

The Church - The Body of Christ

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[0:00] 1 Corinthians 11, always a familiar passage used at this time. Verse 29 tells us, It shows how the church has a special place in the heart of God, that it is called the body of Christ, as it reads later in 1 Corinthians 12, 27.

Now ye are, plural ye, you are the body of Christ, and members in particular, each one. Different members, parts, components of the body of Christ, that you collectively are.

It's saying that every one of us has this special place as we make up, as we form the body of Christ in our particular functions and callings and places of service.

What's more, it's saying that we are specially linked together. There's a special linking together in that special unity. And we recognise that at this time, as the body gathers to remember the body of our Lord and the blood.

Romans 12, alike to 1 Corinthians 12, which both speak of the gifts of the body. 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. Romans 12 from verse 4 says, For we, as we have many members in one body, you know, we have many parts to our one body, and all members of not the same office, all the different parts of our body have a different function, so we, the church being many, are one body, one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

[2:12] You can't have a part of your body that isn't part of your body. We are members, each one, one another, and we're joined together by God to form one special people.

People can ask, what is the church, and why does it matter? People have different ideas about what a church is, what it ought to be, and why does it matter? Why should I bother about church? You know, I mean, it's been truly said, I can be a Christian and not go to church. Well, technically, technically, but you are the church, and each one of us are the church, and the gathering together of his people is the church, the assembling.

It's an assembling, not a building. It's wherever we assemble, wherever we get together. It's the getting together that matters. And God says the church is the body of Christ.

It's special. It's important. The church is God's design. It ought to be by God's design, that it's framed, that it's fashioned. His plan, he has eternally purposed it, to be this one vehicle, under his sovereign government, to deliver his one essential message, to this world that desperately needs to hear it, from his own dear called out people, for his glory.

[3:32] That's the church. And the word church means called out ones. It means we've been called out. Get out of it. Escape that burning building. Called out. And called together.

That's the church, the ecclesia, the called out. He has called us out, and he's joined us together as one force, one army of God, meant to be as united as an army would be united.

The gates of hell shall not prevail, against the church that he is building. And it will be ultimately triumphant, into eternity, into eternity.

God has put us together, you, me, every one of us here, that identifies as his church, he's brought us together. Of course, when a church assembles, we know there might be some, that are not saved people, in that gathering.

But certainly, the saved in the gathering, are the assembly of God. The assembled people of God. And, like components of a body, we make up the one.

[4:36] The one whole. We all have different parts to play. You know, the eye, the ear, the mouth, all have a different function, likewise in the body. All of his people, have a different role, something for all of us to do.

We are Christ's body, in the world. What an amazing, illustration it is, the body, of the functionality, of a body, that likewise, the church is meant to be such.

And every one of us is different, yet, all important. All important. One is not less important, than another. The one who might be, looked on as, inferior, or lacking, is not.

Amen. And we need to get a hold of that. It's like, you might think, oh, my, my, my, big toe's not that important.

But, if you lose your big toe, you find that you can't walk as well. You find that even, just those little things, things that are, less thought of, are likewise important.

[5:44] Even some of your internal organs, that even, some people have thought, oh, you can do without this or that. Just get them to remove it. And, you suffer afterwards, when, God's put it there for a reason.

And likewise, God's put you here, in his body. Wherever it be, whether, he might identify with another church normally, another church gathering. But, nevertheless, he's, he's made you part of his church.

His church. And, find your place in the body. Some treat church, as if it's a kind of drop in, incense it. A social club, that you've just got a casual connection with.

And, the least thing, they, and, they will, the least thing that annoys people, they'll up and leave, because, oh, the pastor's trot on my toes this, this, week, you know, he said something in his, sermon, or, oh, the person who sat next to me, looked at me funny.

They call it, you know, and that puts them off the church. They never come back. You know, so please don't look at anyone funny this morning. We don't want anyone put off this church. But, you know, this can happen, can't it?

