

**Accord**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**Romans 15:1-7**  
**Prayer Sermon Series**  
**March 14, 2021**

INTRODUCTION: Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are one. Adam and Eve became one flesh. Jesus prayed for His disciples to be unified. His prayer includes us, too. Paul insisted harmony was essential. Strong bonds must be forged within the church. Paul said in Romans 15:6 the church should glorify God with one voice. Yet, Paul had such a very sharp disagreement with the “son of encouragement” (Barnabas) over John Mark’s (who was related to both Barnabas and Peter) behavior that Paul and Barnabas broke up. They went separate ways (Acts 15:36-41). They eventually reconciled: *“Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:11) but the original division was painful.

Ideally, Christians should march to the beat of the same drummer, but we do not. We have different approaches and emphases. Some preferences are about doctrine, worship style, music, polity, race, age, mission, ministry programs, social issues, and politics. Strong personalities, power, and control issues exist too. Our differences often confuse Christians; imagine what others who aren’t followers of Jesus think. Ephesians 4 is a great text. Read it carefully. It stresses how urgent unity is for the church. Verse 2 of the text shows how unity is created and developed. Note the emphasis in Romans 15:4 on, *“the encouragement of the Scriptures.”* No wonder John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said, *“I am a man of one book”* (the Bible).

APPLICATION: What promotes unity? What divides us? What are essentials? What makes you stay connected to Asbury? What would disconnect you? How might this saying: *“We will have to agree to disagree agreeably”* be helpful? How are you keeping our membership vow: *“I will be loyal to Jesus Christ as expressed through Asbury, and uphold it by my prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness”* this week?

**Intro:** Praise, Pardon, Reconciliation; now Accord. Synonyms = unity, harmony, agreement, consensus. Being in accord with someone else means buy-in. It’s a fit or a match. There’s solidarity. The opposite is discord. Discord may mean a clash of ideas or wills or it could be a major conflict that results in a battle with intense

fighting and quarreling. Disagreement, disputes, dissension, and strife. A secret to a flourishing business is to remove the impediments –things that block the flow. Living in accord or living with discord in a business, family or church has two different results.

**Psalm 133** promotes accord: *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.* David wrote Psalm 133. David knew what it meant to “dwell together in unity.” He experienced a special bond with Jonathan, his “mighty men” (warriors) and he brought the people together in an unprecedented way to form a nation. He also knew discord. His brothers didn’t seem to “dwell together in unity,” nor was King Saul harmonious. David experienced the treachery of his son, Absalom, and the betrayal of his best friend and counselor, Ahithophel.

When touring Israel, we visit a former Jordanian military post overlooking Syria and Lebanon. Mt. Hermon is clearly visible. It is huge. The snow melts on Mt. Hermon to form the headwaters of the Jordan River. It is a vital source of water for all of Israel.

Verses 1 & 3 make sense but I didn’t understand “the precious oil” of verse 2. It refers to Exodus 30:22-30. It describes making the “holy oil” to anoint Aaron and the priests. 4 spices (Cinnamon, Myrrh, Cane, and Cassia) are mixed in olive oil to produce a wonderful fragrance. It’s not a lot of one spice; it’s the harmony of four. They are better together than alone. This is SYNERGY. An athletic team, the human body, businesses, a car, a meal, an orchestra all have different members with different functions, but when properly aligned and fit together, their unity produces something far greater than an individual could accomplish alone.

In our readings this week, we saw how **Jesus** constantly prayed for accord among His disciples and prayed that we would be one. His disciples had different gifts and personalities, but they needed to be on the same team. While we share the same mission, we do not all have the same gifts.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> scriptural source is from **Paul**, who wrote to the church in Rome: *We who are strong have an obligation to **bear with the failings of the weak**, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to **build him up**. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of*

*the **Scriptures** we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in **accord with Christ Jesus**, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Romans 15:1-7*

### 3 Relationships to create to build Accord

1.) **OTHERS** *We who are strong have an obligation to **bear with the failings of the weak**, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to **build him up**.*

Years ago, Dana and I went to an Eagles concert in Dallas and heard Don Henley sing "Dirty Laundry" "I make my livin' off the evenin' news Just give me somethin', somethin' I can use **People love it when you lose**. They love dirty laundry. Kick 'em when they're up. Kick 'em when they're down. Kick 'em when they're up. Kick 'em all around.." I'd never heard the song before, but I'll always remember it because of a dancing patron, who kicked them with her cowgirl boots. "**People love it when you lose**." Why do we tear others down? Why do we gossip? The tongue is a wildfire and hard to control.

