

A Body of Believers

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[0 : 00] Joyful noise. He is our living hope, isn't He?

And I do, whether I get that song right or not. I believe it, and I praise God for it. And I hope you do as well. And this morning, if you have your Bibles, I want you to get it out and turn to Psalms.

Psalms chapter 133. Psalms 133. And the verses, we're going to look at a couple different places. We're going to be in Psalms, and then we're going to be primarily in the book of James.

But they really talk about what's kind of been our theme this morning, and the kids' corner that Madison had to share, the body. And when we say the body, I'm not talking about our physical body, but the Bible gives us that analogy.

Because we understand, to a degree, we understand our physical bodies, right? We understand at least the ways that they're supposed to work. We open our eyes.

[1 : 07] What are they supposed to do? See. We focus on our ears. What are they supposed to do? Hear. You put something in your mouth. What are your taste buds supposed to do?

Taste, right? We understand the way our bodies are supposed to function. And when they're not functioning correct, we kind of know it, don't we? Don't we?

And God's Word, He talks about the church being the body of Christ. And that means there is a way that it is supposed to function. Well, let's read in Psalms.

And I'm going to ask if you found it, if you'd stand this morning as we read. Psalms 133. We're going to share the entire chapter. All three verses.

Psalms 133. Let's pray together.

[2 : 28] Lord God, we just thank You for this morning. We thank You for Your Word. We just thank You for Your goodness, Your grace, Your faithfulness, Your patience. Just all the things that You give us and show towards us, we thank You for those things.

And we thank You this morning that You have given us Your Word. As a guide. As a map. But also, Lord, as a challenge. That when we read it and find areas in our lives that need to change or areas we need to improve in, that it brings that to light.

And Lord, I pray that Your Word does that this morning too. That it exposes the areas we need to work on. And I pray, Lord, that we would have the willingness to allow You to work in our lives and to mold and shape us into what You want us to be.

To mold and to shape this church into what You want us to be. So just work in our hearts and in our lives and in our church body. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. You can be seated this morning. I like the way this chapter starts. Because it starts with just one simple word. Behold!

[3 : 38] What does that mean? Pay attention. What else? Wake up. Listen.

Listen. All those things kind of accurately describe what behold means, right? And I think as someone that has created something, behold!

Look at this. In other words, look at what's there. And that's how this chapter starts. Behold.

Understand what I'm saying. And look at what He says next. And it's really what this whole chapter, all three verses are about, is really the first verse.

Behold! Behold! How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. And really, verses 2 and 3, they just explain how good it is.

And they use analogies and use things that maybe are a little difficult for us to understand. But the last part of verse 3 we should understand. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

[4 : 39] Is life forevermore a good thing? Eternal life? Yes! We realize how good that is, right? And He's saying that's also what it's like. How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together

in unity.

And it's really talking about a group of people. And we all understand that whenever you get a group of people together, they all get along and it's such a blessing.

Right? You get groups of people together and just everybody gets along with each other. And then you have to make decisions in a group.

Everybody agrees. And things just are smooth. Right? Right? Okay, okay. So maybe that's not accurate.

But you get together a group of church people. And then everything is good and everybody gets along and everybody's happy. And it's rainbows and sunshine when it's church people, right?

[5 : 44] That's not true either? Alright, we won't talk about church people. We'll be more specific. So you get believers, Christian people together. And then everybody gets along.

Scott says the problem is I'm saying the word people. People are involved. And that's where the wheel kind of falls off, isn't it? You know, we laugh about what I was just sharing. But we understand that's kind of the truth, isn't it?

Whenever you get a group of people together, it isn't natural that you just all get along and that there's unity. That does not happen naturally.

But can it happen? And should it happen? Yes. And that's as we look at Psalms, behold how good and how pleasant it is. It's talking about when the body, when this family, when this group of brethren, this group of believers, when they come together in unity, it's talking about how good that is.

And the reason it's so good is, you know what, is because it's also so rare, isn't it? Things that are rare are valuable, aren't they?

[6 : 53] You think of one of the most valuable things that we have used as a money system for years around the world for centuries is gold, right? And why is gold so valuable?

Not because it's pretty. There's a lot of pretty things. Why is gold so valuable? The bottom line, it's kind of rare.

That's the focus of it. You can't just go in your backyard and dig a hole and find a bunch of gold, can you? I know you can't in Paulding County. I'm not going to attest to where you live, but I don't think any area around here you can dig in your backyard and find gold.

