

A people who are united

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[0 : 00] Now, I don't know if when you were little you enjoyed playing with Lego. I was a bit of a Lego fan, and it's great at the minute with Angus. Angus is just getting into Lego, and for Christmas he got a great Lego set.

He got an Indiana Jones Lego set that had a plane, and it had a car, and we built them together just in between Christmas and New Year. However, Angus decided that what would be great were to take it all apart again, as you do as a five-year-old.

Now, the problem is, when we started to put it back together, there was a tiny piece, as we read the instructions, that we couldn't find. When you looked at the box to begin with, this tiny piece looked so insignificant that you thought, it can't be that important.

The wings, you knew were important. You knew those were the important bits. Don't lose the wing. But what it turned out was that the tiny piece that we couldn't find was one of the most important pieces to build the home plane back again.

It was tiny, but it was important. It was small in size, but absolutely vital. This is one of the things that I want us to consider this morning when we're talking about the church, because this is what Paul, the Apostle Paul, wants to get across about God's people.

[1 : 26] And he uses this amazing illustration of the human body to represent the importance of every person. Every member of the church is as important as the other.

Every member, whatever age, whatever background, whatever skill, ability, every single person is as important as the next in God's church.

It is every person has a vital role that can only be done by them. It is a different message to the world, or what we might tell ourselves. Because we might say, we might look at the church, or what other people do, and think, oh, I'm just not that important here.

I'm not gifted like that, or the person I can't really contribute. Or we might think about what our past is, and think, my past is too bad.

I must be the weak link in the chain. We don't really, maybe we don't value what we can do. The world says that what you can do, and the speed you can do it in, the efficiency, is where you get your value and worth.

[2 : 36] That we say, I'm, and from that, as we live, we make judgments on ourselves. Either I'm really important, or I'm really unimportant. I contribute a lot to society.

I contribute very little. People depend on me, or I depend on others. The church notices me, or the church wouldn't notice if I disappeared.

That is not how God tells his people to think about everyone in the church. Every person is vital, and every member is unique.

Only you can be your place in the church. You're not just a number in a system that can be replaced. Every member matters to God, and every member matters to God's people.

As we come to this letter, in a letter to the Corinthian church, one of the important things to remember about the Corinthian church, is that they were a church that was very, very gifted.

[3 : 41] Right at the beginning of the letter, in chapter one, Paul tells them, he tells them, you do not lack any spiritual gift. Imagine being told that you do not lack anything. You've got everything going for you.

You don't lack any spiritual gift, as you eagerly await for Jesus Christ to be revealed. However, there is a huge issue in the church.

The Corinthian church assumes that, because they're gifted, that they must be doing well. Because they're gifted, they make the fatal mistake of thinking that, gifting is a sign of spiritual health, both in an individual, but also in the health of the church, that gifting equals godliness.

Amongst many things, Paul wants to show them that this just isn't the way. In the chapter that comes after the one that we're reading today, the famous chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, you've probably most likely heard it read at a wedding, all about love.

The point of that chapter is to say that, you can be as gifted as you like, but if you don't know how to love someone, forget it. That it is pointless.

[4 : 57] You can have as many gifts as you like, but if you don't know how to love, then forget it. And so what we're going to be thinking about this morning is, what does this mean for us?

What does this mean for the church? If everybody is as important as one another? And where does this all come from? And that actually, God's people are not divided into gifted and non-gifted.

They are one body. One people that should be united. And we'll consider that this morning.

Thinking about it in three things. All God's people have the Holy Spirit.

All God's people have equal value. And all God's people are honoured. The world, as we've mentioned before, separates people into what they can do and what can't they do.

Do you know that when you go for a job interview, or if you've ever filled in a job application, there's this criteria that's listed, desirable and essential. And before you fill it in, as you're writing part of your CV, you cater it to what the job tells you to do.

[6 : 09] Now, of course that's right and important in paid employment, because they need to know that the person they're employing can do the job. But the issue is, is that because that way of thinking about it is so ingrained into society, that we can bring that into how we think about the church.

How we evaluate ourselves, how we evaluate one another, that there are people that are desirable, and there are people that are essential. But that's not how God sees it.

You see, there is not two tiers of Christians. There's one body, there's all believers. There's those who say that Jesus is Lord, have the Holy Spirit.

Everybody who says that Jesus is Lord, have the Holy Spirit. Just look with me in verse 3.

Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says Jesus be cursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

I take that to mean, that everybody who says that Jesus is Lord, has the Holy Spirit. Anyone who confesses, and who believes in their heart, confesses with their mouth, that Jesus is Lord, can only say that, believing it in their heart, if the Spirit of God lives in them.

