Rocking the boat

Max Lucado wrote this sermon. He was encouraging people to understand biblical unity. I think we need to understand this more today than ever.

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God has enlisted us in his navy and placed us on his ship. The boat has one purpose, to carry us safely to the other shore. This is no cruise ship; it is a battleship. We are not called to a life of leisure; we are called to a life of service. Each of us has a different task. Some, concerned with those who are drowning, are snatching people from the water. Others are occupied with the enemy, so they man the cannons of prayer and worship. Still others devote themselves to the crew, feeding and training the crew members.

Though different, we are the same. Each can tell of a personal encounter with the captain, for each has received a personal call. He found us among the shanties of the seaport and invited us to follow Him. Our faith was born at the sight of His fondness, and so we went.

We each followed him across the gangplank of His grace onto the same boat.

There is one captain and one destination. Though the battle is fierce, the boat is safe, for our captain is God. The ship will not sink. For that, there is no concern.

There is concern, however, regarding the disharmony of the crew. When we first boarded we assumed the crew was made up of others like us. But as we have wandered these decks, we have encountered curious converts with curious appearances. Some wear uniforms we have never seen, sporting styles we have never witnessed. ?Why do you look the way you do?? we ask them.

?Funny? they reply. ?We were about to ask you same of you,? The variety of dress is not nearly as disturbing as the plethora of opinions. There is a group for example, who clusters every morning for serious study. They promote rigid discipline and somber expressions. ?Serving the captain is serious business,? they explain. It is no coincidence that they tend to congregate around the stern. There is another regiment deeply devoted to prayer. Not only do they believe in prayer; they believe in prayer by kneeling. For that reason you always know where to locate them; they are at the bow of the ship.

And then there are a few who staunchly believe real wine should be used in the Lord's Supper. You'll find them on the port side. Still another group positioned themselves near the engine. They spend hours examining the nuts and bolts of the boat. They have been known to go below deck and not come up for days. They are occasionally criticized by those who linger on the top deck, feeling the wind in their hair and the sun on their face. ?It is not what you learn,? those topside argue. ?It is what you feel that matters.?

And, oh, how we tend to cluster.

Some think once you are on the boat, you can't get off. Others say you would be foolish to go overboard, but the choice is yours. Some believe you volunteer for service; others believe you were destined for the service before the ship was even built. Some predict a storm of great tribulation will strike before we dock; others say it won't hit until we are safely ashore. There are those who speak to the captain in a personal language. There are those who think such languages are extinct. There are those who think the officers should wear robes, there are those who think there should be no officers at all, and there are those who think we are all officers and should all wear robes.

And, oh, how we tend to cluster.

And then there is the issue of the weekly meeting at which the captain is thanked and His words are read. All agree on its importance, but few agree on its nature. Some want it loud, others quiet. Some want ritual, others spontaneity. Some want to

celebrate so they can meditate; others meditate so they can celebrate. Some want a meeting for those who have gone overboard. Others want to reach those overboard but without going overboard and neglecting those on board.

And, oh, how we tend to cluster.

The consequence is a rocky boat. There is trouble on deck. Fights have broken out. Sailors have refused to speak to each other. There have even been times when one group refused to acknowledge the presence of others on the ship. Most tragically, some adrift at sea have chosen not to board the boat because of the quarrelling of the sailors.

?What do we do?? we would like to ask the captain. ?How can there be harmony on the ship?? We don't have to go far to find the answer.

On the last night of His life, Jesus knowing the end is near, prays one final time for His followers (John 17:20-22). He prayed not for their success, their safety or their happiness. He prayed for their unity. He prayed that they would love each other.

My passion is that as we see Jesus and the Father as one, we also as the church will be one. As we are in Him, He is in us; going forth with one mind and one heart to see His kingdom come.

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