

PLUG IN: THE GIFT OF DIVERSITY!

Scripture used: [Mark 2:14-17 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon is continuing his sermon series “Plug In” where we examine what it means to connect with the fullness of God’s heart while also looking at ways that NBCC is shaped by God to be an uncommon community. This week is all about diversity. Specifically, the fact that our church represents every aspect of society. We have people of every color, race, age, socioeconomic level, political affiliation, sexual orientation, and more. Why is all this diversity so important? Because it reflects the inclusive, grace-filled ministry of Jesus. Diversity requires that we have a Jesus-first faith, which teaches us how to radically love others without conditions. This is a powerful, countercultural message in a world of virtue signaling, trolling, and other unhealthy behaviors. We are called to follow Jesus’ example by embracing others, listening to their stories, and loving them no matter what.

KEY POINTS

- NBCC’s gift of diversity requires us to share three principles.** With them, we can transform the Bay Area and be a shining light all over the world. Without them, our diversity will be almost impossible to harness as a positive force (faithfully, not flawlessly).
 - A Jesus-first faith.** As members of NBCC, we choose to trust in our Lord Jesus above all else.
 - Grace and truth.** As members of NBCC, we love across differences while maintaining our core values. Grace always comes first, though, before we speak any difficult truth.
 - Hearing and respecting stories.** As members of NBCC, we take the time to learn from each other and truly value the unique stories of God’s faithfulness that each of us have.
- Diversity is both exciting and challenging.** Where there is diversity, there is difference. And where there is difference, there is both disagreement and the potential to learn. This was just as true in Jesus’ time. That’s why His ministry was so scandalous to many people. In that time, the tax collectors and sinners that Jesus invited to hear Him speak were considered “scum” by the scribes and Pharisees. They were not worthy of any attention. Certainly the priests did not think they needed to listen to their stories or validate their perspectives, yet that is what Jesus did. We can follow His model by trying to:
 - Listen** to the stories of others with thoughtfulness and compassion.
 - Feel** and acknowledge the pain of other people, as if you were in their shoes.
 - Share** your own feelings and thoughts honestly without dismissing or devaluing their stories.
 - Boundaries**, drawn wisely to create space to love one another and to entrust differences to God.
- Thanks to Jesus, we can disagree and still love each other.** In [John 15:12 \(NLT\)](#), Jesus commanded us to love each other in the exact same way that He loved us. That means we do not have the luxury of loving members of one political party but not another, or members of one racial group but not another, or even fans of one sports team vs another. Jesus loves us all, and so we also need to love us all. We leave behind our worldly identities to be united as followers of Jesus.

DISCUSSION

- HEAR** - What differences in others do you appreciate? What kinds of differences in others are hard to appreciate? Why? Are there times when you are more excited to engage with people or practices that are different? When is your posture toward differences more open or more closed?
- UNDERSTAND** - Jesus did not choose to die for the people who agreed with Him. Jesus died for everyone, “while we were yet sinners.” He even died for the very people who condemned Him and put Him to death! This is the hard work and the “heart work” that Jesus asks us to do as His followers. We must be able to dialogue across differences, which begins with humility. Paul reminds us all about that humility in [Philippians 2:5-8 \(NLT\)](#), where God made Himself flesh to die “a criminal’s death on the cross.” Consider [Mark 2:14-17 \(NLT\)](#). Have you ever found yourself in a moment where your attitude was more similar to the Pharisees? What causes us to have that attitude? What was the different perspective that Jesus had that allowed him to engage with people “different from him” in a radically loving way?
- DO** - Ask God to show you a person whose story you need to hear. Take the time to listen to that person’s story, to acknowledge his or her pain, to share your feelings in response, and to consider boundaries that might help you love consistently. Remember that “What God has called us to do, we can only do together.” NBCC needs each of us as a member of this beautifully diverse body of Christ.