

Unity in Diversity

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Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[0 : 00] That song that the choir just did is one of my favorite songs out there. Just love the message of it. I don't know who did it first, but the first place I heard it was the group Selah.

Y'all ever heard them? They did a fantastic job with it, and I thought our choir did very well with that. Let's go to the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, and we are continuing on our practical preaching series on We Are the Church.

We Are the Church. Is that working? Hold up a minute.

There we go. Got it. All right. We talked about this by way of recap last Sunday. We don't just go to church. We are the church.

Let's read that together if we can. We don't just go to church. We are the church. And one more time. We don't just go to church. We are the church.

[1 : 13] What do we mean when we say by that? Well, we're talking about the biblical word that we get the idea of church from, and that word is a Greek word called ekklesia. And you pronounce it just like you see down there in English, ekklesia.

It means an assembly, a congregation, a called-out gathering of people, and in this case, a called-out gathering of believers in Jesus, Jesus' followers.

So we're talking about the idea of ecclesiology, which is the doctrine, the Bible doctrine or set of beliefs that we glean from the Bible word ekklesia and the Bible's teaching on the church.

So we put together this doctrine of the church called ecclesiology, and that is what this series is covering, this practical preaching series. We're not just going to dive into a bunch of theological mumbo-jumbo, etc., that you've got to try to wrap your heads around.

We're trying to make it very practical, very everyday life, and draw out those truths and applications from the word of God. So last week we said the church, it's not about who?

[2 : 22] Me. It's not about me. And it's not about you. It's about God. So the church is not about me. We talked about how the church is not about me.

The church is to glorify God, and I glorify God the most when I glorify myself the least. We also said it's impossible to glorify God when we hold grudges against one another.

Now, Jacob Browning has a grudge against me this morning because I knocked him out of the steak and shoot skeet shooting last night. And so y'all lift him up in prayer this morning if you would. No, we're joking around. But the church is not about me this morning. We'd like to talk about this topic, the church unity in diversity.

Unity in diversity. So we're going to be in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. If you would go there in your Bibles, 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

[3 : 22] We'll begin in verse 12, and we'll kind of jump around a little bit in that chapter, but we'll mostly stay in 1 Corinthians 12 today. There's one other passage we'll get to later.

Beginning in verse 12. Notice that capitalization.

If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body, is it not for that reason any less a part of the body?

And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body, it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? The whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. Let's say that again. Verse 18. As it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted.

[4 : 55] Verse 19. And if they were all the same part, where would the whole body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.

Or again, the head can't say to the feet, I don't need you. On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. Indispensable.

And those parts of the body that we would consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor. And our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect, which our respectable parts do not need.

Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body.

That there would be no division in the body. But that the members would have the same concern for each other.

[5 : 52] So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ.

And individual members of it. So this part of 1 Corinthians 12 really emphasizes the undivided church.

That there would be no division in the body. That's why sometimes we refer to our church as a body of believers.

Because we get that terminology from the scriptures. Long time ago, German Christians began to see over the course of time and theological trends began to see the church as more of a place.

And so they came up, they started using the term kirche, or K-I-R-C-H-E. I do not speak German, so I'm probably pronouncing that wrong.

[6 : 57] But K-I-R-C-H-E, they started using that word for the word church. See how similar it sounds to our English word church.

And that's kind of where that word that we all use so commonly came from. Because if you'll notice, church sounds nothing like ecclesia, which is the Bible word for church.

And that German word for church actually means more house of the Lord. So the emphasis became more on the building.

And beautiful churches were built up all over Germany. And I've gotten to go see some of those churches on trips. And they are absolutely stunning. Mixed in well with the beautiful castles over there, etc.

But the emphasis became more on the place, the building, than it did the body of believers. The gathering.

[8 : 00] And subtly, in our minds, whether or not we're conscious of it every day, we often think of the church more as the building.

Even if you asked us and said, what is the church? Is it a group of people or is it a building? We would say, it's the people. The church is the people. But oftentimes, the way we live signifies more that we see the church as more of a location than a body of believers.

So these scriptures must be taken very seriously by our church, by our gathering, and continually remind us that the church is the people.

