

Xplore - The Body Beautiful

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Date: 25 July 2004

Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 25th of July 2004. The preacher is Steve Brown.

His sermon is entitled, Explore the Body Beautiful. It is based on 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 12 to 31.

We're talking about the body of Christ and the church and stuff like that and how to be a body. So I reckon we need to actually come together a little bit more to actually reflect that.

So about the people behind Bill and Esther, try to come forward a little bit more and sort of squash in. So we're actually physically doing this a bit, you know, what the Bible passage is on about tonight.

That'd be great. Thanks. Well, not to the right to the right. That's better. That's good.

[1 : 08] Well, Mel and I had a great time on holidays for the last three weeks. It was fantastic. Me tongue was cold, but it was relaxing. That was good. Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast were warm and sunny, 21, 22, 23 degrees every day.

It's perfect. And I enjoyed watching the weather reports every day and thinking of you all down here. Although I'm a bit cold right now. One thing I did notice while I was on holidays, though, was how patriotic Australians have become.

While I was on holidays in Me tongue and Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, I noticed lots of flags. Aussie flags everywhere on top of pubs, surf clubs, bowls clubs, even churches.

People even were flying flags in their front yards a lot on their own personal flag poles. And I reckon that we've become proud or more proud to be Australians late.

Maybe it's a result of September 11 or the Bali bombings. Maybe terrorism has caused us to huddle together a bit more, challenged what our identity is a bit.

[2 : 12] The other night I was watching a tour to France and there was 900,000 people on the final mountain of the stage I was watching. 900,000. It's almost a million people lined up on top of this mountain as the riders went up.

20 deep. It was amazing. There seemed to be more Aussie flags waving in the crowds than any other nation. It was amazing. We definitely have become more patriotic.

I must say I like it a lot, actually. I never used to be patriotic. I thought it was a bit silly. But I've become patriotic as I've grown older. As I've travelled around Australia, as I've read history about Australia, as I've seen the land, I've become proud to be an Aussie.

And I suppose I now consider myself a patriot. Proud to be Aussie, true blue, dinky dye. And I'd probably fly my own flag too if I had my own flagpole. But I don't.

Maybe the church could fix that up for me. I even like that cheesy Aussie, let's hold hands sort of sing along. You know how it goes. For we are one, but we are many.

[3 : 17] And from all the lands on earth we come, from all the lands on earth we come, we share a dream and we sing with one voice. Join in. I am. You are. We are Australian.

Isn't that lovely? Patriotism brings Aussies together. Patriotism creates a sense of unity. Patriotism builds up a feeling in us that we're part of something bigger than just ourselves.

And if you're a patriot then you'll feel like you belong. You're an Aussie. My question tonight is this. Are you a patriot? Not of Australia. Not an Aussie patriot. But are you a patriot of the church?

Do you have the same fervour for the church? Do you have more fervour and more patriotism for the church? Do you experience a sense of unity when you come to church? Do you feel like you're a part of something bigger than yourself when you come to church?

Do you feel like you belong? Are you proud to be a part of God's church? Are you proud to be a part of this church here at Holy Trinity Doncaster? Last month Tim spoke to us from the first part of this

chapter in 1 Corinthians.

[4 : 23] And it was all about spiritual gifts. And Tim told us what spiritual gifts were. First he said that spiritual gifts were particularly Christian in nature. Second he said that they were for the building up of the church.

For the benefit of others. Not necessarily for the benefit of ourselves. Although they can be. And ultimately will be. And he also encouraged us to go away and think about what might be our spiritual gifts.

So as I was on holidays I thought about it. And I've come up with a couple of spiritual gifts that I believe that God has given me. And the first one is evangelism. I think one of my gifts is evangelism. I find it relatively easy to strike up conversation about Jesus with people that I'm sort of just having a chat with.

Sometimes it's hard. But sometimes most of the time I find it relatively easy to do that. So God's given me a gift to do that. And I enjoy that. Another gift that God's given me is teaching. Sometimes I really don't like teaching.

Because I'm not an academic. But God has sent me to Ridley College to learn about his word. And therefore he's given me the gift to teach that and spread that. And give that to others.

[5 : 29] And God wants me to do that. So that's another gift that God's given me. But I'm also currently asking God to give me the gift of prophecy. Because I reckon that preaching, my preaching, needs to change a bit.

It needs to be more prophetic in nature. And what I mean by that is that it needs to actually be challenging God's people now, today, immediately.

