Well, this morning I was asked to fill in for Jeff. I don’t have a series that I teach. Jeff has a series. So when I’m asked to teach I always bring something that I’m wrestling with at that time. So you’re going to get the fruit of my most current wrestlings with the faith because I find that God is disturbing me most of the time. *(Laughter)* It’s great to know that He loves me and He has me in His arms and I have that security. But it’s a restless security. So this is part of my restlessness.

And I take for that the passage from 1 Corinthians 16, verses 19 and 20. It’s at the very end of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, a church that he has great difficulty with. They were doing all kinds of things they shouldn’t be doing: dividing up over personalities, doing immorality, violating the Lord’s Supper, just a really troubled church. And at the end of that letter he says this.

“The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

So I thought I would talk about the appropriateness of kissing in church. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: You forgot to say something.

Ted: What?

Don: You forgot to say something.

Ted: Which is what? Oh, this is the word of the Lord. Oh, my gosh! *(Laughter)* This is the word of the Lord!

Men: Thanks be to God.

Ted: Thank you. Oh, my gosh! Please don’t tell Jeff! *(Laughter)* Oh gosh! That would almost be like Jeff allowing a hymn at his service rather than a Psalm. *(Laughter)*

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Or, as I’ve said and stated it another way, this greeting that ended the letter of greeting from Paul was the challenge of embracing your brothers about whom you have doubts. Or I know Jesus, but I’m not too sure whether you know Jesus like I know Jesus.

I feel that the unity of the body of Christ is a very important topic for me. I think about it a lot. I think of it as the doctrine that has been missed by the church, the evangelical church. It’s like the church has blinders on and can’t see the importance of the unity of the body.

And there’s kind of a macro-understanding and a micro-understanding, or an essential and an existential understanding. And I’m going to hit the essential first, but only briefly, because that’s not where the Lord rattles me. It’s not overly healthy sometimes to get overly rattled by big doctrines because you can then avoid dealing with yourself.

So to give a nod to the importance of the unity of the body of Christ as a big issue, the fact of the matter is that *the unity of the body is a God-created reality, and commanded of all who are in union with Christ*. So the fact that we are in union with Christ, and by that in union with every other Christian, that is God-created and commanded. And I’m just going to read to you from several passages of Scripture to remind us.

From John 17, beginning at verse 20. *“Father, I ask also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may be one just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me, that they may be perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them even as You loved Me.”*

So Jesus in His prayer is saying that that unity, that oneness in Christ, is not only a spiritual truth. And Bruce has pointed that out to us. But it’s meant to be visible as well, because He says, *“So that the world may know that You sent Me,”* and also *“that they may know that Me and loved them, even as You love Me.”* That was John 17.

Ephesians 4:1-3. *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord,”* (and Paul is writing this passage as a prisoner; it’s got to be important material.) *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in the manner worthy of the calling, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

So we already have that unity in the Spirit. That’s just a fact that happens when you’re born again of the Spirit. We take on the same unity, the same oneness with other believers. But Paul says they’re to maintain it.

Ephesians 4:11-13. Christ *“gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the building up of the body, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the full measure of the stature of Christ.”*

So once again Paul is saying there that we are to grow up into unity. We already have it, but we need to grow into it. And I would say that we are to grow into it in a visible way.

And then finally 1 Peter 3:8. *“All of you, have unity of mind.”* Other translations say, *“Be of one mind.”* *“Sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind.”*

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But the body of Christ is in the same predicament. We’re kind of suffering an amnesia of the body. We’ve kind of forgotten about the body of Christ. It just doesn’t seem to be that important.

In the fall of 1966 I started college at The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. I lived in northern Virginia. And at that time the Interstate was not complete all the way down to the peninsula and on down to Norfolk and in those other areas in Tidewater, Va.

And so my parents dropped me off at college, and then the Thanksgiving holiday came along. And I caught the Greyhound bus to Northern Virginia, to the plain where I live.

And at the Greyhound bus station in Williamsburg there was a colored toilet and a white toilet. And there was a colored drinking fountain and a white drinking fountain, and they were labeled.

