

Sunday 8th February 2026 - One Body, One Church: We Are One Body

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Preacher: Dave Moss

[0:00] Well, good morning. It's just so good to see you all and for us to be together. I count Sunday mornings as one of the real privileges of my week.

! We're here as God's people in this place. Hallelujah. We are beginning a new series this morning called One Body, One Church.

We were supposed to be looking at our values, but, you know, all the best laid plans and all that, well, we're not. Okay? The blockbuster movie is not ready for release. Okay?

So what we've got this morning is the prequel, yeah, for the next few weeks. One Body, One Church, which I think will be a good thing.

We're hoping this prequel will be a good preparation for us so we really will be ready for the blockbuster when it comes.

[1:05] So this morning we're exploring what it means to be one body. We are one body. I think we realise that we're all different. Especially you, Sean.

This is the part of the beauty of when we all gather together, as we are this morning. So you might have been expecting the vicar this morning, or the curate, or the retired member of the clergy, or that clever university lecturer, or that nice librarian lady, or indeed someone else of importance. Well, I'm sorry. All you've got this morning is the appendix. Okay? The appendix, that part of the body nobody knows what to do with.

The appendix, that little added on afterthought. And that's me. Just call me Dave, the appendix. Okay. I don't know how you were brought up, but I was brought up in a tight-knit farming community and family in Mid-Cheshire.

[2:17] There were very clear rules and expectations of what it meant to belong. Firstly, you had to live on a farm.

Preferably with lots of cows, tractors, and green fields. And milk is the most important food on the planet. To succeed in life, you needed to work hard on the farm so it could thrive.

And as a son, I would work in the shadow of my father. And when I was older, my task was to find a nice farmer's girl to marry.

So when this time came, we could run the farm together with our happy little family. This community worked exceptionally well and prospered according to the rules.

And it still does to this very day. I can take you to visit my relatives and show you how this still works well. People from the town, townies, are obviously suspect.

[3:29] As they are not part of our group. Townies obviously don't understand what it means to work hard like we do. They have all this leisure time and are not to be relied upon.

It was somehow cleverly overlooked that the townies were in fact the consumers of milk. And without them, our little community would be nothing. Imagine the consternation when I announced that I didn't want to be a farmer, but go to university to study languages.

I mean, what are languages anyway? That is not work. My parents, nonetheless, despite criticism from family and friends, allowed me to go.

In the belief that one day I would see sense and return to the farm. Imagine the consternation and concern that when, later on in life, I introduced them to my now wife, Jan.

A woman from the town! Who was she? What were her family like? Did she go to the WI? My father was quite convinced that she came from back-to-back housing in the centre of Birmingham.

[4:55] The exact opposite of those green fields. She actually comes from the black country and has nothing to do with Birmingham at all. Was she accepted?

Could she be included? Well, you'll have to ask her about her experiences. But the short answer is yes. I don't know what your experiences of life are and whether you belong or have belonged to a particular social setting.

Or perhaps you're an outsider who feels they do not belong. Schools usually start us off on this path in life, deciding who will be successful and who won't.

But it runs throughout our society. We belong to different groups or sports clubs or social clubs. We know where we belong and where we feel comfortable.

And we tend to look down on those who are outside our group. We keep at a distance those who don't think the way we do.

[6:05] We become wary of those who don't live life the way we do. And we see other people's actions and beliefs as peculiar.

Or are odds with the way we think things should be. Neuroscience is the study of how our brains work.

Neuroscience enables us to have a better understanding of what makes us tick.

And neuroscience now makes very clear that humans deeply love predictability and fear all unpredictability.

I'm going to repeat that. Neuroscience now makes very clear that humans deeply love predictability and fear all unpredictability.

[7:06] This encourages us to make all kinds of absolute affirmations. Especially about things we fear or we're not sure of. Our anxieties make us cling to what we know.

That makes us feel safe. We cling to what is predictable and we shut out anything we're afraid of.