[7 : 31] What that must mean is that that cannot be said and believed, and doesn't have the same resonance, if the Spirit of God is not there. It happens, at the moment someone decides to follow and put their trust in Jesus, that His death is for you in your place.

In that moment, when you believe in Jesus Christ and decide to follow Him, something astonishing, something otherworldly takes place.

The Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside, and gives new spiritual life, that didn't exist before. The point being made here, what I want to hone in on, is that that is true for every single follower of Jesus, who puts their trust in Him.

Like I mentioned, there isn't two types of Christian. There isn't some that have the Holy Spirit, and some that don't. There's not two categories of believers, some that are elevated higher than others. The Spirit of the living God comes to live, and directs the life of every Christian. It's really important. It's really important.

[8 : 45] Because, if every believer has the Spirit living and working in them, what we see in our passage this morning, it means that, every believer is actually gifted.

Every believer is gifted. To bless the church. To bless the rest of God's people. Every believer.

Now, I'm not going to go through the long list of gifts, that we see.

Just as a side point, I don't think that list is exhaustive. I think there's lots more gifts, that could be mentioned here. But the thing I want us to hone in on, to remember, is that the gift is something, that is given by God.

Verse 4, we read, but the same Spirit distributes them. The service, it's the same Lord, the working. In everyone, it's the same God.

Everyone has the Spirit of God, which is every follower of Jesus, every believer, is gifted, without exception, in a whole variety of ways. But the gifts come from God.

[9 : 50] They're not something we earned, or deserved. And if we were ever, and sometimes, don't get me wrong, we are tempted to, if we were very gifted, doing things, to look at ourselves and be

impressed, puffed up, that God has gifted us in certain ways, because if we were ever to think that there was something innately special about us, that we have these gifts, that the gifts, it's crucial to remember, these gifts were given.

They weren't earned. Verse 11, All these are the work of the one, and the same Spirit, and it is he who distributes them, just as he determines.

It is God who made the decision. Everyone is gifted, which they are. The question then, that I want us to leave, at this point, is, do you know that you're gifted by God?

Because if you are a follower of Jesus, you definitely have been. That is without question, he has distributed a gift to you. Do you know what it is? If you don't, if you don't, why not ask God to show you?

Or why not ask a friend to tell you? Or better still, why not go unprompted, to someone in your church, and encourage them, in how you know God has blessed them, to bless the church?

[11 : 21] Why not go and do that? Wouldn't it be such encouragement, if somebody came up to you and said, do you know, I really see that God has blessed you, with kindness, you're such a kind person, you have a gift of kindness.

Wouldn't that be an amazing thing, to be told by someone? Why not do that, in the church, and have, and you also have a, you, if you're the kind of person, that wants to do that, let me tell you, you have the gift of encouragement.

Think of how that might, bless one another. Think of how the church, would be built up, if that was the kind of way, that we live, just going around, encouraging one another, and showing each other, and building one another up.

Your gifts, that we are gifted, and that should be stewarded, for the common good, to bless people, to bless God's people, so that God is glorified, in the body of the church.

What is yours? And how might you use it? So that's the first point. All God's people have the Holy Spirit. Secondly, all God's people have equal value.

[12 : 30] There is not one part of the body, that is more important than any other, in a human body. There is not one member of the church, that is more important than any other. Verse 12, Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts, form one body, so it is with Christ.

The body of Christ, the church, God's redeemed people, are many, but put together, they form the church. And every part of the church is needed, like in a human body.

Verse 15, 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. If the ear should say, Because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, stop being part of the body.

Where would be the sense of smell, the sense of hearing? But verse 18, In fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

And we would know that experience, it's a brilliant illustration, a brilliant metaphor of the church. A human body is incomplete, if there is part missing.

[13 : 38] Every part of your body has a unique job, and it is the same with the church. Every person has a unique role, that can only be accomplished, or done by that person.

It can only actually be done, by you. Can't be done by anyone else. It is unique, there is a unique calling, on your life. It means, it actually means, what it really means, is that your life, your, actually has a purpose, a unique purpose.

It has a unique purpose, it can't be done, by anyone else, because we are individual, members of one body. One body, many parts. Every, it means that every part of the body, needs one another. It's what we see, in verse 21, only I cannot say to the hand, I don't need you, and the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. You know that with your own body. With a, with a healthy body, your mouth, needs your hands, to put food in your mouth, and your eyes, to see, where your plate, and your dinner is.

Every part of your physical body, needs every other part, to function, properly. And if it doesn't, your body doesn't function, as it should. If any of those parts, are out working, it makes it really difficult, to eat.