2.) **SCRIPTURES**. Our book is the WRITTEN word. It's a difficult book, particularly the Old Testament, but the early church used it. To follow Jesus is to learn and apply His word.

The United Methodist Church has been facing a crisis for many years about human sexuality. I believe this debate is less about human sexuality and more about how we apply scripture. (**Wesleyan Quadrilateral**) What governs our understanding of our faith? Some say scripture should be put into 3 buckets (God inspired, what used to be inspired but no longer valid, and what should never have been in the scriptures). The core issue is whether we adhere to the teachings of the New Testament. Furthermore, for nearly 2,000 years other Christians have interpreted scripture in a certain way.

When we reach a point where we can no longer agree about a conflict, we may have to separate like Abraham and Lot over a land dispute or Paul splitting with Barnabas over Mark on a 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey after the young man abandoned them on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark and they went their separate ways. After the Revolutionary War, Francis Asbury, the General Superintendent of the Methodist movement in America, informed John and Charles Wesley that the Methodists in America had to separate from the Church

of England because we had just fought a war with the British. That division spawned a new church. Until then, a Methodist was not about a denomination – it was being part of a method – giving account over your soul (Avail yourself of the means of grace, do good, avoid harm). When Asbury became “Bishop Asbury,” that didn’t go over well with the Wesley’s either. Denominations are NOT the GOSPEL. They are “wineskins.” They are containers that hold the gospel. The UMC wineskin has burst. It will change. Asbury will host an event on April 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 with the President of the Wesleyan Covenant Association to discuss this. You are invited. Regardless, Asbury will be Asbury regardless of the denominational tag.

3.) The scriptures and prayer help us be in **accord with** JESUS, the LIVING word. We freely receive His grace and freely extend that grace to everyone. We are not just AGAINST things; we are FOR someone – Jesus. One guest at our “COVID clinic” told me, *“As a happy atheist, thank you for opening your building to us.”* I believe in God. He doesn’t. We disagree. I am still to extend kindness. There are times we must disagree with others. It doesn’t mean we are righteous, and they are bad people. We just disagree on matters of faith and practice.

I led a memorial service this week for Jack Kackley, a past member of Asbury. He was 6 months older than me. In his mid-50’s he was struck by early onset Alzheimer’s or dementia. Jack had spent 30 years in the car business. When this disease hit him, he couldn’t hold a job, but he found one place at Asbury to volunteer. He drove a shuttle for us. He proudly called himself “Asbury’s Main Shuttle Driver.” He loved it...until we had to REMOVE him. On May 3, 2011, we let him go as a volunteer because: Jack was playing the radio/CD too loud; preaching to his riders; passing flyers to riders trying to sell cars; hanging 10-12 scented air fresheners in a shuttle; racing to get in front of other drivers to pick-up/drop-off passengers & taking off before they were seated. The note said, *For the most part when confronted about these, he will cease. But in no time, there will be another ISSUE.*

People have “ISSUES,” but like with Jack, we often have NO IDEA what’s going on in someone else’s life. We often REACT to them w fear, anger, or anxiety. Our anger does not produce the righteousness of God. This is why we need to pray. We need to align with God’s will, found in the scripture, and expressed through the body of Christ. When I am in accord with Jesus, I can line up with you. I can offer you the same grace I receive. We will disagree on certain matters, but I still care about you and root for you to win.

I invite you to be in Accord with the Lord now. We call it Holy Communion.