It doesn't happen. That's what makes it valuable. It is rare. It doesn't always happen. It is not just everywhere. And folks, this dwelling together in unity is valuable because the honest truth is it's rare for a group of people to come together and there to be a sense of unity and peace and to have it be something good and pleasant.

That's rare. But you know what? That's also what God wants it to be. To be honest, that's the way it is supposed to be.

[8 : 10] You know, just like this body that they put together on the floor up here. When it is all working the way that it should, when all the parts are functioning and working, your body, when everything's working the way it should, how do you feel?

It's good, isn't it? You feel good. What about when it's not? Not so much. What's that?

Feels like a Tuesday. When our bodies aren't functioning right, we know it's not a pleasant feeling. Whatever is going wrong, it's not pleasant.

And folks, God's family, the body is the same way. When it's not functioning properly, it isn't good and it isn't pleasant. But when the pieces are all fitting together in God's family and there's that unity there, how good and how pleasant it is.

But again, as I shared, this does not just happen naturally. The natural thing is to get a bunch of people together and they don't get along.

[9 : 20] That's the natural thing. This person has this idea. This person has the other idea. They think they're right. They think they're right. I think I'm right, obviously. You think you're right, obviously. And what happens?

Not unity. That is the natural thing. But where God is involved, God is all about the miraculous, isn't He? And God is all about fitting things together the way that they are supposed to fit together.

But here's the thing. We play a part in that. I praise God. You know, I look at our church and here's a question. Are we a perfect church? Everybody say no. And you know why we're not perfect?

Perfect. Because you're here. I don't mean that as an insult. It kind of sounded that way, didn't it?

But also, it's not a perfect church because I'm here.

And as Scott said, we're people. We have our faults. We have our shortcomings. So we are not a perfect church. But I look at our church and I praise God for it. Because of the unity that we do have here.

[10:23] I praise God because when I talk to people that have come, and especially ones that are fairly new that have started coming recently, you know what I hear? I hear people say, I just feel very welcome.

I come in and I just feel a sense of love. I come in and I have people talk to me and I feel like I belong. Folks, praise God. That is the way it is supposed to work.

That is the good and pleasant dwelling together in unity that there's a love there. That there's a coming in and knowing that you're welcome, that you're loved, that you're cared about.

Folks, that is the way it is supposed to be. But here there is a danger, and we talked about this a little bit on Wednesday night. It doesn't happen naturally. And once you get to the point where it's present, do you know what can happen?

It can go away too. Do you understand that? How does it go away? How does that happen? The devil, actually, yeah, obviously the devil wants it to go away.

[11:26] But how does it happen? Selfishness? What else? Complacency? It goes away when we all stop making it a priority.

You see, every one of us has a hand in that. Whenever you see somebody that walks through the doors, you make a choice. Am I going to go up and speak with them? Or am I just going to go on my way and go have a seat?

We all play a part in that. And we have to understand that every person that comes through those doors is valuable, aren't they? That is not the message you will hear from the world today, is it? That every person is valuable. We go through life in a lot of ways. You see the message that all life isn't valuable. We see that all the time. But folks, we have to understand as believers that in God's eyes, everybody that walks through that door back there is valuable.

And we need to have that same attitude. I want you to look now in James. We're going to be in James for a little bit and maybe for a few Sundays. I don't know. But look in the book of James, chapter 2.

[12:34] James, chapter 2. And I'm going to share a few verses starting in the first verse. So listen to what James shares. And I like the book of James because the book of James is a practical book, isn't it?

I mean, a lot of the Bible, it's all valuable. Don't get me wrong. But a lot of it is more theological. But James is really where the rubber meets the road. What our actions should be like.

James, chapter 2, beginning in the first verse, it shares this. My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. What is respect of persons?

It's how you view other people. That's what respect of persons is. How you look at others. For if there comes to your assembly a man with a gold ring and goodly apparel, and there comes in also a poor man in vile raiment, and you have respect to him that wears a nice clothing, and say to him, sit you here in a good place, and say to the poor, stand you there, or sit here under my footstool.

All right, so what is the situation the Bible and the book of James just laid out? Talking about people coming through the doors, right? Coming into the assembly, into the family.

[14:03] What's the problem here? Favoritism. Judgment. Judgment. Respect.

You know, the issue is two people in this example come through the doors. Are they treated the same? Are they valued the same as they walk through the door? They should be.

But in this story, it's highlighting a problem. If two people come in and one person, it goes back to the gold. They have a gold ring on. And they're dressed really nice.

And what is the response to the person that's dressed really nice? Oh, come on. Here, you just sit right here in the second row. That is a prime spot.

