

Pastor Graham Pfeffer Sermon for 26th January 2025 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Text 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 ¹² *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ And so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

The body is not made up of one part but of many. Paul gives a description of what that looks like in our physical body. How all of our body parts work together in an amazing way. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

V24-25 God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

It is the same with our spiritual life as his body the church. Each one of you is part of his church. Each one of you make up this church. As Paul writes, there should be no division in the body, but its part should have equal concern for each other.

So how do we do that? How do we be one?

Paul writes in several of his letters how to do that. In Philippians 2:1-4, Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Also, Ephesians 4, As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

In John 17:11 Jesus is praying to his heavenly father for his disciples. ¹¹ *I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me so that they may be one as we are one.*

Interestingly since 1 January 2021, no longer do we sing in the Australian national anthem, 'Australians all let us rejoice for we are young and free'. Instead, what do we sing? One and free. The then Prime Minister Scott Morrison said this was a bid to be more inclusive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and better reflect the country's diverse populations, and "In the spirit of unity, it is only right that we ensure our National Anthem reflects this truth and shared appreciation. But changing a word doesn't make us 'one' does it? People need to desire oneness. There are still people who call Australia Day, invasion day.

But really every day is invasion day, if we do not put aside differences and seek forgiveness for those things that prevent us from being one. If we let Satan deceive our minds, invade our minds with thoughts that we cannot forgive a person, then that is not of the Spirit of God. Those thoughts are not in line with Jesus prayer, *Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.*

It is easy to look at others and blame them, but Jesus asks, what is in your heart. Jesus taught us to pray, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. That is what puts us on the right path to be one. To forgive as Jesus forgives us, Jesus showed his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, he still went ahead and died for your and my sin.

Ask yourself, are you willing to die for someone who has sinned against you? Or at least put to death whatever it is that gets in the way of being one?

In 1981 Robin Mann wrote this song, based on Jesus' words in John 17, may they be one as we are one.

Let's reflect on the lyrics

1. May we be one, bound in love forever, growing close together day by day; growing as God fills us with his life - we are joined in him, he makes us one.

God desires His church to live in unity and harmony, bound in love forever, built on the foundation that is Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who draws us together by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bind us in love forever, to grow close together day by day working together in perfect unity as God fills us with his life.

2. May we be one, as our Father planned it - may the love of Jesus make us strong. No-one can harm us when he is near - he has brought us peace, he makes us one.

What is God's plan for us? For the love of Jesus to make us strong. That we value the unity and relationships within His church to be one. Satan does not stand a chance when we are one with Christ and each other brought close together by the love of God.

3. May we be one, Jesus' truth to bind us: with his body he unites us all; dying our death he restores our life, living with us now he makes us one.

What is the truth that binds? That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. This is the gospel by which you are saved. This is the gospel that unites us as one.

4. May we be one, sharing life together with the Father and his only Son. Now we have life in this world of death, heaven has begun, he makes us one, heaven has begun, he makes us one.

As God's people we join in the perfect unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We live in a broken world. We live in a broken nation where sin separates and divides the nation through selfish personal desires and not looking out for the interest of others. So, how do we stop the brokenness of the world invading the church and even our own personal lives as people who have been united in Christ?

By allowing the love of Jesus to make us strong. By allowing the truth of Jesus to bind us. By knowing that Jesus has given us all gifts and talents to use for his glory. The body of Christ needs everyone of you, to operate together as one. No one should feel more or less important as we all contribute to the body of the church.

Jesus' mission is to free people from captivity to sin. May we be the church that Jesus would be happy to come and worship at. A church devoted to his word. A church that welcomes. A church where we have equal concern for each other. Where if one suffers, we all suffer. If one is honoured, we all rejoice with them. May we be one, united in Christ using the gifts and talents we have been given as his church. This is the church that gives glory to God.

Amen