And when you get a group of people together, what do you get? Anybody want to take a guess at it? What's that?

Division. You do. You get arguments. You get disagreements. You get strife. When you get a group of people together, you usually have some problems that come along with that.

[9 : 06] However, also when you get a group of people together, oftentimes, great things can be accomplished. If you look throughout history, it's usually teams or coming together of people that accomplished great things.

So you have both positive and negative from the gathering of people. But that is what God chose to do. He didn't institute any of us as Christian maverick commandos that were just going to go out as a one-man army and go win the world for Jesus Christ.

That's not how God set it up. He set it up that we would form and assemble into local expressions of the body of Christ. We have two bodies of Christ.

There is the universal church. There is the universal body of Christ that contains all believers in Jesus from all time. Those who have ever put their faith in Christ are part of that universal historical body of Christ.

However, you can't be the pastor of that church. You can't be a deacon in that church. You can't go attend their services. You can't observe the ordinances that God gave us in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

[10:28] You can't do any of the things that the church was commanded if all you are is a member of the universal body of Christ, the universal church. And so there has to be local expressions of that.

There have to be local assemblies of the church. And that's why we gather here today. That's why God instituted those local gatherings all across the Middle East, all around the world.

And they began to spread. And the gospel was carried forth. The gospel was propagated. The gospel was spread all around their areas and even around the world.

So much that they earned a reputation that they were turning the world upside down for the name of Jesus. So, we have the universal church.

But we have the local church. The local church is what God is speaking to here in 1 Corinthians, the church in Corinth. And he's included it in Scripture for us to gather truth from today, to gather applications from for our church today.

[11:37] And so, number one, we are to be an undivided, undivided church. That is the first theme. And when I say number one, that's the first theme that we're looking at from 1 Corinthians 12, the undivided church.

Now, let's jump back and go to verse 4. Same chapter, 1 Corinthians 12. Let's jump up to verse 4. And we'll spend most of the rest of the time talking about this second theme.

But then it'll all hopefully tie together when we say unity in diversity. So, verse 4. There are different gifts, but the same Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12, 4. There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. There are different activities, but the same God produces each gift in each person.

Did you catch that? Different gifts, same Holy Spirit. Different ministries from the same Lord.

Different activities, but the same God produces each gift in each person.

[12:47] So, this theme is spiritual gifts. Now, you might be a gifted individual, alright? You might have been part of a gifted program in school.

And people looked at you and thought, wow, what a gifted person. Or you might not be. And that's okay. We're not talking about that always.

We're talking about gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to you. Whether or not you're good at football, or whether or not you can play the piano like June, or whether or not you can sing like the choir or anything else.

Those things can be good, and those things can absolutely be used in the church. But God is talking specifically here about spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit imparts to each one of us.

And let me tell you, each one of us that is a child of God, and you put your faith in Jesus, is gifted by the Holy Spirit. Each one of us, every person sitting in this room, has their spiritual gifts that God has given you.

[13:56] Let's jump over. As we look at number one, this is number one in the outline today. By the way, we're going to start tweaking the bulletin a little bit.

Y'all remember when we had the folding bulletins? I've been told that that was a thing here. We had the bulletins that fold. Y'all looking at me like, what? Really? Such a thing exists?

We did, okay? Unless I've been lied to. We had them. Whether or not we're getting them. Pretty soon, we're going to start having that bulletin that folds. And here's the part.

There's going to be some engagement on your part, okay? In one of those pages, we're going to have the outline. We're going to have some blanks. So that means you actually have to work a little bit during the service.

Y'all are excited, aren't you? This is going to be great. God is love. But it'll say, God is blank. Fill in the blank. Love. Means you have to pay attention a little bit, okay? All right, it'll be good.

[14:55] So, number one, in this outline today, you don't have to write it down unless you're just taking your own notes, but God equips us with unique gifts. That's the principle here. God equips us with unique gifts.

Now let's jump over to the other passage we're going to spend time in today, which is Romans chapter 12. So, both chapter 12s, that's an easy thing to remember when you're thinking, where is spiritual gifts talked about in the Bible?

Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Those are two key passages that talk about spiritual gifts. So, Romans 12, let's jump over there. It's one book back from 1 Corinthians.

Kind of turn backwards until you find Romans. Romans chapter 12. And it's also on the screen for your convenience.

But beginning in verse 3. For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Well, that is just good advice for all of us right there, okay?

[15:51] We can park right there for a minute and preach a whole sermon that you and I often think much more highly of ourselves than we should. And the Bible specifically commands us, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

Instead, think sensibly. Sensibly. So, what do you think would happen if somebody's back there just kind of bragging on themselves and talking about how great they are and how skilled they are and how accomplished they are and all the great things they've done in their life and somebody just said, you're just not talking sense.

You're just not talking good sense right now. Because the Bible says you're not thinking sensibly about yourself, okay? So, think sensibly as God has distributed, sorry, a measure of faith to each one, to each person.

Every one of you, God has distributed a measure of faith. Now, verse 4, here we go. As we have many parts in one body and all the parts do not have the same function.

We kind of covered some of that in 1 Corinthians 12. In the same way, we who are many are one body in Christ. You look across, there are many people in here this morning.

[17:09] There's a wide variety of people from all different kinds of backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses and, you know, my daddy was this and my daddy was this and my grandpa was this and my grandpa was this and they didn't get along and et cetera, et cetera.

But look, all that, set it aside. We are many, but we are now one body in Christ. You may not be one body in Clay County, but you are one body in Christ.

Does that make sense? There might be history between you and somebody else, but in Christ, that is under the blood of Jesus. In Christ, he can rise above all that.

He can bring together anyone in his name with his power. So we who are many are one body in Christ and individually, I love how the Bible puts this, we are members of one another.

We are members, not just of the body, the large body, but we are members of one another, intimately related to one another in this body.

[18:19] I like how Jack Hayford puts this. He was a pastor out in California and he wrote the old hymn, Majesty. You guys remember that song, Majesty, Worship His Majesty? He wrote this and some other songs.

And he said, Jesus gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet when the Spirit comes, he is loaded with packages. He desires us to release, he desires to release much more in us and through us than we could ever imagine.

These gifts are given for delivery, not for accumulation. We receive them to pass on to others. Did you catch that last part?

God brings all these special packages for us, all these special gifts, but they're for delivery, not accumulation. We're not just supposed to hoard them and build them up.

We are supposed to pass them on so they're a blessing to others. So, God equips us with unique gifts, but God also equips us for a unique role.

[19:27] God equips us for a unique role. Let's go back to Romans 12 again. Stay there, Romans 12 and pick it up in verse 6. Pick it up in verse 6. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts.

If prophecy, use your gift according to the proportion of one's faith. If it is service, use your gift in service.

If it is teaching, use your gift in teaching. Let me jump back here. It jumped ahead on me. Verse 8, here we go. If it is exhorting, use your gift in exhortation.

Giving with generosity. Leading with diligence. Showing mercy with cheerfulness. Interesting, the admonishments that were paired with each gift.

Let's go back and look at them again. If you have prophecy, we talked about this a week before last, I believe it was. We said there were the Old Testament prophets, but when we read in the Bible of prophecy today, we believe firmly that Jesus is the fulfillment of all prophecy in himself.

[20 : 38] He is the prophesied one. He is the one. He is the Messiah. He came and fulfilled all the prophecy. And so now we believe that when the New Testament encourages us to prophesy, that is the preaching of the Word of God.

And not necessarily just from the pulpit, but is the foretelling rather than the foretelling. Understand the distinction there. Foretelling is saying what's going to happen in the future. Well, we have everything written in Scripture that we need to know is going to happen in the future.

You can't start filling in the blanks of Scripture with your own opinion and then treat that as prophecy. And there are a lot of people out there on the internet and in churches that will try to tell you and fill in the blanks of their opinion of what's going to happen.

But we stick to what the Word of God says. And so if we are talking about prophecy, it's not foretelling. It's forth telling.

Telling forth, preaching forth, holding forth the Word of God, the gospel message of Jesus. So it says, use that in proportion of your faith that God has given you. If in service, use it in service.