That's what I mean by prophetic. So that's what I reckon my gifts are and that's what I'm asking for. And I hope that God gives me those gifts. That gift of prophecy. And maybe you can tell me whether he has or not after the sermon. You might say to me, well that's really nice for you, Stephen.

That you know what your gifts are. That's okay for you. But you're a leader. And you need to know what your gifts are. Because after all, this church pays you money to work here. That's why you know what your gifts are.

And I thought about that too. I think I know my gifts and I try to exercise them. Not because I'm a special leader. Because I'm not. But because I'm patriotic. I'm a patriot of God's church.

[6 : 29] I'm patriotic for God's kingdom. I exercise my gifts because I enjoy coming together in church and helping other people. I exercise my gifts because I experience a sense of unity.

And that I belong to something bigger than just myself when I come to church. That I belong to something important. I'm a part of this church. So are you patriotic for the church? Because patriots realise that they're part of a group.

Patriots work hard to benefit that group. I was talking to Amelia before tonight. She said, well, patriots actually die for the group. And I thought, that's a great observation.

They die for the group. True patriots. See, patriots realise that they're a part of something bigger than themselves. And they need to get involved. I wonder, do you realise that you're a part of something bigger than yourself when you come to church?

Look at verse 12 there in the Bible. That you have there. Page 933. If you haven't got it open, grab it. I'll give you a couple of seconds. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 12.

[7 : 36] 1 Corinthians 12, verse 12. It says this. You see, if you've been baptised by the Spirit of God, you're not alone.

If you've drunk the Spirit of God, it says there, then you're not alone. You belong with others to Christ. You belong with others to his body. To be a spiritual person is to realise that you're baptised with others into one body.

To be a spiritual person is to realise, partly, that you've drunk together from the same source, the Spirit of God, with other people. The fact is, if you're a Christian here tonight, you've been baptised into the Holy Spirit.

And you've drunk down the Holy Spirit. He indwells you, personally. You're a part of something bigger than yourself. Because the Spirit's job is to draw people together, isn't it? That's what the Spirit does.

Through the Gospel, he draws people together. Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, male and female, young and old. Whether you're from Dandenong or Turak, whether you're a doctor or a labourer. We become one in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

[8 : 56] We're one unit, one group. Now, they're politically astute here tonight. We'll say, or maybe they're thinking, isn't that communism? Isn't that communism?

My grandparents are Polish and they came to Australia after World War II. And when they talk about the war and then they talk about Poland, my grandfather always says to me, usually after a few vodkas, he says, Stephen, we Polish have no hope.

On one side we have the German and on the other side we have the Russian. Something like that. No hope, he says. As you know, before World War II, Poland had been a free and independent country for only 20 years.

They got their independence and freedom after World War I when Germany was beaten the first time. And they had been under German rule before that for 150 years. So, Polish people like my grandfather and grandmother remember German occupation for 150 years before World War I and they experienced German occupation and terror during World War II.

So, Germans aren't high on their list of most favourite people or nation. You understand? They like Germans. But, as a general rule, they're not high on the list.

[10 : 16] And I think that goes for any Pole. But after World War II, or during World War II, when the Germans were being driven out of Poland, many Polish left Poland. They gave up. Because they knew that something worse was coming.

They knew that something much worse was coming. They knew that the Russian forces that were driving the Germans back weren't actually liberators. They knew that they were going to be subjugated again and this time under communism and that was going to be much, much worse. They knew that they wouldn't be individuals anymore under communism. They'd have no rights as an individual. Their lives were worth nothing in a communist system. All that mattered in communism was the group, was the whole.

And the individual that didn't cooperate was exterminated. Christianity has often been accused of being communist because it calls us to be one body. One. It calls us to, well, some people think it calls us to not be individuals anymore.

Listen to the way Paul balances it out here in verse 14. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member, but many. If the foot would say, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

[11 : 22] And if the ear would say, because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God arranged, that is, God arranged, the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

Nowhere. As it is, there are many members, yet one body. You see, the church is one, but many. Lots of individuals. The body of Christ is one body, but it's got many members, different parts.

The kingdom of God is one, but it's got many subjects that do different activities. That's why you are important to this church. That's why you, as an individual, are so important to this church.

If you think that you're not that important, then you'll say things like, well, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body, or because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body. You see, if you think you're not important, then you'll say things like, well, because I don't play an instrument, I don't feel like I belong to this church.

[12 : 30] Because I don't get up the front and do the Bible reading and prayers, I don't feel like I'm a part of this church. Or because I don't have the particular gifts that Holy Trinity values, then I don't belong to this church.