Now by 1967, that next year, all of those were gone. I think by that time the 1964 Civil Rights Act had finally gotten to that part of Virginia. (*Laughter*) But you know, as I looked back and thought about it, and thought about my own reaction to that, (although that’s not what I’d seen in northern Virginia; I did see it in Williamsburg), I never thought about it. I didn’t think about segregation of the races. It is just the way things are, I thought. It never crossed my mind, one way or the other. I thought it was odd because I hadn’t seen it before. But it didn’t disturb me.

When we talk about church unity and loyalty in church with many of our congregations, invariably we talk about church loyalty in unity in the context of a congregation, not in the context of a larger body. I once heard a pastor preach an entire sermon on 1 Corinthians 12 and never once mention anybody beyond his church. All of the things in 1 Corinthians 12 were meant to apply to his church only, and nothing beyond that.

We really have no idea what’s happening in the congregations down the road. There’s a Presbyterian church right down the street here. I doubt seriously if anybody knows what’s going on there. When we started our short-term mission church up the road I said to the pastor, “You need to go and meet all the other pastors and get to know them, and find a way that we can relate to the body.” And the five years we were there he never got around to it. It just wasn’t important.

It’s kind of like when we start up here in the morning, and Kirk or Sig starts talking. We’re all having our own conversations. What we’re talking about one on one at our small table is much more important than anything that’s going on up at the center. To me it’s a sign of the predicament in the entire church. We’re very much into our own thing, and not what else is going on. When the speaker starts, just try to cut off the conversation. If nothing else it’s a courtesy. And it’s also a recognition, I think, of the body.

The church of Christ, the body of Christ, while one in spirit,--that’s a fact,--is in real life fractured into literally thousands of pieces, actually 20- to 36 thousand pieces to be exact. And that doesn’t include all the denominations, as well as all the nondenominational churches.

And do you know what? We never think about it. It’s just the way it is. The toothpaste is out of the tube, and we’re not getting it back in.

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So that’s the macro-concern I have. And you’ve all heard me talk about this in the past. I don’t know the solution to it. I mean, I believe that when the Reformation started an observation was made to Martin Luther. They said, “Don’t you know, Dr. Luther, that if you give the bible in the language of the people that each one will interpret it his own way, and will fracture apart in their own interpretations.”

He said, “Yes, I know that may be the case. But I’m willing to take the chance.” Well, that’s what’s happened.

But I wanted to bring it down to a more personal level, because just to talk about the big issues of course avoids me dealing with me. And I would rather just not deal with me; I’d rather deal with the big issues. The problem is out there, it’s not here. But in fact, the problem is here.

I picked up a book at a church rummage sale a few weeks ago. It was a book by Warren Litzman, who I’d never heard of before. And the book was called *Church Unity*. And it’s one of those awful books with the gaudy, colorful front covers and great big print, as if I needed double-thick glasses to be able to read it.

And Litzman suggests a macro- reason for disunity. He goes into it. And he lists four things. He lists *doctrine, buildings and property, programs for numbers*. This is not in your notes. Programs and numbers, a focus on how many people we have in church, how many people made a commitment to Christ, how much money has been raised. Programs do that. And the fourth is *authoritarianism or clericalism*, which puts the pastor or the pastoral staff at the center of all the activity.

I keep up to date with a pastor who is in a start-up church on Facebook. And I notice that every single picture of his church is him. It’s this pastor preaching, it’s this pastor teaching, it’s this pastor being in charge of the service. And I need to write to him and say, “Is the church all about you?”

We have a problem with that, clericalism. One of the problems in the Catholic Church with the priest sex scandal has been a matter of clericalism, where all the power is wrapped around some key leaders. But we also get it in nondenominational churches where they need a very popular charismatic leader to pull everybody in. So it’s the same problem.

Now Litzman goes on to talk about the micro-reasons for disunity. And this is where it hit me. Let me read to you what he wrote. You only have part of the quote there.

He wrote, “*We are in the body of Christ, as a living experience. We can’t know another believer outside of his relationship to Christ. We accept the other believer as a person who is also related to Christ. We do not accept other believers by what they do, nor do we accept them on the basis of how they express Christ, nor by what their doctrine is. We accept other believers on the ground of Christ who is in them. Never forget that it was Christ who by His passion on the cross made each of us acceptable to God. If you are acceptable to God, what possible reason could I find to make you unacceptable to me? If you are acceptable to Christ, what possible reason could I have that you would be unacceptable to me? You should accept me because God has accepted me. I do accept you. Why? Because God has accepted you.*”

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Now I found this book very disturbing. First, Litzman is not a brilliant theologian that I would normally read. He’s a bit suspect in my book. But secondly Litzman was striking a very sensitive and vulnerable nerve in my own soul.