[6:50] The least little thing, oh, you sat in my seat. Oh, and they think, oh, whatever it be, people can be obnoxious. Christians, can be just as bad, as the world, can't they?

With their bad attitudes, and it can put people off a church. But, it's sad in a way that the least thing can get someone upset that they often storm off in a huff, and they want to go and join some other Christian club down the road that they can loosely associate with, and then, till the next thing happens, and they're off again.

And some will say to me, I have left the church. What? You've left the church? How can you leave the church? I mean, really, I'm not talking about this particular church, but of course, if you're a saved man, a saved woman, you cannot leave the church.

You cannot. It's like, would Jesus amputate you, such that you could leave the church, you leave his body? We cannot leave this church, as in his church, as in God's church, the assembly of saved people, you cannot leave it, because you're eternally joined together.

In the early days of the church, there was only one church in each city, so you just had to learn to get along with each other. There wasn't any up and leaving and picking and choosing.

[8:10] It's like, oh, you know, I don't like how they run that church, I'll go to the other church, and they can pick and choose like it's a smorgasbord out there. But God does not amputate parts of his body.

We are eternally saved and secure. Well, you cannot leave this church, as in God's church. You cannot. You can't leave the church. You're eternally connected to it.

And we are interconnected as well, just as a body has that interplay of the different parts. And that's what God's design is for his church, that God wants us to be a strong and healthy body, with every part working well and jointly together.

And we read in the Bible, it tells of diversities of gifts, of different abilities and different places to serve and opportunities. Yet a perfect unity, a oneness, we're united in Christ.

And he is the head. You know, please, I know some people have got this little habit of saying, when I walk in, oh, the boss is here. No, sir.

[9:14] I'm the chief servant. Please, don't. I'm down here. I'm the one who picks up the rubbish, and just makes the place look nice. And just, I'm your servant.

I'm the chief servant. He is the boss. Please don't call me the boss. I know it's a kind of little, it's almost a quaint and a kind of polite thing to say, but I'm not.

He is the head. And I've said this many times before too, that he is the senior pastor. He is the chief shepherd. He is the great shepherd. He is the senior pastor.

I'm a nobody. But he's given me something to do. And I'm doing what it's my duty to do. That's all I am. I'm a nobody. A dog's body. But in the early church, we see the church, the head of the church is, not the Pope in Rome, not some big knob archbishop that's the headquarters.

No. Christ is the head of the church. And we've got to get that right, that Christ is the head. There was a preacher who told of a holiday Bible class where his wife had an experience with the primary class that she says she will never forget.

[10:31] Her class was interrupted on this Wednesday in the school holidays when they had their program. About an hour before the dismissal time, a new student was brought in. A new student. A little boy he was.

A little boy. He had one arm missing. And since the class was almost over, she had no opportunity to learn about him and she was nervous to think, oh, he might feel a little bit different, fitting in, and maybe some of the kids might tease him or make fun or embarrass him about his handicap.

And there was no opportunity to caution there. So she was very careful about how she went about things. And it seemed like everything was going really well and the class was coming to a close.

And she asked the class to join in her usual closing ceremony.

I don't know if any of you have done this. I remember doing it when I was a kid. Let's make our churches. Here's the church. Here's the steeple. Open the doors.

And here's the people. It's a good one, isn't it? Got that? Here's the church. Here's the steeple.

Open the doors. And here's the people. She thought, oh, that's what we normally do as our closing ceremony.

[11:39] But then the awful truth struck her that the thing that she had feared that the other children would do, making this little child without the arm feel uncomfortable, she was now doing herself.

And she stood there speechless. The little girl sat next to the boy, reached over with her left hand, and she placed it up to his right hand and said, Davey, let's make the church together.

Let's make the church together. What a picture. What a picture of how the church is meant to function together with that real oneness in Christ. Let's make the church together.