So we stay within our little group and stick closely to those we feel comfortable with.

Our familiar circle of family or friends. St. Paul, when writing to the church in Corinth, makes it clear that when we become followers of Jesus, we all belong together, we all belong together.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all of its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

For we were all baptized by one spirit, so as to form one body. Whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, we were all given one spirit to drink.

[8:18] Even so, the body is not made up of one part, but of many. Now, many of us will be familiar with this passage, and we see it quite rightly that we all have been accepted into God's family, and so therefore, we all belong together.

We understand that we're not all the same, and we have different parts to play. And this brings us together just as if we were one body. The body of the church with Jesus as our head, as it says elsewhere in the Bible.

We discover that there is a place for the appendix after all. St. Paul, this time, is writing to the Ephesians, and he picks up on the same theme.

There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. This provides enormous encouragement. Note the emphasis on one here. As followers of Jesus, we are one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

[9:45] When we follow Jesus, we become part of that oneness. The oneness who is also God in all his fullness.

No one is left out, not even the appendix. Now, if the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, stop being part of the body.

And St. Paul goes on to explain how each part of the body is vital for the good of the whole body. As it were, there are many parts but one body.

The body needs all the different parts to function well. So far, so good. But I think there's a tendency to oversimplify this.

People often just see it in the local context, only applying to the people in their church. Well, God has given us everyone and everything we need here, you know.

[10:49] But of course, we are just a part of the body of believers worldwide. It includes the people of faith who loved and cared for me when I was part of a church in France.

It includes the people of faith who loved and cared for me when I was part of a church in Wales. I have been privileged to hear people pray and worship and read their Bible in German, in French and in Welsh.

This body of believers is far more complex, far more diverse than we can ever conceive or imagine. It includes so many, many different people.

Those nice people from the church in the next town. Those friendly people in Africa. Those people in prison for their faith. And those people who worship quietly and in secret for fear of persecution in so many countries.

As it is, there are many parts but one body. But, St. Paul goes on to explain, If one part suffers, then all other parts share its suffering.

[12:23] Last week, I spoke to some people in church, here seated, and I asked them how they were. Well, fine, they said.

But we've just heard the news about Matt going back into hospital. And it really hit us hard. I'm sure many of us feel like that.

When one part hurts, a number of us hurt as well. And yet we keep going. And often it's not easy. We struggle. But that is why this image of the body is so powerful.

The body functions best when it is well. But when it doesn't, and part of it is in pain, we do our best to look after it. So we can recover.

Again, this is more reasonably straightforward in the local context to which we belong. But we're much harder when it comes to the wider context of the body of Christ worldwide.

[13:26] I think it's easy enough to think of us all belonging to a happy, healthy body. We're all just having a great time together. But when one part suffers, this takes on new meaning.

It becomes a walk of faith which we take together, hand in hand. Or should I say hand with foot on knees, smelling and listening and encouraging voice.

Oh, and don't forget to look after the appendix. St. Paul, again, goes on to say that we're to build each other up. So that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith.

And in the knowledge of the Son of God. And become mature. Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. What do you see God is doing right now?

Wherever there is genuine love and reconciliation. That is where God's presence occurs between people. That is where the body lives and breathes.

[14:35] But then St. Paul adds to this. Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves. And blown here and there by every wind of teaching. And by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Hold on a minute. People in their deceitful scheming. What's meant by this? And St. Paul goes on to talk about people who darkened their understanding.

And separated themselves from the life of God. Because of ignorance and the hardening of their hearts. Ignorance. Hardening of hearts. What on earth is he talking about?

Doesn't everyone belong? Anyone watch this? Right.

It's one of the most popular TV programs at the moment. The Traitors. It's just finished, hasn't it? The participants belong to one of two groups. The majority are faithful.

[15:38] And a select few are traitors. The aim is to discover the identity of the traitors. And eliminate them before they eliminate you. The drama revolves around the fact that the viewer knows who the traitors are.