I believe with my whole heart, in my inner being and my secret heart, as it says in Psalm 51, that all I am is dependent on my unity with Christ. All I am is dependent on my unity in Christ. Jesus says it in John 15. *“Abide in Me and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”*

Or in Philippians 1:21, *“for me to live is Christ.”* Or in Colossians, *“Your life is hidden with God in Christ.”* Or Galatians: *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”*

So all the life I have is completely dependent on Christ in me and I in Him. And when I am put into Christ, I in Him and He in me, I am put into His body at the exact same moment. So it’s not just a matter of me in Christ and Christ in me. It’s a matter of me also being one with everyone else who is in Christ.

The primary purpose then of going to church is not to be inspired, to be uplifted, to be joyful. The primary purpose of going to church is to be with Jesus. If nothing else happens in that church, if the music is terrible and the sermon is dull and the fellowship is cold, if there are Christians in that congregation that morning, then I’m with Jesus. And that’s where it all starts. Everything else is secondary.

From the moment I am regenerated I am put into Christ and I am intimate with every other Christian as I am with Christ. And Paul says this. We kind of pick apart 1 Corinthians the 12th chapter and pull out certain parts that I find especially telling.

This is what he writes, beginning at verse 13, and I am skipping several verses in between. *“In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”* Okay, that’s what I’m talking about. When I’m in union with Christ I’m in union with every other believer, everyone else who has been regenerated.

“And all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an ear, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. As it is, there are many parts; you have one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’ Nor can the head say to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ But God has so composed the body that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.”

But you know, actually this is not the way I think. And this is where it becomes disturbing to me. Because you’re not an eye, you don’t belong to the body. Because you’re a hand I do not need you. Dig deep into my heart and this is what you’ll find. Because of your particular doctrine, because of your behavior, because of your worship style, because of the way you’ve hurt me or treated me in the past, I really don’t want to be related to you as one of God’s own. I really don’t—a member of his body and in union with Christ.

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There are two pastors in my life that have hurt me very deeply. One attacked me without cause and made a public spectacle of it. And another says he won't forgive me for things I've done in the past. I don't care if I ever see any of these pastors again. I say, I have no need of you.

The denomination I belong to at one time took away all the property of our buildings and all our assets. I am with members of that other denomination, and it irks me to be around them. And I say that I have no need of you.

I listen to Christian TV and hear a preacher say, “God can't act unless you cooperate with Him. God's arms, His wrists are chained. And you have the key to unlock that chain and let God bless you if you'll make this gift over the phone.” You know what? I have no need of him. *(Laughter)*

I find that your services are weighed down with dull music and even duller sermons. Or the opposite: your music is way too loud and the preacher sounds like he's selling knife sets. *(Laughter)* And you know, in my heart, even though these are brothers in Christ, I say, I have no need of you.

Warren Litzman in his quote gives us the word “*accept*.” You know, if God has accepted us, what right do I have not to accept other believers? And I went to the bible and I could not find the word *accept* used in the context in which Litzman used it.

But I did find another word that I think is a wonderful substitute for that word *accept*. And that is the word *greet*. And the Greek word for *greet* is a very interesting word, as I found. It's not found too many times, although Paul uses it extensively at the end of his letters. *Ashotsomai* is the Greek word. And it means *to salute, to pay my respects to, to welcome*. But if you break down that word into two parts, it actually means *the drawing*, as in drawing somebody in.

So what *ashotsomai* really means at its root, when Paul says, “Greet the brothers,” I'll show you what it means. I'm going to illustrate it. Rich, stand up.

Transcriber's Note: Ted goes over to Rich Clark and hugs him.

Ted: I draw Rich in.

Don Nemit: Don't kiss him! *(Laughter)*

Ted: That's what the word means. It's one thing to say that you greet somebody, and that's kind of an anemic understanding. But *ashotsomai* means to draw another person in, to embrace him, to enfold in the arms.

See, when it tells me to accept other Christians I might say, “I accept Rich. But you know, he really has hurt me.” Or “I accept Rich, but he's really got some strange doctrine that he believes in.” It's another thing to say, “I embrace him and I enfold him in my arms because he and I are one in Christ.”