Or because I'm not a preacher or a teacher, I don't belong, I don't feel like I belong to this church. If you think you're not important, then you'll say things like that. But you do belong. You do belong. Because the body is made up of individuals. And these individuals are important because they are different. They're different. And the one thing this church needs, more than anything else, is different people.

We have lots of teachers. We have lots of preachers. We have enough, I think, Bible study leaders, although some more would be nice. What we need here at Holy Trinity is people with gifts of healing.

We don't have many of them. We need people with gifts of prophecy. We need people with gifts of helping other people. We need people with gifts of encouragement and hospitality. We need people

with the ability to perform miracles, as the passage says.

[13:28] We need people with the ability to organise social outreach programs to bring people to know Jesus. We need people with the ability to handle finances and do administration, but also give guidance.

We need people with the ability to listen when people are struggling with life. The point is, you're important because you are unique and the rest of us need you. You're important because you have particular gifts and abilities that I don't.

You see, I can get up here and preach, but I can't play the guitar. I can't sing. I can't speak in tongues. I don't have gift of healing. I'm not a great administrator, as my wife will tell you.

You see, without you, I'm lost and we all lose something. And God has deliberately done this. It's the great thing about it. God has deliberately done it.

He's deliberately arranged it this way so that we're dependent on one another. Verse 18. As it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them. That's you. He has arranged you as he chose.

[14:29] If all were a single member, where would the body be? You see, it's God who's given you particular gifts and abilities and even your personality. God gave that to you. It's God who's brought you into his church and it's God who's actually brought you here to Holy Trinity Doncaster.

It's not you. You're here because God chose you to be here. He arranged it that way. I think we don't recognise that fact often enough. We don't. And when we don't recognise the fact that God has arranged it, then we run the risk of thinking that we don't belong.

We run the risk of saying that we're not a part of the body. When someone leaves the church for no apparent reason, as has happened many times during my three and a half years here, usually it's because they just don't understand that it's God that's arranged their place here.

That's why moving away from a church ought to be a huge issue, a hard issue. God has arranged members of the body, not us. So we've got to be very careful when we want to rearrange it.

The message so far is fairly simple. Be a patriot of God's church. We're a part of something bigger than ourselves. We need to get involved. But we're also individually important to the church.

[15:39] Don't lose our identity. You have a role to play. You are important. I need you. Each of us here is here because God has arranged it. Verse 20 is lovely, I think.

It just sums it up nicely. As it is, there are many members that one body. But I realise also that there are some people here who might understand all that, but they still feel like they don't belong.

They still feel a bit estranged from the church. You see, they want to belong. They want to feel patriotic about the church they attend. They want to be a vital part of something bigger than themselves.

They want to get involved and use their gifts and abilities, but they feel like they never get the chance. They feel like they never get an opportunity, that they don't get noticed, that they never get respected by others when they do little things around here.

Little, but important. They don't get the respect. And they don't feel cared for. And I want to say to those people that that is a legitimate way to feel. It's okay to feel that way.

[16:38] Because Paul the Apostle realises that people in the Corinthian church that he's writing to here felt that way too. And he knew why they felt that way. He knows the cause of the dysfunction and he tells us what the cause is.

Verse 21. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need for you. On the contrary, the members of the body that seem the weaker are indispensable. And those members of the body that we think less honourable, we clothe with greater honour.

And our less respectable members are treated with greater respect. Whereas, the more respectable members do not need this. That God has arranged, there again, God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member.

There may be no dissension within the body, that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it. If one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

So if God has arranged, as it says here, the body and all its members, then why do people still feel like they don't belong? It's because some of those more honoured members, I think, are saying things like, I have no need for you.

[17:49] I have no need for you. And I think that happens here at this church too, sadly. I think it happens at every church really. It happens here too. Fevzi was the worst footballer I've ever seen. He was, Fevzi was my best friend. We played at primary school and high school and all the boys in our class loved to play footy so that every lunchtime we went out and we did that. We used to play footy every lunchtime. Rain, hail or shine. But Fevzi was a little bit unco. Right? He was very unco. No matter how much we tried to teach Fevzi how to kick the footy and how to hand pass, he just didn't get it. All he could do was just pick the ball up and run until he got tackled and pinged for holding the ball. Right? And that's all he could do. I remember the way we used to select the teams as well. We used to pick two captains and then they would come out at the front and then take turns at selecting kids. And Fevzi was always selected last, wasn't he? Holi was his best mate. I really felt for him.