Best spot in the house. I would love you just to sit there. And then another person comes in. How does it describe them? Look how it describes them.

[15:03] The end of verse 2. Another comes in. Okay, they're poor. What are they wearing? It says vile raiment.

I mean, that puts a lot of things in our mind. But not good clothing. Whatever picture you want in your mind. Dirty, smelly. I don't know. Whatever picture you want. Obviously, much different than the fine man here and the gold apparel.

The gold ring and all that. And so, this second person comes in and you're like, You know, this spot. I'd kind of rather have you sit back there.

All right. Maybe over in the corner. Clear. Yeah. Maybe slide the chair clear into the corner. All right. Is that a problem?

Yeah. Why? At the heart of it. What is that problem? Because I'm no better than him. Yeah. We have looked at them and we've assigned different values to those two people.

[16:06] The man that looks great. He must be important. You know, I need to be careful how I speak with him. I want a connection with him. This other guy, eh. He's just taking up space.

In reality, he could be more of a Christian. In reality, he could be more of a Christian. You're absolutely right. We are judging upon what we see and we're assigning different values to people on things that don't make any difference.

And in James, it's saying that we need to be careful about that. Look at verse 4, the next verse. If you do that, are you not then partial in yourselves and are become judges of...

What does that next part say? Evil what? Thoughts. And that to me is kind of the important part that I really got to thinking about. It's not just our actions, but it's also our thoughts.

Yes. Even if I don't tell Scott to sit up here in a prime spot and put Nate back in the corner, even if I don't physically treat them different, what if I'm thinking about them different?

[17:10] What if I'm thinking, I need to make sure I talk to this guy after church because I want him to come back. You know, he'll probably put more in the offering every Sunday. This guy over here, I doubt he's going to put anything in.

So I need to talk to this guy because I really want him to keep coming. Even if I don't actively sit them in different places and I still say hi to both of them, but in my mind I've given him more value than Scott, than Nate, what does the Bible say about that?

It says it's wrong. And it's talking about evil thoughts. That's having respect of persons, assigning more value to one than another because of what you may get from one of them.

Do you think that's pleasing to God? Look on. Verse 5. Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?

But you have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called? If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well.

[18:32] But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin and are convicted of the law as transgressors.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. So when we assign more value to one person than another, what does the Bible call that?

He calls it sin, doesn't it? And here's the thing. We sometimes think about sin and we think of other things. Well, I don't sin. Yeah, I stole this week.

I didn't lie to anybody this week. I didn't commit murder. You know, I didn't do any of that stuff. So I'm doing good. The Bible says if you're guilty of one sin, what does it say?

If you offend in one point, you're guilty of all. In other words, sin is sin, folks. If you're guilty, you're guilty. And it's saying that when we have respect to persons, when we assign different value to people, we're guilty of sin.

[19:38] And we can do this in so many ways. You know, I gave one example. You know, he might put more in the offering plate, so he's more important. Is that sinful thinking? Yes. We can think in other ways, even in a church body.

Well, Scott's got a beautiful voice, and he could maybe come up and do a special. I'm making all this up. You might have a beautiful voice.

I don't know. Scott, he's got a beautiful voice. He's a really talented guy. He's a great public speaker. So we want him to stay in church because he's valuable. He can add a lot to this church. Nate, have you heard him sing? And I, you know, I don't know. I don't think he's probably going to offer much to the church. So I don't know if I really need to spend much time talking to him.

If that is the attitude, what is that? Sin. And again, it's the judging by what they can bring to the church. That isn't what God wants.

[20:43] It says that we should not have respect of persons. Each one is valuable because they are valuable to God. And I was making that up.

Nate's got a beautiful voice, by the way, and he works for youth and does all kinds of good things. But in our minds, we have to be careful that we don't put people in a box. That this person, we need to have more connection because somehow they're better than this other person.

Folks, that ruins unity in a church body, doesn't it? And again, we are not going to treat everybody through the doors the same way if we have that mentality. Everyone is valuable to God and therefore everyone needs to be valuable to us.

There's one other verse I want you to look at. Look in Romans chapter 2. I know our time is getting away, but look in Romans chapter 2. Romans chapter 2, beginning in verse 9.

Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile.

[22 : 00] But glory, honor, and peace to every man that works good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Now listen to verse 11. For there is no respect of persons with God.

What does that mean? Means God does not show respect of persons.