“The churches of Asia Minor send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

Now let me ask you something. That church to which Paul sends exuberant greetings, many greetings, that church in Corinth, did he want nothing to do with them because of their behavior, because of their sin, because of their false doctrine? He had every reason to say, “I have no need of you. I don't need you. You're too much trouble.” But at the end

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he’s exuberant in his greetings. In essence he was saying, “You may be wrong. But I’m wrong, too. I embrace you in Jesus.”

There are certain people and groups in Christ that I don’t want to embrace, and to whom I don’t want to give a holy kiss.

A number of years ago, well, right now, if you went into our house, you would find that almost all the furniture in our house are antiques. All the furniture is antiques. Are, is? Help me out, brother.

Jim Hamilton: Furniture, “are.”

Ted: Our furniture are antiques. Like *university are*. They are antiques, and we used to collect them. Now I’m getting older and I know I’m going to die in not too long of a time; I’m probably in the last quarter of my life. I’m trying to get rid of it all. But at one time I collected it all.

And I went to an auction, and there was a chest of drawers there. If you know anything about furniture sales, it was Empire. It’s the kind of chest of drawers built in about 1840 or ’50. And the top comes out a little further than the next drawers down, and it kind of sticks out. It’s very popular and a very heavy piece of furniture. And it had many coats of paint on it.

And you know, when it came up for auction I decided I wanted that piece, because I wanted a big chest of drawers. I did not have one at the time. I think I once had a particle board from Walmart at the time. And I got it really cheap.

Why did I get it cheap, this big, hulking chest of drawers? Well, because nobody can see deeper than the paint. And over the years, probably in the ‘30s and the ‘40s, that chest of drawers probably hand-built with beautiful dovetails on the drawers, was painted over and over and over.

So I got it out in the driveway and I started to apply this stuff that will give you cancer later in life. (*Laughter*) But it was worth it at the time. And I started to take off those layers of paint. And you know, when I got down to it, it was a beautiful cherry and curly maple throughout.

Now if you know anything about wood furniture, those are really nice pieces of wood—beautiful red cherry wood. Yes?

Brave Man: Are you selling it? (*Laughter*)

Ted: You wait. When I live too long and they move me in. And the pillars on the sides were beautiful curly maple. It was a beautiful chest of drawers. And I took I don’t know. It wasn’t linseed oil. Maybe it was tom oil. And I rubbed it down and it just shone! I fixed the drawers up because they’d worn down over the years. The slides, I replaced those. And I still use it today and I’m very proud of it. And that chest of drawers hasn’t cracked over the years because it got dry or anything. It’s just a beautiful piece of work. But the other bidders couldn’t see it because they were looking at the paint that was so ugly.

I often look at your paint rather than the beauty underneath that God created by putting you in Christ. You’re as rich and as beautiful as that 170-year-old cherry and curly maple. And that’s the way God made you when He put you into Christ.

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Before I can pray for unity in the bigger body, I need to start taking care of my own problems in terms of unity. I need to ask myself the following questions, and you might want to.

By faith, do I believe that Christ lives in the ones I have the greatest doubts about? In 2 Corinthians 4:7 it says, “*We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*” *Am I seeing your earthen clay rather than your heavenly lice?* What am I saying? Am I looking at the paint, or the cherry and maple underneath?

Will I look at the past? Will I look past the paint with which I painted you?

Will I take Bishop Jim Hobby’s advice? When he started being a bishop several years ago he said to his clergy, “*Assume the best when I talk to you.*” So whenever somebody speaks to you or encounters you, just assume that they’re coming from an honest and pure heart. Don’t assume the worst.

Am I expecting more perfection from you about whom I have doubts than I’m expecting of myself? Am I expecting you to be more perfect than I am?

Do I need less grace than others?, because you really need grace, and I really don’t need it that much.

Does God’s grace have the power to transform you as it transformed me?

Are my issues, my hurts, my injustices, my resentments more significant than the life of Christ in you who call upon the name of the Lord? Are my issues more important than what Jesus is doing in your life?

Do I see cherry and curly maple under layers of ugly paint?—the paint that I’ve brushed you with, not that you have.

