

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012

# Ecumenism

(2 Chr 30:13-22, 1 Cor 1:10-18, John 10:7-18)

**Ecumenism** or **oecumenism** mainly refers to initiatives aimed at greater Christian unity or cooperation. It is used predominantly by and with reference to [Christian denominations](#) and [Christian Churches](#) separated by [doctrine](#), [history](#), and practice. Within this particular context, the term *ecumenism* refers to the idea of a Christian unity in the literal meaning: that there should be a single Christian Church. Not to be confused with [Nondenominational Christianity](#)

The word contrasts with [interfaith](#) dialogue or interfaith pluralism aimed at unity or cooperation among diverse religions and referring to a worldwide 'religious unity' by the advocacy of a greater sense of shared [spirituality](#).

The word is derived from [Greek](#) *οἰκουμένη* (*oikoumene*), which means "the whole inhabited world", and was historically used with specific reference to the [Roman Empire](#). The ecumenical vision comprises both the search for the visible unity of the Church (Ephesians 4.3) and the 'whole inhabited earth' (Matthew 24.14) as the concern of all Christians.

We can say CSI and CNI were the fruit of the initiatives that had been taken in the past. These days there are many groups that have been started by taking a text in the Bible out of context. God's will which he purposed in Christ, is to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (Ep1:9). But Satan's relentless work is to divide destructively what God has started to unite. We are called to live in peace. Therefore we have to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ep 4:3). God has revealed the whole counsel of His will in the Bible and handed over to the saints. Jesus not only revealed God's will but showed how to do it and handed it over to us. Jesus consecrated Himself on the cross to make all the human beings sons and daughters of God. When mankind have strayed like lost sheep and become useless Jesus came into the world like good and chief shepherd and brought all into one herd or one family by shedding His precious blood on the cross. This is today's gospel lesson. In today's epistle lesson God is teaching through Paul that the church should always be on guard fully equipped to face every attack of Satan to make divisions among the flock of God. Even when people won't agree with our stand God hears our prayers for them if we pray like Hezekiah in the Old Testament lesson. And those people will be established in faith.

Our Chief priest Jesus Christ who is now at the right hand of His Father has been praying that we should all be one as He and Father are one. Therefore May God help us that we may all reach unity in faith and in the

knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ and nothing like caste, color ,sect, sex and denomination disrupt that unity.

**The Gospel lesson: John 10:7-18**  
**Jesus is the Shepherd of all**

We find God the Father described as the shepherd in the Old Testament (Ps 23). In this portion we find God the Son as the good shepherd. Jesus shed his precious blood for all who strayed like the sheep whether they are Jews or non Jews. Only those who believe that Jesus came to save them confess their sins to Jesus and decide to follow Him as their master, are His sheep. In that way the church is the flock of the sheep whose shepherd is Jesus. When the pastor and other leaders of the Church realize that the Church is God's flock under their care and be examples to the flock and watch over the flock not because they must, but because they are willing, as God wants them to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it then there will not be any danger to the unity of the Church (1Pet 5:1-3). In this way today God wants all His churches to be single minded and united.

**The Epistle lesson: 1 Cor 1:19-18**  
**Let us give up divisions**

Division has always been a problem among God's people, and almost every New Testament epistle deals with this topic or mentions in one way or another. Even the 12 Apostle did not always get along each other. Paul established the church in his second missionary Journey. After some time Apollo's came to Corinth from Ephesus. He attracted people by his powerful preaching talent like those today with their so called gift of healing. At the same time another group was formed who were insisting that those non Jews who accept Jesus Christ should undergo Jewish rituals like circumcision. As a result groups were formed in the church. In addition to this some of the members were immoral and they were taking sexual immorality lightly. Paul also pointed out this and asked them to remove this sin from them. But in this portion God who told the Corinthians through Paul that divisions and bitterness should not be in the church is also warning us about them.

We are in those perilous times about which Paul told in his letters to Timothy how people will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. Many preachers giving importance

to healings, prosperity and solution to their problems in the name of Holy Spirit are not making any effort to teach the whole counsel of God .There is blatant omission of great commission and they are emptying the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. We find people leaving their mother churches and go after those even though they do many unscriptural things. If a person claims to be healed and does not follow Jesus as His disciple the work of the Holy Spirit is not complete or the will of the Father is not fulfilled.

We should never glory in the gifts we have but always glory in Jesus Christ who is our wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption( 1 Cor 1:31). If a man of God doesn't present people whom he ministers perfect before Christ like Paul by preaching the cross centered Gospel, teaching and admonishing with all wisdom his ministry is not complete(Col 1:28,29). In this way men of God whether they are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers the body of Christ should be built up, people should be equipped unto every good work and should become mature in their ministry. In fact God gives these men of God as ministry gifts to the church so that they help people grow into Christ likeness by faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ( Ep 4:11\_13). In another place Paul said,"Neither circumcision nor un circumcision means anything; what counts is anew creation". (Galatians 6:15).Therefore to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace even when there are people who don't agree with us in matters of doctrine leaders should pray like the king Hezekiah .Then God glorifies His name through them .This is today's Old Testament lesson .

**The Old Testament lesson: 2 Chronicles 30:13-22**  
**Let us rededicate ourselves for His work and pray for others!**

When Hezekiah became a king the first thing he did was to open the doors of the temple and cleans it from all defilement and rededicated it. When he gave call to all his people to dedicate themselves for the ministry of God they responded and dedicated themselves. They also rededicated the temple. Then he called all the people to come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. All came to Jerusalem to observe Passover. That day there was a great revival. Many rededicated themselves and observed Passover. Some of those who came from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun ate the Passover without purifying themselves contrary to what is written in the scripture. Hezekiah prayed for them and God heard Hezekiah's prayer and healed them.

The Holy Communion we observe is the type of Passover in the Old Testament. Jesus Himself told this while instituting this sacrament. But to many Christians these days they don't know why they observe this .Month

after month they part take in the sacrament and at the same time they bring divisions in the church and live immoral lives outside. Paul taught that all those who part take in the communion have to proclaim Lord's death (1 Cor 11:26). That means they should live in this world as witnesses of His Cross. How many of us are living like that? Many they live as they like outside and yet come and participate in the communion. What pastors can do? They have to pray like Hezekiah.

Today many among us want to seek the Lord. But very few are those who have confessed their sins according to scriptures and are born again or saved or inherit eternal life. Those who have consecrated their lives on the New Year day (New year day message) and decided to follow Jesus sharing the Gospel (8<sup>th</sup> January message) as His disciples and started living a life worthy of God's call (15<sup>th</sup> January's message) can pray for those who are not saved like Hezekiah and God will hear their prayers and save those people. May God help us to be like that praying for the salvation of others!

### **Life Application**

1. Let all those among us who have a real experience of salvation not condemn others but pray for them and lead them into the right path with gentleness and meekness (Gal 6:1).
2. Let us all have the mind of Christ who is our good shepherd and have a burden for the lost sheep.
3. Let us proclaim the Gospel without emptying the power of cross.
4. Let us win the world by prayer.

*Jyothi Prakash Ethakoti*  
[jpethakoti@gmail.com](mailto:jpethakoti@gmail.com)  
9391366670