That means every one of us in God's eyes is equally valuable. We need to understand that. Every one of us in God's eyes is equally valuable.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? Every one of us that are here this morning, me, you, all of us, equal importance in God's eyes. And God looks on us. We judge by all kinds of standards, whether it's looks, finances, money, social standing, jobs.

We judge people by a lot of different things. God judges people by one thing. Look down in verse 16 of Romans chapter 2. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

[23 : 15] When God looks on people, do you know the one standard He judges them by? Jesus Christ. Whether they have Jesus Christ in their heart or not. That is the standard.

And when we look at people, we need to start looking at people through that lens, with that aspect. Looking at people and just thinking in our minds, not judging, but I wonder if they know Jesus.

That is how we should look at people. Not worried about how they dress, what job they have, how much money they do or don't have, what kind of car they drive, where they live, what they live in.

Who cares about any of that?

That's all temporary. Whether they look good, whether they're attractive, whether they're not, guess what? That's temporary too, isn't it? Some of you are good looking.

Some of us are not so much, but you know what? None of it's going to last anyway, is it? Is it?

You're going to get wrinkly. Your hair is going to either fall out or get gray, isn't it?

[24 : 17] My kids tease me all the time that my hair is getting more and more gray, and I tell them it's a silly lighting in here. It happens, but we lose all those things that are not important to begin with.

The thing that's important is, does someone know Jesus? And when people walk through those doors, that should be the question in our mind. Not who are they, what do they offer, any of those kind of things, but I wonder if they know Jesus.

And talk with them. Share with them. Because you love them and want to make sure they know Jesus. Folks, this family that God is creating here, I believe it's a strong family, and I believe God wants it to remain strong.

It will not happen by accident. It will happen if we continue to focus on the things that are important. Pleasing God. And that means looking through His eyes, not our own.

Looking at people based on, do they know Jesus or not? Not based on anything else. Folks, that's the challenge. And I pray it does challenge us. When people walk through the doors, you know, sometimes I'll have people ask me, who is so-and-so that sat, you know, in the middle in that one row?

[25 : 28] So, I'm always nice, but you know what I want to say? Ask them. If you don't know them, go ask what their name is. And here's the other thing I get. This is just some practical things.

Well, I met them twice, and I still don't remember their name. Yeah, welcome to the club. You know my advice to you?

Go up and say, I apologize. I'm terrible with names. I don't remember your name, but I really want to remember it. So, what was your name again? And then don't be offended if somebody asks you that.

Be honest. Be open. Get to know people. That's how the family is strengthened. And just share that love with each other. How good and how pleasant it is for brethren, for a family to dwell together in unity.

Folks, I believe that's what we have here, but I believe it's also what God wants to continue here. And can it get better? Always. Always. But we are a part of that.

[26 : 33] Let's pray. Lord God, thank you again for this day that you've given us. I thank you for the family that you have brought here, this body of believers. And Lord, we are by no means perfect.

We have our faults. But Lord, I pray that you would help us in this area that we've looked at this morning, that we would not have respect of persons, that everybody that walks through these doors, that we would look at as valuable, as precious, in your eyes and therefore in ours.

And help us to look at people just with the thought, with the standard that you look at people. Do they know Jesus? And Lord, I pray that it is our desire that if they don't, that we would share that with them, that they would come into this place, your house, and that they would feel your love coming through us.

Help us to be the family that you want us to be. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning as we close, the altar is open.

We are not a perfect family. When you have something wrong with your body, after you Google it and find out what's wrong and something's actually wrong, what do you do? You go to the doctor, right?

[27 : 44] When we find something wrong in our lives, we need to bring it to God, the one who can fix it. Now here's the thing. Here's the thing. Can doctors always fix you?

No. Can God always fix your heart? Yes. Folks, if you have a need this morning, the altar's open. Come and talk to the ultimate physician. Come and talk to God about it this morning.

Close this morning. I want to continue to issue you a challenge. This morning, if you see anybody here you don't know, go ask who they are. There's your challenge, all right? So I hope to see people running all over, grabbing somebody and saying, who are you?

We're a family. And praise God for the family that he's brought here. And make sure this morning, at least, on the way out, you tell somebody you're glad they're a part of your family.

Let's bow our heads as we close in prayer. Lord God, thank you again for your word. I thank you for the family that you've brought together here. And I just pray that you continue to mold us and shape us into the family that you want us to be, that shares your love with others, and most importantly, shares the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ with everybody that comes through these doors.

[28 : 52] Thank you, Lord. Thank you for all your blessings. And it's in the name of Jesus we do pray. And all God's family said, Amen. God bless you. Have a good week. Thank you.