So those are the things I’m asking myself. I don’t have a resolution to those because I’m still wrestling with them. It would be easy for me to say, “Yes, brothers. I’ve asked all those questions. And all those doubts, all those concerns, all that is saying, ‘I have no need of you.’ Those are taken care of.” They’re not. That’s still in my heart. And God willing, they’ll be dismissed and I’ll be able to embrace you as it says in the Scripture, with a holy kiss.

That’s what I wanted to share. Do you have any thoughts? It’s pretty quiet today. I guess it’s a solemn event. Yes?

Matt: Oh, okay. On the flip side of tolerance and bearing up with one another is the passage on church discipline.

Ted: Yes.

Matt: Immediately after the text that you read, also at the very end he says, “*If anyone does not love the Lord, a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!*”

Ted: Right.

Matt: And in the same letter he’s saying to the same church all those wonderful things in chapter 5. “*Expel the immoral brother.*” And so we in America say that tolerance is the new religion. We try to embrace everyone for everything. And in so doing we lose sight of the specialness of who we are in Christ and the fellowship that we have in Him.

Ted: Absolutely. And I agree with you 100%. But I’m not even looking at that issue. I’m putting that issue aside because we would all agree with that. I believe that here

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we’re not a group of folks who would say that we’re very tolerating of sin. I mean, I think most of us would not do that. What I’m saying is, how did the 36,000 denominations get there? How did they get there? They got there because somebody said, “I have no need of you,” or “You’re not really a part of the way that I really understand it.” We don’t have the movement.

And I’d almost like to say, “Okay, Jeff.” And I’m picking on Jeff because he’s not here. And I have some resentments toward him so it gives me a good chance to get even. *(Laughter)* I’m just joking. But I would say this, and I’ve actually asked him. I said, “Why don’t the Reformed Presbyterians get together with the PCA?” Well, he said that one of the issues is that they have the practice of Psalm singing in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and his congregation would not want to give that up. So somewhere along the line somebody said, “Well, we only want to really fellowship with Psalm singers and not with hymn singers.”

So I agree. We’re to exert church discipline. And I’m not dealing with that issue. And I’ve been wrestling in my own mind with how those two weigh out, because it seems like the tendency is to fracture and fracture and fracture, rather than come to unity. I would say how do we get the unity then? And how do I do it? It starts with me. I’m not saying that I don’t have any need of you. I respect completely what you’re saying. I’m not disagreeing. Yes, Don? When I say “Don,” he’s going to object to it; I just know that. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: Well, okay. Related to what Matt is saying, I don’t think that all of the denominations were founded because they said, “I have no need of you.” There are some denominations which were founded because they saw what was happening in the denominations that they were splitting from. They were slowly but surely apostatizing and compromising over key doctrines.

Ted: Right.

Don: It’s sad, but it happens.

Ted: Okay. I accept that, Don. But you answer me this question then. How do we move to unity?

Don: I don’t know.

Ted: And see, that’s the problem, isn’t it? Okay, now I’m getting some action here. *(Laughter)* Okay, Jim over here. Go to brother Jim. Brother Jim, right there.

Brave Man: Not Jim Fitzgerald.

Ted: No. That brother Jim, *(Jim Hamilton)*, not that brother Jim. *(Laughter)*

Matt: You have no need of him. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I have no need of him. *(Laughter)*

Jim Hamilton: All that, you see, is very simple. Why not just greet everyone with a holy kiss? And I don’t know that we’re doing that around here. I remember a time when John Guest was sharing with a couple of Catholic inmates. And with all the times that we were going over these things I don’t think we ever offered each other a holy kiss, or something making the relationship more productive.

Ted: Right.

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Jim: So I think that clergy and laity have been separated by a holy distance. I’ve been going around our church, and I can think of a lot of ladies that come up and give you a kiss. But generally speaking, we don’t have the respect for a holy kiss that we ought to have as brothers in the faith.

Ted: Oh, you were actually talking about a literal kiss, right? You were talking about a literal kiss?

Jim: Yes.

Ted: Okay.

Jim: What would be the definition of a holy kiss?

Ted: Well, I think it’s obviously a kiss. I didn’t kiss Rich because Don asked me not to. *(Laughter)* I could have kissed Rich. That was fine; I could have kissed him.

Jim: I assume it’s much more than a phrase.

Ted: Yeah, right. Okay, go ahead.