But the faithful people do not. I don't know what your experience of life is or has been. And I hope you've not had these experiences.

But unfortunately, I think many of you probably have. This is the situation where you have someone you trust. Someone you like. Someone you see as faithful.

And then in the end, they turn out to be not that person after all. You feel betrayed and let down. And this can happen in any situation in life.

And unfortunately, it can happen in church too. This has happened to me a number of times. And it's not at all pleasant. It really hurts emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

[16:42] And you end up broken. And we're back to the neuroscience. People desperately cling to certainty.

And to what they hold dear. They're afraid of change. And so when the living and breathing body of believers moves and grows and matures, they strike out.

They put the brakes on. And they fear the unknown. They see that belonging to the body requires change. And in the end, they cease to be a part of that living body.

St. Paul, and indeed Jesus, has a lot to say about people who put themselves outside the body. Who remove themselves from God's kingdom. St. Paul is calling them deceitful schemers, ignorant, and with hardened hearts.

It's not polite. It's not light touch. It's not, oh, they didn't mean it, language. And if you read the Gospels, you find that Jesus has even harsher words to give.

[17:52] There are people, unfortunately, who end up damaging and hurting. You see, this lovely image of the body of the followers of Jesus is not the complete picture.

It's easy to pick out verses which only present a positive light. Well, one happy collection of people acting as one body and all is great.

Yet the image of the broken body is perhaps the most central image of the Christian faith. The week before last, our home group, we looked at the person of Judas who betrayed Jesus.

The person leading the study was just brilliant. She took us far beyond the rather inadequate Bible study notes and got us to focus on the complex character of Judas.

One who had been so faithful yet ended up being a traitor. When Jesus sits down at the Last Supper to share some of the most profound teachings of what it means to belong and to follow God, he sits down with a motley crew of people who wouldn't normally be seen together.

[19:09] We see a Jesus who knew so well who was about to betray him, and yet all share the same meal of bread and wine. We very often focus on Jesus' blood shed for us, and perhaps less often on Jesus' body broken for us.

The image of a broken, suffering body very soon became a reality as Jesus was condemned and nailed to a cross. The faithful ran away in fear because the turn of events was not in the plan that was in their minds.

But it is through this broken body that we experience God's all-embracing love most clearly. This body is not fixed and never changing.

This is my body broken for you. The very words of Jesus which we hear every time we gather as a body of people at the communion rail.

This body which is just like ours, human flesh and blood, is broken. Yet we belong together in all our different parts, but we come to a Jesus who is himself betrayed and broken.

[20:30] It is in that very brokenness that we find forgiveness and restoration and belonging. Sonia came to the front last week and so movingly shared with others, amidst an array of tissues, what it means to belong to the body of believers.

She reminded us that often we do feel broken and we are expected to be just fine. Yet it is that smile, that encouraging remark, an uplifting song, the laughter of a child, a feeling of peace and contentment that makes you realize you belong.

When we come into Matt's house, as Sonia's son calls it, we feel the warmth, the beauty, the fragrance and the good in people.

You never know who God will bring through that door, to this insignificant backwater, down an unremarkable street to a pretty ordinary building.

Again, I was talking to someone else this week, who shared how somebody came in this church just to light a candle. Others will tell you how people come to this place to find help or sanctuary.

[22:05] And for some young people, this is the only safe place they know. We come to a place we belong to be a part of the body.

We come to Matt's house. We come to be with each other. I don't know if you've seen the many snowdrops in the car park here, and crocus and so on, that beautiful at the moment, and now it's stopped raining, you can go and have a look.

If you look through the window, you may not have seen the abundance of catkins around the side here, and I simply marveled at them this week.

And despite all the rain and the cold, there are just that simple reminder that when all is dark and gloomy, when all seems broken, when you don't feel you are playing your part, you do indeed belong, because just like nature itself, somewhere there is beauty and growth and life itself.