Amen? Sometimes churches these days can be more focused on being more and more hip, you know, being more and more needs-oriented, responding to the buttons that people push in their pews.

You know, it's like, it's almost like, it's a bit of a game show, and the preacher performs, and you hold up, oh, I'll give him a, let's see, I'll give him a seven, seven today, oh no, no, he's, no, he's not so good today.

[12:48] Two, he's no good. You know, it's like you, it's like you come to church to kind of vote on the preacher. How, how good is he? Well, how good is them? Like, it's all about the needs of others.

And one preacher put it, I'm not even sure I want all my needs met as much as I want to meet God. To meet God. You know, sometimes it's not about having a meeting, it's a meeting with God.

It's meeting with God. And sometimes the sermon and the singing and everything else is kind of incidental to, I'm here to meet with God, to meet my maker. And sometimes this preacher goes on, I wonder if, with all these things that's going on, this, this noise of our clamoring for things, it's a bit like my dog.

He can't seem to get anywhere because he keeps having to stop and scratch his fleas. You know, you get a dog like that and they just so, oh, just got to, their leg goes funny and they, they just stop and itch.

And it's like we, sometimes in churches they're like that. That the preacher is so busy that, they're busy scratching where everybody itches.

[14:01] And, and they've forgotten what the whole point is, to please God, not to please people. And we're meant to be a strong, a healthy body with a steady, scriptural stand, with a united purpose, functioning as a strong, spirit-empowered people with our absolute aim being to give glory to God, to bring him glory, to extend his kingdom on earth, discerning the Lord's body.

He is the head of the church, which is his body. And the head of the body, it gives direction, it gives vision, it gives focus, it, it sets the actions, it gives the purpose, it, is the, the part, that, is, in control, the head of the body.

And that's what God wants for us, as, as we rightly discern the Lord's body, we discern that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. No man, no Pope, in Rome, no man, over a denomination, or woman, these days, it's no head that is a human.

Christ is the head of the church. He is the head of the body. And, how can we rightly discern the Lord's body? It's been said, where does the church's power come from?

Our power doesn't come from relevance, it comes from revelation. Our power does not come from entertainment, it comes from edification. Our power does not come from structures, it comes from scripture.

[15:31] Our power does not come from programs, it comes from prayer. Our power does not come from cash, it comes from cleansing, and consecration. The church's power.

He is the head of the church, and we need one another. Are we rightly discerning the Lord's body? Think of it, that we are interconnected with one another.

That right knowledge, that we are meant to be a functioning body, that we've all got a part to play. There's strength in the one another. We can strengthen one another.

We can comfort one another. We can encourage one another. Edify one another. Recognise one another as fellow brothers and sisters, from different cultures and countries, and colours and persuasions, and backgrounds.

He's brought us together. He's made us one family. And we all play our part in our different ways. Some people are less recognised, but they are just, just as important.

[16:31] There's a story called, Who Packs Your Parachute? There was a US naval graduate, who was a jet fighter pilot, in Vietnam. He flew 75 combat missions.

One day his plane was destroyed, by a surface to air missile. And Plum, the man Plum, is his name, was ejected, and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured, and he spent six years, in a communist prison.

He survived the ordeal, and now he lectures on, the lessons he's learnt, from that experience. And one day, when Plum and his wife, were sitting at a restaurant, a man at another table came up, and said, You're Plum.

You flew jet fighters, in Vietnam, from the aircraft carrier, Kitty Hawk. You were shot down. How in the world, did you know that? asked Plum. I packed your parachute, the man replied.

Plum gasped, in surprise and gratitude. He didn't even know the man, and he pumped his hand, and he said, I guess it worked. And Plum assured, it sure did.

[17:36] If your chute, hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today. Plum couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plum says, I kept wondering, what he might have looked like, in a navy uniform, with his cap, and his bell bottom trousers, and his uniform on.