Bishop Rodgers: I think the cure is to make the distinction between essential elements of the faith and the important elements to us that are not absolutely essential. And I think we can find unity with those who hold the essentials of the faith. It’s just that the problem is what are the essentials and what are my own—

Ted: Thank you,. Thank you, thank you, thank you. That’s a good point, John, yes. Good. Oh, this is great!

Brave Man: What you were talking about is what I think of as a good example of unity. It’s kind of a more recent problem, and it’s getting worse and worse for discernment. You know, as a church we’re unified. But just as an example, (and I think the bishop kind of hit on that), where did we start to stray? Maybe this is a bad example. I don’t know, but early on in the church were they in a situation where they had many choices? I think that’s our big problem. We have so many choices so that everybody wants their little cliquey thing, when there were so many things that you had to believe.

Ted: It could be, although I think there were plenty of options in the first century world. In the pagan world, you know, “I’m of Priscilla,” or “I’m of Peter,” this kind of thing. Good point. I think it’s interesting that, for instance, in Croatia where Tom Smith was with Almir Pelech, that they called that church the Reformed Church of Croatia, even though it’s made up of three different denominations. So in a situation where you’re under pressure and persecution you tend to pull together. I think that when the pressure’s on, that’s basically when Christian reality hits. Mike?

Mike Davis: Sometimes we think about these kinds of things and we think about them at a really high level, where the reality is that when we impact at a high level is where you and I begin to do it at our level with the people we see as individuals.

Ted: Right.

Mike: So thinking about way out here, how we impact this country with the gospel of Jesus Christ is by me and you, each of us, talking to our neighbors.

Ted: Right.

Mike: And we can share our faith. I don’t think it’s so much how we change the upper levels of the church. We do that by starting at our level and going from there.

Ted: Amen. Okay, keep going.

“Greet One Another with a Holy Kiss”

Craig Waller: I’m really encouraged by your talk.

Ted: Thank you.

Craig: It reminds me of a couple Scriptures. One of them is “Love those who hate you.”

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Craig: What good is it if you love those who love you? Don’t the Gentiles do that?

Ted: Yes. It’s a lot easier and it feels better.

Brave Man: About the dresser drawers?

Ted: Yes.

Brave Man: One of the things in life that God has laid on my heart in relation to that is “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but always in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*” Everyone has that cherry or that maple, a solid sign in them. *(Unclear)*

Ted: Thank you. That’s good. I’m parsing it pretty clearly, because I know about church discipline. I understand that, and we’ve got to exert that, and agreement in the essentials. I’m trying to zero in on my issue and my heart. That’s what I like about what Mike said. It really starts down here. And it starts with me saying this. And I’m not even talking about seeing the image of God, the *imago Dei*, in all people. I’m talking about how can I do this? I mean, here is a person whom Christ has accepted, and who He embraces and greets. How can I say about that person, “For some reason I don’t need you?”, or “You’re not acceptable to me?” I do that. I mean, these two pastors, I have to stay away from them because it’s too much pain because I find them so unacceptable. But yet they’re one with me in Christ! And they could turn right around and say, “But Ted, I find you unacceptable too because of your mess.” That’s what I’m talking about. That’s what I’m struggling with.

Bishop Rodgers: It’s repentance.

Ted: I know it’s repentance. What?

Jim: Paul says, “Greet them with a kiss.”

Ted: I know. That’s right.

Jim: That’s not your problem. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I once heard a pastor on the radio say that you know you’ve forgiven somebody when you can hug him. And actually there was a situation where I really tested that. And I prepared my mind and I prepared my mind and months went by. And I finally just ran into that person by accident—not an accident!—and I went up and I said, “Forgive me!” And I gave him a hug and he hugged me back.

If I had said, “I’m going to see that person tomorrow at three in the afternoon,” I probably would have chickened out. But because it was like God said, “I know you don’t have the fortitude to do this, Ted, so I’m going to put you into an unstoppable position.”

Brave Man: Amen.

Ted: So I saw the person in the parking lot.

Don Nemit: Yeah, right.

Ted: And he said, “Hi, Ted.” And I approached him, and it was kind of like, “Are you going to hug him? Are you going to embrace him? Are you going to greet him?”

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Brave Man: Are you going to give him a kiss?

Ted: I didn't kiss him. *(Laughter)* But it was almost like I didn't have time to think about it. But I'd been thinking about it for months. And when that person came I came up and I embraced him. And I said, "Forgive me." And he said, "Yes,. Of course."