[21 : 43] If in teaching, teaching. Those are obvious things. If exhorting, encouraging one another. There's some similarities between that and prophesying, forth telling the gospel.

But it can go more personal, more intimate with exhortation. And then giving, be a generous giver. Don't be a stingy giver. I liked what Bruce was saying earlier with the giving moment.

We're going to have more and more of those as instead of me just standing up here and saying, y'all need to give to the church. Y'all need to give to the church. That's not what it's about. We're going to have some personal testimonies of people who have given back to God as an act of worship that giving is.

You know, some people say, man, I don't need to give to the church. Church doesn't need my money. Giving is commanded in scripture as an act of worship to God.

To again, not hoard what he gives you or just use it for your own personal good, but to give back to God's work on this earth. Whether it's not saying, well, they need this much money, so I guess I'll give some.

[22 : 48] It's saying, I'm going to give to God regardless because that is an act of worship. For God. The point of this message wasn't to preach about giving today, but we see it here in Romans 12.

And so if we're giving, it is with generosity. And we should all be giving. Both of our finances, our time, our energy, etc. And being generous givers, not stingy.

And then leading with diligence. I can't tell you how many times people have come to me over the years and said, I want to lead in this area. I want to lead. And I really need to see what their commitment level is.

Because oftentimes people mean, I want to lead because that looks like it's fun. But when it's not fun anymore, I don't want to lead anymore. I want to do what you're doing if it means I get the attention or if it means I get a pat on the back or if it means I get to have a good time with everybody.

But when it starts getting hard and when the target is on your back, then I don't want to lead anymore. So God says we need leaders with diligence. Leaders who will be faithful and diligent to the leading that God has called them to do.

[23 : 58] And then showing mercy and doing it with cheerfulness. Often times we'll show mercy and it's begrudging. Because we don't really want to show mercy.

And so I think it's very interesting that he used the word be cheerful when you're giving mercy. Freely give it as God freely gave it to us.

Romans 12 verses 6 through 8. I like the way Rick Warren put this. And let me just say this. You'll see all kinds of people that I'll quote from on here. This doesn't mean that I'm putting an absolute rubber stamp on their ministry and saying everything they've ever done or said in ministry is gospel. That is certainly not the case. And I hope nobody ever does that to me because I will let you down at some point. I guarantee you. But I can say that I liked this quote. I thought it was great. And Rick Warren's given us a lot of great quotes over the years in his books, etc. But this one is about spiritual gifts and it was very appropriate. Your spiritual gifts were not given for your own benefits, but for the benefit of others.

[25 : 03] Just as other people were given gifts for your benefits. Have you ever thought about it from that perspective? Oftentimes we love when people use their spiritual gifts for our good.

But we don't always reciprocate. It doesn't always go the other way, right? Sometimes we're not willing to stick our neck out there or get out of our comfort zone and figure out what the spiritual gifts are that God has given us and then use them for the benefit of his body and even our community. So it's a two-way street there. Spiritual gifts were not just given for your own benefit, but for others. Just as the spiritual gifts and those around you benefit you.

We need each of you. We need each of you. This church is not responsible. Hear me on this, please.

If you don't hear anything else this morning. I hate it when the preacher says that, you know. If you don't hear anything else I'm saying, hear this. Like, great, so I can tune out the rest? That's not what it is. But seriously, this is a crucial, vital point.

[26 : 16] Don't miss it. We are not responsible for the results of our labor for God. But we are responsible for the effort.

We are. We are responsible for the labor. We are responsible to try our very best for God. Now, will our very best ever be enough?

No. God can take our best and bless it and make it far greater than we could ever make it. Make it far more effective than we could ever make it.

So we are not responsible for the effort. Whatever's going on in your life. Whatever struggle you're facing. Whatever challenge that is there. Whatever obstacle you have to overcome. You are not responsible for success in that.

But you are responsible to try. You are responsible for the effort. That's what God put us on this earth to do. Otherwise, he could have just snapped his magic fingers and kind of like Thanos, if you're a Marvel geek like me.

[27 : 25] The blip. Anybody know what I'm talking about here? You're just too embarrassed to raise your hands. Thanos snapped his fingers with the gauntlet on and the infinity stones.

