

HOW MANY JESUSES?
August 12, 2012 –Ephesians 4: 1-6
The Church of the Covenant

In a former church of mine we had a no-budget, public access TV show that was so low budget everyone was a volunteer, we did it in one take, and they put me in charge of the kid part of it, called “Kids of the Kingdom”. It was essentially a children’s sermon, with some fun singing with hand motions, one of the church children’s Sunday School classes was invited as the special guests of the week, and we would end with a sweet little prayer, where all the children would bow their heads and repeat after me. I had my Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood cardigan sweater on (even in a 90 degree studio) and I would put together all the dialogue. The length of the show was 15 minutes –and it always seemed like an eternity. I mean, we would go through all of my planned material in about 5 minutes so I always had to count on the cuteness and precociousness of the kids to fill in the other 10 minutes. And kids, as Art Linkletter used to note, “Say the darndest things!”. The day in question we had sung together the opening song, Kids of the Kingdom, had all introduced one another, and were in the middle of the little children’s message, when I asked, “Now we’re all supposed to be like Jesus, right?” And all the kids yelled, “Yeah!!!!!!” Except one little 5 year old boy, smart as a whip, and the son of one of the Associate Pastors --he yelled out “Nooooooooooooo!”. So I look over at the volunteer stage manager, and he gives me the “stretch it out more because you still have ten minutes of time to fill” sign. So I figure I might as well do what you should never do during a children’s message, let alone a children’s message that is being recorded and broadcast, and that is to ask a cute precocious little child a question that you have no idea what they are about to answer. So I ask, “OK, David, WHY is it we’re not supposed to be like Jesus?” Close up of an angelic, cherubic little face. David answers with his winsome and adorable little lisp. “Well, Stu, if you’re like Jesus and I’m like Jesus and she’s like Jesus (he also dramatically was pointing to all the other children assembled) and he’s like Jesus, pretty soon you have thousands and thousands of Jesuses running around. (dramatic pause and close up on adorable face) And there was only ONE Jesus!” I almost staggered and gasped out loud. (look of shock on my face recorded for all eternity). The entire rest of the show was Dr. Broberg being intellectually bested by a 5 year old –me trying to argue that while yes there was only one Jesus we are still supposed to try to be LIKE Jesus and David staunchly saying over and over again, “But there was only ONE Jesus!” The show thankfully came to an end. Since we only did one take there was no re-doing of the show and it ran on Booth Cable as is. Unfortunately, it was the last show prior to the summer re-runs, so “Only ONE Jesus” was run and re-run and rebroadcast all summer, over and over and over again. Finally, I started getting phone calls from minister friends asking me, “Stu, and how many Jesuses are there?” I would get phone messages asking me how many Jesuses there are. I guess the only thing that saved me is that there wasn’t Youtube then, or I am quite sure it would have gone viral and the whole world would know exactly how many Jesuses there are...plus that Dr. Broberg could get bested by a five year old. But I think God wanted to impress upon me that day that there are not thousands and thousands of different Jesuses running around, no, there is only one Jesus, only one only begotten Son of God, only one Savior, only one Lord, only one Word made flesh that can save us from our sins. Beloved, trust me on this, the Lord conclusively demonstrated to me...THERE IS ONLY ONE JESUS.

That is the point of our scripture for today. It says, “*one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all...*” (Ephesians 4: 5-6) There is an essential and inherent UNITY in God. “*The Lord our God is ONE...*” says the Old Testament. There is “*one Lord, one faith, one baptism*” says the New Testament. There is an inherent ONE-ness to God. God is not diverse; God is ONE. God is not many gods; God is One. There is an inherent unity between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father is united in essence but also in plans, purposes, truth with God the Son and with God the Holy Spirit. God the

Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are likewise in union and complete agreement with God's Word, the written Word of God, the Bible. The Trinity is not in conflict; the Trinity is a perfect reflection of the union and unity of God. It would never be correct to say that the Spirit of God would lead us to be in conflict with what God's Word plainly says we are to do. There is only ONE Jesus; there are not many. It would never be correct to say that Jesus led me to do or to say something that His Word says we are not to do or to say. That would offend the basic unity and oneness of God. The one Lord is in complete agreement with the "one faith", with what we are to believe. Today we will baptize an infant and that "one baptism" is in full agreement with the "one faith" and our "one Lord" Jesus Christ. There are not many baptisms; there is ONE baptism; it is why the Presbyterian Church recognizes the baptism of children baptized in any and all other Christian faiths. Our baptism is not in disagreement with the baptism of some other church; our baptism is ONE; it is in unity with Christ, and with the "one faith" and with the "One Body" and with the "One God".

And we are to be united, in union with, and in agreement with, one another. There is "one Body"; there is one and only one Body of Christ. There is only one people connected to the One Son of God, Jesus Christ, and through HIM connected to one another. Oh, there may be many churches. But there is only ONE Body of Christ. Because there is only ONE Jesus. There are not thousands and thousands of Jesuses. There is only one Jesus, so there is only One Body of Christ, His Church. And as His church we are to be, as Ephesians says, *"eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* (Ephesians 4: 3) Disunity in the Body is the sure and certain sign that we are following multiple Jesuses, that we have become spiritually detached from the ONE Jesus. Disagreement means we have become detached from our head and cornerstone, the One Lord, and so we are not expressing our "one faith". How many Jesuses are there? If we are not in agreement, if we are not in union with one another, then somewhere along the way we must think there is something else that will save us. Maybe we think it is a particular style of worship that will save us; then we've turned that style of worship into our Jesus. Maybe we think focusing only on spiritual matters will save us; then we've turned "being spiritual" into our Jesus. Maybe we think we have special knowledge from the Lord that no one else has; then we've focused on that special knowledge and we've taken our eyes off of Jesus and we've made that special knowledge our savior and not Jesus. Maybe we've decided our opinions are better than other people's opinions, or our viewpoints are better than someone else's opinion in the church; and O, if only everyone would agree with me on this matter or that matter only then we would be one and unified; then we've transformed our opinions into the gods that we worship and we have forgotten the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ, on whom to focus exclusively is the only place where our one-ness and our unity comes from. If you have been tempted to focus on something or someone other than Jesus, then, like it or not, you are declaring that there is something other than Jesus that can save you and bring one-ness and unity to the Body of Christ. Its so simple. Disunity comes from thousands and thousands of Jesuses. Unity comes from "one Lord".

By now you're probably sick and tired of me pointing out over and over again that there is only one Jesus. But when people are tempted to become dis-united over stuff then we know that somehow and in some way people are starting to trust in multiple Jesuses. Trusting in "stuff" and not in Jesus. And as I was reminded over and over again, by God through the voice of that little boy, so many years ago, "No, Stu, there is only ONE Jesus". Ephesians 4 –ONE body, One Spirit, One Hope, One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of us all. There is only One Savior and when the One Body, His Church, focuses on that One Lord, then we have our unity in HIM alone. Because there is only ONE Jesus. And that's where our unity comes from. Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!

