

## Merge

6 of 7 "Signs for the Summer" Rev. Michael J. Mattil

A large construction project is taking place next to a convent. One of the nuns is concerned because of all the foul language being used by the construction workers, but she doesn't know what to do. She prays for guidance, and then it hits her – she decides that if she goes over to the job site during their lunch break and sits and visits with the workers, her presence might be enough to get them to clean up their act. The next morning she prepares herself a lunch and puts it in a brown paper sack. At lunch time, she takes the bag and walks over to where a group of workers are sitting and eating. She smiles and says "Hello!" They look at her and say "Hi" but nothing more. She's not sure what to say next, so she says, "Do you know Jesus?" The workers look at each other, shrug their shoulders, then one of them shouts up to a guy on the building, "Do any of you guys know Jesus?" One of them hollers back, "Who wants to know?" The worker on the ground shouts, "I don't know. Some lady down here has his lunch!"

We live in a world where more and more people, including people with whom we interact every day, do not know Jesus. We need to be aware of this and think about what this means for our living as followers of Jesus. For the last few months I've been encouraging you to think about this under our theme "**Signs for the Summer.**" Jesus said His followers should notice the signs around them and I have been urging you to do the same using common road signs as visual reminders of how you should live as followers of Jesus Christ. I'm not going to go over all the signs we've already looked at, but go right into the sign for today which is **MERGE**. I think you understand what it means to merge: traffic from two different roads come together onto one road. Sometimes it is two highways coming together. Sometimes it is an entrance ramp where cars must enter the main highway. It has to do with joining together. We don't always do it well. **Sometimes** we feel like the sign on the bottom right. But we have to know how to merge when we drive.

"Merge" is a term used in the corporate world as well. Sometimes two companies merge together as a mutual agreement. Sometimes it is a hostile takeover. But mergers are a common occurrence.

- A number of years ago there was a proposed merger between Fairchild Electronics and Honeywell Computers. Rumor had it that the new company would be called **Fairwell Honeychild.**

- There is a merger in the works involving Polygram Records, Warner Brothers, and Keebler. It will be called **Poly-Warner-Cracker**.
- There has long been a rumor that W.R. Grace Co. was going to buy the Fuller Brush Co. and Mary Kay Cosmetics and then merge with the Hale Business Systems. This would result in the new megacorporation **Hale Mary Fuller Grace**.
- Knott's Berry Farm and National Organization of Women: **Knott NOW**

Maybe we should get back to the Merge sign and what that has to do with our lives as followers of Jesus. When you are driving, there are times when you have to merge, like it or not. In the corporate world, there are mergers, like it or not. And in your lives, there are times when you will have to merge, like it or not.

Merge situations in your lives are relationships, work surroundings, neighborhoods and families to name a few. One such merger would be is marriage. (**Cartoon with cars merging into one**) – This is what is supposed to happen in marriage: two lives become one, two become one flesh and live according to God's institution. **More than just the two lives are merged**. To some extent it involves parents and siblings, all the "in-laws." Sometimes the mergers involve more because the spouses have children from previous relationships, and that can make it more challenging. From the perspective of parents, you have to adjust to new people merging in when your son or daughter brings home that special someone who will marry into your family. It is something we all go through.

Sometimes we have the opposite of mergers. Sometimes people go **their separate ways**.

- Divorce, with the pain and anger and bitterness.
- When family members move out of the house, like kids setting out on their own.
- When a death occurs.

We tend to favor merging rather than separating, but they are both realities in our lives. That is true not just in families, but in other groups, including congregations. Our congregation is to be our family of faith. Living as followers of Jesus, we want to be His loving and obedient children because we know what He has accomplished for us through His death and resurrection. **We need to work together to spread the message.**

Jesus told us our job as disciples is to make more disciples.

**Matthew 28:19** *Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

God wants more people to be His children who have His name placed on them through the washing that is Holy Baptism. He wants them merged into His family of faith. For that to happen, we have to work together as a family.

**Matthew 18:19** *“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth **agree** about anything you ask for, it will be **done** for you by my Father in heaven.*

What happens when we agree? God gets the job **DONE**.

**1 Corinthians 1:10** *I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no **divisions** among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.*

What happens when we agree? There are no **DIVISIONS**. When we are united in our mind and thought and mission, more people will be brought into the family.

**Philippians 4:2** *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to **agree** with each other in the Lord.*

Two women of faith, whom we are told in the next verse worked with Paul in the cause of the Gospel, now find themselves at odds with each other. What happens when we disagree? The work **STOPS**. Think about families you know. When someone does not welcome a new person into the family, what happens to the family? It becomes dysfunctional. It splinters. People stop getting together, much less working together. We cannot afford to have that happen to us in our family of faith. That is why Paul urges them to be reconciled to each other, so that they can get back to the ministry of sharing the Good News of Jesus as Savior.

We find ourselves in situations where we must **MERGE** together in this life. We are the ones who have been **RECONCILED to God** by the death of Jesus Christ. As those who have been bought back from sin and washed in the blood of Christ, those who have the certainty of forgiveness and eternal life for Jesus' sake, those who believe that the death of Jesus paid for all sin and who have claimed that payment in faith, we need to be about our Father's business.

You and I know that Jesus not only **offered His perfect life** on that instrument of torture to save us from our sins. We know that He also rose again on the third day to assure us that we will also rise and live with Him. That is our confidence as those who have been merged into the family of faith.

There is an old hymn that speaks about merging and separating and how those things have an impact on our lives. This hymn was sung in the worship service I attended the Sunday after my father died. It reminds us of the bond of faith we have with other believers, and the confidence we have for Jesus' sake.

***Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above.***

***Before our Father's throne We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, Our comforts and our cares.***

***We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear,  
And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.***

***When here our pathways part, We suffer bitter pain;  
Yet, one in Christ and one in heart, We hope to meet again.***

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We have been brought together by the Holy Spirit, led to faith in Jesus as our hope. That same Holy Spirit wants to use you to merge still others into this family, those who will share with us being one in Christ and one in heart who have the certain hope of meeting again.