[14 : 58] Every member of the church, equal value, unique roles, purpose to play, you, have value. You're valued. And you're important. You're the only person, who can fulfill your role, in the church.

The church, the church, is a place, that fights, against the world's, values. Every, that every person's values, comes, from, what they can do.

The reason it does, that the world, the world values, placed on what you can do, but God values you, not because of what you can do, but because of who you are. Because, because the living God, has called you, not because of what you can do, but because, he's called you to belong to him.

Whatever you do, whether you're, like the, like the, like the Lego, whether you're the wing, or you're the tiny piece, that looks like nothing.

Whatever you do, it's because God has called you, and he delights in you. That's the same principle, for the church, that, that we want to be a church, that is like that, that follow the same principle, that, that you're valued, not because of what you can do, but because, Jesus loves you.

[16:16] Because Jesus died for you. Because Jesus died for each one of us. And because, he loves us, and he's called us in his image, he's made us in his image, and he's called us to be united to Christ, because he loves us, and has forgiven us, then the church, as his people, love, and care, and are kind, to one another.

You're important, you're valued, and a necessary cog, in the church wheel. From the oldest, to the youngest, whether you're up front, or crawling in the creche, you have a gift, and a role, to play.

And it means, as God's people, we never look down on anyone. We never look down on anyone, we're all in the same boat, and we need each other. And nobody's unimportant.

There's no little people, in God's kingdom. There's no one who is ignored, or forgotten, or discounted, because, we're all in the necessary part of the body, and play a different, and necessary role.

Third point. All God's people, are honoured. It's coming to that, we're coming towards the end of the year, and, it's that time of the year, when, you'll notice on the telly, it's the award season, where we honour, great things.

[17:32] That normally, normally starts around December, you normally get BBC, sports personality of the year, drifts all the way, through to January, February, got the Oscars, and then there's, there's awards for all sorts of things, isn't there?

Oscars, Brit Awards, the Nobel Prize, and business engineering, you name it. But on top of those, kind of, glamorous events, events, you've also got, events that judge things more locally, haven't you?

I know, that one of, that everyone here, will know, a fish and chip shop, that claims to do the best fish and chips, in Scotland. It's wherever you go, there's a fish and chip shop, that says, we do the best fish and chips, in Scotland, we've got an award for it.

There are awards for everything, whoever wins the award, gets recognition, for what they've achieved, they receive honour, because of what they've done, and in many ways, it's helpful, isn't it? It's good to do that, however, like I mentioned, the issue with living in a culture, that uses worldly honour, to make progress, is that we can imbibe, that worldly honour, is the most important thing, that matters, and to some, which the world, to people, which the world doesn't honour, this can be catastrophic, because what it says, is that what really matters, is being honourable, or working with honour, for what the world values.

It came to me, as I was thinking about this, just how devastating that can be, not so long ago, you might remember, the head teacher, whose school was deemed, below the standard required, the Ofsted said, down in England, in the eyes of the world, her work she put into the school, was deemed, not honourable, and the idea, of not being honoured, of not being valued, of not everything, she'd put into the school, was too much for her to cope with, and she took her own life, we've got to ask real questions, as a church, how do we ensure, that we go against, the grain of society, that only honours, productivity, achievement, and certain skill sets, certain gifting, you might say, well right here, Paul tells us, the church is different, verse 22, on the contrary, those parts of the body, that seem to be weaker, are indispensable, and the parts, that we think, are less honourable, we treat with special honour, and the parts, that are unrepresentable, are treated with special modesty, while our presentable, parts need no special treatment, but God has put the body together, giving greater honour, to the parts, that lacked it, those who, in the eyes of the world, not the eyes of God, but in the eyes of the world, are weak, who are less honourable, who the world says, don't matter, are not important, and can be forgotten,

[20:33] God says, they are indispensable, and to be treated, with special honour, special modesty, giving their honour, giving them the honour, that they lack, in the world, having a special concern, for them, and there are thousands, that this could be the case for, when you're grieving,

