

From The Pastor's Study

One Nation

Many of us were raised reciting the Pledge of Allegiance every morning at school. It was pretty much rote to us back then, there was no real thought about the words we were saying, it was just something we did. The last part of it is, "One nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all." Now as I think about these words, they strike me deeply, and one word stands out, "indivisible", I don't have, to define the word. But are we?

We describe ourselves by the state we are from, even from our home towns. Then we create division if we call ourselves Italian Americans, Irish Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans...you get my drift. If we identify ourselves by these labels we create division, not indivisibility, we create division and isolation or segregation. I am not saying we should reject our heritage, but we are Americans.

A friend of mine was active in the integration movement back in the 60s and 70s. He told me that one day he went to pick up his daughter at school for an appointment. It just so happened he arrived at lunch time. As he looked around the room for his daughter he noted the students had segregated themselves by race. The years he had spent trying to bring people together were all for not, the students had self-segregated. He said it brought him near tears.

The color of our skin isn't supposed to divide us. So many are calling for unity, and one step toward that unity is identifying ourselves as one people. How are we going to unify as a nation if we continue to hold onto dividers, hyphenated America has got to disappear but other dividers need to go away as well, that means we need to look around us carefully.

First is Whatever-American. I believe strongly in heritage, it is so important to us personally and even nationally. We are a nation of the world; in other words representatives from nations all over the world fill out nation and their heritage should be remembered but not in a way that creates division. We are called to be a united nation, we can't be that when we identify ourselves as Something-American.

There are other dividers. I am about to tick off a number of my friends. I love the heritage of the South, it is more than just a location; it is foods that take us back to a place and time. Being from Texas there are a few things that bring back special memories, like Bar-B-Que. A mesquite smoked brisket just can't be beat (in my humble opinion), true Mexican food

(not Mexican food for American tastes, or Taco Bell), Gulf shrimp tastes best when eaten in one of the states that touch the Gulf of Mexico and I could go on.

The Confederate banner is raised in pride by many in the South and to most of those who adore that banner it represents a heritage that differs from other locations. The other side of the coin is the hate some people carry. So, what do we do? It does represent hate to some and whether it is true to all, we need to become united and we need to find something to do with all our banners and store them. I am fully aware this flies in the face of our freedom of speech and expression but maybe we can be a little private in that expression.

There is a freedom we don't recognize most of the time, the freedom to be offended. A pastor of mine many years ago told about his home town, There was always disagreement between Ford and Chevy truck owners. They had their right to their choice and their right to be offended. There are some things we will never agree on, that's why we have different cars, different foods, different denominations, different colors and different styles of clothes and even homes. Okay, we will also disagree about politics as well.

Is there a cure for all of this, no, we will never come to a point where we agree on everything, but we can come to the point we can sit down and discuss disagreements. Who is the "we"? It certainly isn't the government, they are all rules, laws, and control. We, the church, should be at the forefront of change in this mess. Why the church? Because the one who created us, who died for us, who loves us is our leader, if we allow Him to lead and we listen to what He teaches.

"For God so loved the world" not just black, white, Christian, Jew, Ford drivers, and Chevy, but His entire creation. "That He gave His only Son" so that we may live in unity and for eternity. We have leaned on our own understanding, we have tried to allow the government to resolve our issues and both have failed; perhaps we should Give God A Chance.

WWJD