But the broken body is not the end, because Jesus, after his resurrection, shows his very body to the gathering of believers once again.

[23:28] It's still a broken body that bears scars and wounds and nails prints from the cross, but it is a transformed body, a new body ready for eternal life.

It's a body at one with God himself. It's a body at one with God himself. One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

It is a body at one, oneness, which encompasses all of God's love. And that is who we are.

Many parts, one body. Some parts hurting. Some parts bewildered and lost. Some parts smiling and welcoming. Some parts beautiful.

And some parts not on top form. But we are one in Christ. We are called to part of that body, that oneness, no matter what state we're in.

[24:34] I'm so glad there is room for an appendix like me. I'm so glad that I belong here.

I'm going to play you a song now. And I've used it recently. But I think it fits the context. And the video shows a broken boy, angry at the recent loss of his mother, and shows the struggles that follow.

Thank you. In my weakness, in my trouble, He won't let go If I lose my weight, Lord, I pray lead me home In the darkness, when it's hardest, You are my hope In my highs and lows, cause You're okay On His shoulders, cause You're okay

On His love When I'm lonely, console me, ignite my fear In these broken days, fix my ways with Your grace When I'm searching, when I'm hurting, am I hiding place?

I trust in Your ways Cast Your kiss On His shoulders Or cast my cares Or cast my cares Or cast your cares On His guard The storms might come, but He'll never leave Take His word, He'll forever be Source of strength when we're running out of energy Place Your cares on His shoulders, the remedy He'll give you strength that is needed for every task I know He's on our side, and that's everything In the past, they just led us even through the dark And anything we need, we can ask, cause I know That You're with me You're near You're for me I know that You're listening I need I love I pray You're here

[27:43] And free And carry I know That You're with me You're near And You're for me And I leave And I trust And it's darkest And it's hardest And I'm lonely Console me When I'm searching And I'm hurting Oh I know That You're with me You're near You're near me You're for me You're on Oh I know Yeah So I'll cause my care I'm with you Castwork Yeah On His shoulders On His shoulders On His shoulders I'll cause my care I'll give you everything I'll give you everything I'll give you everything Because you can't believe Because your love Cause my care I'm with you I'm with you I'm with you I'm with you I'm with you I'm with you

I'm with you I'll cast my cast on his love.

Thank you, Dave. Shall we pray? Heavenly Father, we pray for Matt and his healing and recovery. We also pray for Gemma, Heidi and Bobby as they walk this journey with him. We ask that you give them a real sense of your presence in their lives.

Breathe your peace and your calm into the difficulties and challenges they may face now. Lord, we pray for ourselves, our health concerns, our anxieties, worries and fears.

[30:32] The things that are playing on our mind. We pray for our hopes and our plans for the future.

We ask, Lord, that you bring us your calm, your joy. Let us hear clearly your small, quiet voice in our lives.

Let us hear clearly your calm, quiet voice in our lives.

Help us to have an awareness that our words and actions can have lasting consequences on others.

and if one of us is hurting, we all hurt. Help us have sensitivity and empathy and help us, Lord, to know that there is a place in the body for every one of us and to recognise we all have something significant to offer and that together we are whole.

[32:13] Amen. We pray for our country and our leaders, Lord. We see scandals and controversy connecting them to questionable behaviour.

Give them integrity and honesty, a sense of awareness of the struggles of the people they are representing, a fair structure in society that provides for everyone, especially the most vulnerable. And Lord, we pray for our world. Heavenly Father, you have provided us with the most beautiful, resourceful place for us to live and thrive.

Encourage us all to be generous with wealth, to provide for those people who have nothing, to take greater responsibility for the care of the planet so no one goes hungry or lives without shelter and basic needs.

We pray for peace. We pray for peace. We ask that you prompt leaders to strive for reconciliation and ceasefires.

[33:34] Encourage diplomacy and communication. And understanding that it is in unity together that problems and disagreements can be resolved.

Shall we finish with the Lord's Prayer? Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen. Amen.