even if you're a young mum, and you've just, had a baby, if you're slightly older, and don't have the youthful, exuberance, of a 25 year old, if you're ill, and you're weak, that is okay, it is okay, to be in that position, to the world, anything which stops you, being able to pull your weight, can turn into a problem, of course, initially, you do get, there is sympathy, but it doesn't last, I overheard, two people talking recently, who worked, with another colleague, I think I was, on the bus, I overheard them talking, they were talking, about a colleague of theirs, who was, still off work, when is she going to come back, we've got, we've all got our, beeping problems, to deal with, the heart of Jesus mission, is the wounded, the neglected, the ignored, the abused, the lost, the grieving, the violated, he sees, and wants to honour them all, make special, you look in the gospels, make time, special attention, for women, who were at that time, second class citizens, for children, seen and not heard, for the beggars, the lepers, the sinners, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the broken, the dishonourable, in society, and shows them, that they matter, every member, of the church, is as important, as the next, which means, verse 25, that there should be, no division, amongst us, that each part, should have an equal, concern for each other, if one part suffers, every part suffers, if one part's honoured, every part rejoices, we are one body, if you lost your hand, if you broke your leg, your whole body, would suffer, it's not, it's not just a problem, for your leg, you suffer as a whole, person, if one part of the body, is suffering, is struggling, is falling into your sin, you're not divided, from that issue, in your life, you're connected, to their suffering, let me tell you, the story of, Antonio Basco, in 2020, Antonio Basco's, wife, Margie, was, tragically, shot down, shot and killed, when a lone gunman, went into a Walmart, in Texas, and gunned down, 22 people, Margie 63, was just out, doing her weekly, shop, Antonio and Margie, a married couple, had no friends, or relatives, and every day, after she died, Antonio, brought flowers, to the memorial set up, outside the store, and spent many hours there, sometimes all day, on occasion, sleeping on the floor, such was his grief, and distress, Antonio, was when approached, by the local funeral director, confessed, his biggest fear, was being alone, and the church, being empty, at Margie's funeral, Margie was all, he had, well, the funeral director, Salvador, Purchase, knew he had, to do something, and so, he left a message, on Facebook, with a photo, of Antonio, which read, Mr Antonio Basco, was married, for 22 years, to his wife, Margie Reckhardt, he had no other family, he welcomes anyone, to attend, his wife's service, let's show him, and his wife, some El Paso love, and the post, went viral, 3,000 people, came to bring, Antonio condolences, gifts, some just to give him a hug, 400 people, packed into the, funeral service, of his wife, with 700, waiting outside, who couldn't, get in, and Basco said, he had never felt, so much love, in his entire life, he said, so many people, put their arms around me, grieved with me, cried with me, it touched my heart, he said at the cemetery, he said, I love you, and I'm proud, and I'm honoured, to have you all here, as my family, you read that story, that is a picture, of what the church, should be like, following, that is a picture, of what the church, should be like, one another, without prompting, without a message, going out on Facebook, to say, sure this person, should love, but because, we don't need a message, to, we don't need a message, on Facebook, to do it, we already have, a message, of why we should love, one another like this, because Jesus loved us, whilst we, were broken, and a mess, and in the bottom, and in the dirt, and needed rescuing, we were in that place, spiritually, spiritually, and so, that is the church, the church, is not for good people, it is for messed up, broken people, who know they need, a saviour, we are, we are, his body, the body, the body, of Jesus, he's, the head, which means, that his body, were directed by him, which means, that's why, the body should look, like the head, that's why the church, should look like Jesus, because he is the one, that's directing us, do you feel, unimportant, Jesus gives you value, he gives you gifts, he says that you're important, and that you matter, who you are, no matter what you've done, Jesus invites you, welcomes you, to be part of the body, to trust, in who he is, that he loves you, and he will honour you, as much as anyone else, and in fact, the weaker you are, the weaker you feel, the more you will be held up, and cared for, and supported, and loved, because of him, because he delights, to strengthen us, when we feel weak, when we feel vulnerable, and in need, he wants us, to come to him, he offers that, to us today, we are the body of Christ, let me pray, Almighty God, we thank you, that you have called us, to be part of your body, you've called each one of us, I thank you that, you value each one of us, that you honour us, because, we have the same honour, given to us, that living God, you've given to your own son, because we're united to him, and so,

I pray, as we know, the transformation, that has happened in our own lives, where you've taken us from, to the place that we have now, I pray that you would, give us that same compassion, and love, and care, for every single person, no matter who they are, what age they are, where they've come from, that they, that this church, would be a place, where people can feel honoured, and loved, and cared for, Lord, would you show us our hearts, when we feel, not like that, show us our hearts, when we live in that competitive, with that competitive, worldly spirit, that wants to pursue, that thinks that gift's the best thing, give us a godliness, that loves people, because you love them, and so bless us, and grow us, establish us, unite us to one another, we thank you, that you have done, and so may we, look more like you, as your body, every day, we need your help, we're dependent upon you, we pray that you'd bless us, and send us out, in the power of your spirit, to live and work, for your praise and glory, in Jesus name,
[28 : 37] Amen.