

Hello Summer:
Week 11: We Reflect the Reality of Heaven

I. Introduction

- **Greeting and Introduction**
 - Warm welcome to the congregation at Tab.
 - Personal introduction as Pastor Ed Haywood, Senior Adult & Care Pastor.
 - Acknowledgment of the "Hello Summer" theme set by Pastor Craig, who emphasized "Doing Life Together" in the previous sermon.
- **Theme Introduction**
 - Today's focus: "We Reflect The Reality of Heaven."
 - Brief overview of the core value, emphasizing the celebration of diversity and unity in Christ.

II. Core Value: We Reflect The Reality of Heaven

- **Slide: Core Value Statement**
 - Belief in heaven as a place of beautiful diversity, where our differences reflect God's design.
 - Importance of this core value in the context of today's American church and national politics.
- **Addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**
 - Acknowledging diversity as a "trigger word" in today's discourse.
 - Exploring whether God is a God of DEI through Scripture.

III. Scriptural Foundation

- **Slide: Revelation 5:9-10**
 - Reading and interpretation of the passage, highlighting the diversity of heaven.
- **Personal Testimony**
 - Sharing personal history with Tab, emphasizing its significance in the journey towards diversity.
 - Reflecting on the merger between Urban Community Church and Tab, and the challenges faced in creating a diverse congregation.

IV. Theological Reflection on Diversity

- **The Challenge of Diversity in the Church**
 - The reality of losses experienced by both African American and white families due to cultural differences.
 - Grieving these losses while acknowledging the monolithic nature of many congregations.
- **Biblical Diversity in Tab's History**
 - Acknowledging past efforts by leaders like Pastor Garrick, Rich Hardison, and Kenny Bryant to promote diversity.
 - Honoring individuals like Tawana Love, Micah, Dr. Daphne Lenox, Dr. Kurnia, and Lian Foe for their contributions to Tab's diversity.

V. Overcoming Cultural Barriers

- **Slide: Colossians 3:10-13**
 - Reading and explanation of how our oneness in Christ transcends cultural differences.
- **Cultural Preferences vs. Biblical Unity**
 - Discussing how cultural preferences can hinder unity and how Christ's sacrifice unites us.
- **Paul's Instructions to Titus**
 - Slide: Titus 1:12-14

- Addressing cultural abuses and the need for correction within the church.
- Slide: Quote by Dr. Tony Evans
 - Emphasizing that cultural expressions are only valuable when aligned with Scripture.

VI. Practical Application

- Slide: Ephesians 2:12-16
 - Highlighting how Christ has broken down cultural barriers, creating unity in His body.
- Examples of Unity in Diversity
 - Story of Pastor Craig's experience in Chad, illustrating the power of God's unity across cultures.
 - Reflecting on the unity between Jews and Palestinians in Christ, despite deep cultural divisions.

VII. Call to Action

- Slide: Colossians 3:12-15
 - Encouraging the congregation to embody the virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, and love.
- Practical Steps to Reflect Heaven's Reality
 - Slide: Practical Steps
 - Embrace and practice diversity by overlooking personal preferences.
 - Place God's command for oneness above cultural norms.
 - Love your neighbor regardless of background, seeking practical fellowship.
 - Engage in diverse worship experiences.
 - Seek training and service opportunities, such as those offered by GSF Campus Ministry.
 - Acknowledge and repent of personal prejudices, seeking transformation in Christ.

VIII. Conclusion

- Summary
 - Reiterate the importance of reflecting the reality of heaven by embracing diversity and unity in Christ.
- Closing Prayer
 - Ask for God's guidance in helping the congregation to live out these values, becoming a true reflection of heaven on earth.