I wonder how many times, I would have seen him, on the Kitty Hawk. I would have passed him by. I wonder how many times, I would have seen him, and not even said, Good morning. How are you? Or anything. Because you see, I was a fighter pilot, and he was just a sailor.

Plum thought, what of the many long hours, that that sailor, had spent in the bowels, of the ship, on some long wooden table, as he carefully weaved the shrouds, and folded the silks, of each parachute, holding in his hands, each time, the fate of someone, he didn't know.

Now Plum asks his audience, who's packing your parachute? Everyone who provides, what they need, to make it through the day. And it's like that, in a church isn't it?

That it's sometimes, those unrecognised things, and I know there's some, who serve in humble ways, in this church. You know, just helping with the catering, or the cleaner, all the little things, that go about, people putting the signs out, still looking for someone, to bring the signs in Sunday night.

[18:54] Because it's me at the moment. But there's lots of little jobs, to do isn't there? Lots of little jobs, here and there to do, that oh it just happens. It just happens, you just take it for granted.

Everyone plays, an important role, in the church. 1 Corinthians 12, 27, now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular, were called to have, a brotherly care and concern, for one another.

Verse 25 of 1 Corinthians 12, that there should be, no schism in the body, no kind of tearing apart, no division, that the members, should have the same care, one for another.

God wants us to be, such a church, strong and effective, a healthy body. Someone has said this, of the body of Christ, think of it again, we're talking about, rightly discerning, the Lord's body this morning.

A healthy body. Now someone has, pictured it with these words. The part that we play, we are the body, of Christ.

[19:58] Christ has no hands, but our hands, to do his work today. He has no feet, but our feet, to lead men in his way.

He has no tongue, but our tongues, to tell men, how he died. He has no help, but our help, to bring them, by his side. We are the only Bible, the careless world, will read.

We are the sinner's gospel, we are the scoffer's creed, we are the Lord's last message, given in deed and word. What if the type is crooked? What if the print, is blurred?

What if our hands, are busy, with other things, than his? What if our feet, are walking, where sin's allurements is? What if our tongues, are speaking of things, his life would spurn?

How can we hope, to help him, and welcome, his return? Amen. Christ has no hands, but our hands. Of course we know, our God is not helpless, he's not dependent, on human means, yet he chooses humans.

[21:03] He chooses human vessels, he chooses human tongues, to speak his message. He chooses your lives, to make an impact.

And we're called to a oneness, to that body, to be the body. Let's rightly discern, the Lord's body this morning. The Lord's body, where is it?

It was in the tomb, but when they looked, they said, he is not here, he is risen. And then, as he, appeared, in numbers of times, they saw him, and then they saw him taken up, into heaven.

And, and the observers there, were with the disciples. As the body was lifted up, and he was taken up, and the cloud received him, out of their sides.

And while they looked, steadfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them, in white apparel. And they said, you men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up, into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up, from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as you have seen, and go, into heaven.

[22:18] He's gone, but he's coming again. But for the meantime, the Bible says, you are, collectively you, you, are the body, of Christ. We've got a job to do, to be his body, on the earth, to be his hands, his feet, his tongue, reaching, touching lives, and that we are one another, members of one another.

Let's rightly discern, the Lord's body. It's important, we're told here, to rightly discern, the Lord's body. We think of that body, beaten, bruised, nailed, pierced, shredded, mangled, his face, more marred than any man, more gruesome, more graphic, than Hollywood can paint, a picture of, for you, for me.

He bled, he died, he rose, and he's coming again. For those who will trust him, for those who will know him, to know him today, is so critical. Please, I urge you today, if you do not know him, you can know him, in an eye blink, in a moment, of faith, in a moment, of trust, in a moment, of turning from your way, to turning upon, and trusting in, his entire grace, and saving power, for you, at the cross, as the substitute, as the, one in your place, trust him now, and, and, he's told us here, to remember his death, until he come.

And that's why we'd like,