[18:51] So, whenever I was selected to be captain, I'd choose him first or second. You know? Look after him a bit. I'd tell Fevzi, you know, Fevz, just head in the goal square and do your best.

Alright? Just do your best. Whatever you can do. Occasionally, Fevzi was all alone, left alone. So no one thought he was a threat. No respect. He was left alone down in the goal square and we'd look up and there he was.

So we'd just kick the ball in the general direction and hope that he'd do something with it. And occasionally, he would actually pick it up and go and grub it through for a goal. It was fantastic and we would celebrate like nothing else.

It was unreal. Fevzi's goals were the most celebrated goals because he was the least likely to kick one. Isn't that sort of the thing? Well, isn't that sort of the way things are supposed to be in the church?

Isn't that sort of the thing that Paul is saying here in this passage and in these metaphors? If one member suffers, all suffer together with it. I suffered when he got picked last and he felt bad.

[19:51] If one member is honoured when he kicked the goal occasionally, all rejoiced with him, we all rejoice with it. I also remember though later on as we grew up and we'd play footy at high school and when we grew up and went to high school Fevzi still couldn't kick the ball or handball, he was still hopeless but he changed.

He was like this. He was a tank and he would hip and shoulder like a battering ram. He loved it and he would tackle like a maniac. He loved just splitting packs open and seeing the consequences. And I loved it because I'd just follow him around and I'd pick up all the easy crumbs you see. It was great. He was the one percenter man in the team. He did all the little things, all the tough things that helped the team to win.

And you know what? He was honoured most amongst us. He was the guy we all wanted on the team when we played against other schools. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

You see, the weaker are indispensable that says in the passage because they give us immense joy when they do something good and the weaker often do something fantastic that none of us can do.

[21:01] It's too tough for us. The less honourable we clothe and protect more because we don't want them to be exposed to ridicule. The less respected we give more respect to because they often do all the hard work, don't they?

But the main reason we do these things is because God himself has done it. It says here, but God has arranged the body giving greater honour to the inferior member.

You see, God honours the inferior member and he's given us an example of how to do that ourselves and how to follow that example. The example is in the way he treats his own son.

Jesus seemed weak as he was getting nailed to the cross. But God raised him from the dead and the weakness of Jesus became the power of God to conquer sin. That's why the weak are indispensable.

Jesus was exposed to ridicule, not honour, as he died naked before the crowd. God raised him from the dead and clothed him with honour as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and he sat down at God's right hand.

[22:02] That's why we need to clothe those who have less honour because God did it to his own son. Jesus got no respect as he took the sins of the world upon himself and no one else could do it. He got no respect.

But God raised him from the dead and he demands that every creature all of creation will one day bow down and give him the respect that he deserves. That's why we need to respect those who have less respect amongst us because God does it.

It's God's character and God's nature to do that. God honours his son in order to bring peace to bring peace to his world and likewise we need to bring peace through honouring the inferior members it says.

Those who are weaker those who don't get as much respect. Tonight here's a couple of questions to finish off with and you can think about them. Tonight are you patriotic for God's church? Are you using your gifts and your abilities even your personalities for God's church for building up of it? Have a think about that. Or are you saying well because I'm not a I don't feel like I belong.

[23 : 09] Remember this church needs different people with various gifts and abilities and personalities. This church needs you desperately. Or maybe if you do get honour here and you're not one of the weak ones and you get respect are you saying I have no need for you to those who are weaker.

If you say that or if you do it in the way you act remember the way God treated his son. Remember you have a responsibility to bring peace to the body of Christ and that goes for me too.

So how about we pray to our heads. Lord God we are sorry that we often let you down in this respect and we don't care for one another enough and we're sorry that often your church is split.

Tonight Lord we pray that you would help us to be patriotic for you that is to be excited about being a part of your church. Help us to be like that. Help us to use our gifts and our abilities and our personalities to enrich other people's lives.

Lord help us not to say because I'm not such and such or I'm not good at this or that I don't feel like I belong. Lord I pray for people who feel like that that you would encourage them and let them know how special they are and let them know especially that you've arranged their lives and given them those abilities and gifts and that you have brought them here to use them.

[24 : 36] Finally Lord I pray for those who are strong that sometimes they say I have no need for the weaker. I pray Lord that you'd forgive people like that including myself.

Help us to remember that you treated your son with honour and respect and you raised him up to strength and Lord help us understand the responsibility that we have as strong people in your church for the weaker.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.