That's what I'm talking about right there. With church discipline I can do a whole talk on being sure that we don't get contaminated by the world system.

Kirk Ellerbush: Ted?

Ted: Yes, Kirk?

Kirk: I may be opening a can of worms here, but I think of James. And I'm thinking of a footnote in my Bible. James talks about quarrels and the tongue. And if I recall correctly, at least my footnote says that in the church you have the wheat and the tares. And I think that obviously the tares don't have faith. And yet they come across as sheep.

Ted: Yes.

Kirk: And are we certain that we're not harboring a tare?

Ted: And what does it say? "Shall we pull them up now?"

Brave Man: No.

Ted: Jesus says, "No. Don't pull them up now." I mean, the problem I have is that as you're describing that, I act like a tare way too often. That is the problem I have. Now you all may not have that problem. Maybe you're acting like wheat all the time. But there are plenty of times that I act like a tare.

In fact, I was driving over here this morning. And as I'm driving up the road, there's somebody going through a green light. The guy in front of me is going through the green light. And somebody pulls out as if he had the green. And they had to swerve to be sure an accident didn't happen. He blew his horn. And the person who almost caused the accident came down the road and turned up here. *I'm gonna get them! (Laughter)* I was thinking this as they didn't actually keep going down the road. *(Laughter)* But I was prepared. I was prepared to do the righteous thing. *(Laughter)* Because they were wrong and this other guy was right. And you know, I'm right and you're wrong. So Bill, are you going to talk about the Thursday Last Supper, or sanctification? *(Laughter)*

Bill McCoy: There's an old saying I just made up. *(Laughter)* You can pick or choose your friends, but you're stuck with your relatives.

Ted: Isn't that the truth? I mean, you find it even in the coffee hour. You go to the coffee hour and you always go to the same people. You don't go to other people.

I remember this. And this is not at all a criticism of Christ Church. I'm just using it as an example because we were there so long. But there was a ministry that brought in a lot of very young teenage girls who had babies. And they all sat with themselves. And very few in the congregation went and sat with them. I'm not criticizing this church. You could repeat that any place. But I'm just saying that there was a reluctance. You know, I don't know what I had in common with those young teen-age girls with those babies, and the way they dress. You know, I don't know if I have any need for them! So anyway, one more. Yes?

Matt: So I think you were examining earlier by saying these things about doctrine and that you have to have the right message, but then exploring yourselves. So I think that the

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key to unity is for individuals to examine themselves. You know, you can't take the thorn out of your neighbor's eye if you have a log in your own. So when we realize that we're wretched in the sight of God apart from Christ, that opens us up and makes us more accepting of others.

Ted: Preach it, preach it!

Matt: Because we're all sinners. But when we come with pride and think that hey, I have arrived!, then why should I forgive that person, because I know I'm good.

Ted: Right. I'm really not that bad. One last point.

Bill Stolze: Okay. Two quick points.

Ted: I said one! *(Laughter)*

Bill: I'll finish up.

Ted: All right.

Bill: Anyway, C.S. Lewis talks about Christianity as a huge estate and a large mansion. And when we enter into our relationship with the Lord we go into that hallway. And often that hallway has many, many doors. We need to spend a lot of time in the hallway learning our Christianity before we choose a denomination. And so that makes sense.

Ted: I like it; a nice plug.

Bill: Even within our group here there are men of other denominations. And sometimes we have fellowship outside of this room. And sometimes I've seen a little knife, a little shot, because you're not in my church. My church is better. And I liken this to when my children were young, and there would be on my way some driver who would do something wrong. And there would be a gesture from another driver to the driver that did something wrong. *(Laughter)* But anyway, I said, "Take a look at that." He, the driver, may have been in the right; he might have done the right thing. But the negative reflection is on him, his attitude. So there are hurtful things we do in our own group because we call out another denomination. The reflection is really on the person making that judgment.

Ted: Excellent. Thank you. Let us pray. Lord God, we pray that You break us in our hearts, so that in that breaking we may see our brothers and sisters who are in Christ who have been accepted, greeted, embraced, enfolded in your arms, that we may see them as truly the ones to whom we are related. And we pray for the grace to do this because in human terms, in the flesh, it is impossible. We pray this in Your name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*