

St Mark's Anglican Church, 9th February 10, 2025

BHM Theme: Strength Through Unity, Appreciating Diversity

It is a joy and honor to stand before you today as we reflect on the theme **“Strength Through Unity, Appreciating Diversity.”**

This message is deeply personal for me. I grew up with a Tanzanian mother and a Nigerian father, and while that gave me a rich heritage, it also came with challenges. As a child, I often felt like I didn't quite fit in—whether it was my accent sounding different or my appearance not matching those around me.

I remember kids making fun of me, questioning why I didn't “look” or “sound” like them. At the time, it hurt. But as I grew older, I realized something—what made me different was actually a gift from God. It was a reflection of His creativity!

And that's exactly what diversity is: God's creativity on display.

Now, if I had to define diversity in a fun way, I'd say:

Diversity is like a box of assorted chocolates. If every chocolate was the same, it wouldn't be as exciting! But when you have a mix—some with caramel, some with nuts, some with coconut—*now* you have something special.

In the same way, God didn't create us all the same—He made us different on purpose so that together, we could be stronger.

But let's be honest—sometimes, differences can be hard to deal with. We tend to gravitate toward people who look, think, and act like us.

And it's true! If everyone were the same, the world would be a dull place.

But in God's design, our differences are meant to unite us, not divide us.

Unity in Diversity Is God's Design

The Bible teaches us that we are one body, made up of many parts. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Paul writes:

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.”

This reminds me of something funny—have you ever tried to walk when your leg falls asleep? You suddenly feel like a pirate with a wooden leg, stumbling across the room!

Every part of the body is important. If one part suffers, we all feel it. And that's how the Church should function too—everyone has a role to play.

Whether it's leading worship, organizing events, or quietly praying for others—each contribution is vital.

When we recognize and appreciate the unique gifts in others, we build a stronger, more unified community.

A Vision of Unity from Heaven

The Bible gives us a beautiful picture of unity in diversity in Revelation 7:9:

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

Heaven will not be a place of sameness—it will be a celebration of cultures, languages, and backgrounds.

Imagine that heavenly choir—voices from every nation harmonizing together, praising God.

The sound will be far more beautiful than any solo.

And here on earth, we get to practice for that day by embracing diversity right now.

When we celebrate different cultures, perspectives, and traditions, we reflect God's heart for all people.

Unity Makes Us Stronger

There's a verse that says:

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

This means that we are stronger together than we are alone.

We see this throughout Scripture—God designed us to support one another.

Just as Moses needed Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms when he grew tired (Exodus 17:12), we all need people who will walk alongside us, encourage us, and lift us up when challenges come.

When we stand united, we become stronger—not just as individuals, but as a community of faith.

Love Binds It All Together

Paul tells us in Colossians 3:14:

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Love is the glue that holds us together.

It allows us to appreciate differences, not just tolerate them.

It transforms diversity from something that divides us into something that enriches us.

Diversity is God's way of expanding our hearts. It teaches us patience, humility, and compassion.

When we listen to other people's stories, we gain a new perspective, and that builds bridges instead of walls.

Personal Reflection – My Journey at St. Mark's

Since my family and I started attending St. Mark's Anglican Church a little over a year ago, I have personally experienced the beauty of unity in diversity.

I have seen how this church has grown—not just in numbers, but in its diversity and inclusivity.

Each Sunday, I look around and see people from different backgrounds worshipping together, reminding me of Revelation 7:9's vision of heaven.

Our choir has embraced African hymns, blending cultural expressions of worship in a way that is both uplifting and unifying.

And let's not forget our fellowship tea after service—where conversations flow freely, friendships are formed, and a true sense of belonging is fostered.

In just over a year, St. Mark's has become home.

Not because everyone is the same, but because everyone is valued.

That is the power of a church family that embraces diversity.

I love being here because I don't feel like an outsider—I feel like I belong.

That is the kind of radical, Christ-centered love that makes the Church a beacon of hope for the world.

Call to Action: How Can We Live This Out?

As we reflect on this theme today, I want to challenge you with three questions:

1. Whom have I overlooked? – Is there someone in this church whose story I need to hear?
2. How can I use my unique gifts to build unity? – What role can I play in strengthening our community?
3. What small act of love can I do today to strengthen our community? – A kind word, an invitation to coffee, or simply taking the time to listen.

Closing

Let us be a people who embrace God's beautiful diversity and live out the unity of the Spirit.

Together, we are stronger.

Together, we reflect God's heart.

Thank you, and may God bless us as we walk in unity and love.