We're just, I'm sorry. We're way off. Losing a lot of people right now. Half the people in the world disappeared, okay? It's crazy. So yeah, God could have done it that way.

He could have snapped his fingers and all the ones who were supposed to be saved would get saved magically. And we would all just go to heaven and live happily forever. But that's not how he chose to do it. He gave us a free will. He gave us a choice.

He gave us responsibility. And so he chose to use us, not as his robots, as his flawed, but faithful children.

So our responsibility is to put out effort on his behalf. And the church needs that. The church needs your role.

[28 : 25] It needs your gifts. Spiritual gifts are for cooperation, not competition. I didn't come up with that.

I thought it was really good. I'm not 100% sure who did come up with that. I just saw it and there wasn't an author attributed to it. But I really liked it. So I put it in. Spiritual gifts are for cooperation, not competition.

Oftentimes, in our body, we will compete with one another for who looks the holiest. Who seems like they're the best guy, the best girl.

The Christian life is not a competition. The church is not a competition. It is meant to be cooperation between one another. But the devil always finds a way to wean his way, worm his way in there and find some way to divide us.

Find some way to make it a competition. Find some way to, you know, hit somebody's buttons, press somebody's buttons. You've got your hang-ups.

[29 : 33] You've got that thing that nobody better do or you're going to get mad. That is killing the church. That is the death of the church.

We always get scared about the world around us. Is the world around us lost and seemingly getting more lost every day?

Are they seemingly getting more godless every day? Yeah. But you know what's killing churches? It's not what they're doing in Congress.

It's not what they're doing in Hollywood, usually. Usually, it's what's happening inside the church.

That's what kills churches. That's what renders us ineffective. When we bite at each other and snipe at each other and fight with each other and get that passive aggressiveness.

That's what kills the body of Christ. That's what kills family. A house divided cannot stand. So, we are the church.

[30 : 41] And the church must find unity in her diversity. We are not all alike. We are not all the same. We're not all going to see things the same way.

We're not all going to interpret things the same way. We're not all going to agree on everything. But we cannot let that divide us. We must find unity in that. And guess what?

God gets glory when people who wouldn't otherwise get along, get along. When people who would never gather together or hang out each other's homes or become best of friends.

When they gather together faithfully every Sunday. And they greet each other warmly in genuine love. And they sing songs together. And they shake each other's hand and give each other hugs. And they get along for the glory of God.

God gets the glory. That's true in teams at work. That's true in your Sunday school class. That's true in your home. That's true right here in the church.

[31 : 41] The church must find unity in her diversity. So, what are the takeaways? Excuse me. My role is not more important than anyone else's.

Let's take that away from here today. My role is not more important than anyone else's. Okay? Got that one down? Flip side.

My role is not less important than anyone else's. There's another side to pride. Often, pride will say, I'm the greatest. I'm awesome.

Look at me. And then other times, other people's personalities, pride will affect itself in a different way. It will say, I'm the worst. Don't look at me.

Oh. I can't. It's just not who I am. I don't get out there in front of people. I don't serve. It's just not me. Just leave me alone.

[32 : 40] And you think that you're not essential. That you're not crucial. That it doesn't really matter. If you don't show up for church, nobody's going to miss you. You think that you don't necessarily have a role to play in the body of Christ.

Every one of us, however pride manifests itself in our life, every one of us have to put that to death every day. The Bible calls it mortifying the flesh. Putting to death that fleshly sin that weakens us, that distorts our thinking.

And says we are greater than we are or we are less than we are. You know who we are? We're who God says we are. We are his children.

We are his blood-bought, washed servants, ambassadors for Jesus. So it is absolutely essential that we remember my role is not more important.

My role is not less important. Let's finish with this. At Christmas time, we give our kids gifts.

[33 : 56] That doesn't offend anybody, right? Just making sure. Good. At Christmas time, we give our kids gifts. And it started out when they were real little.

They kind of just wanted to know if it was theirs. You know, like, is this mine? Okay, then I'm going to guard it with my life. I just got this new dump truck. Nobody else better put their hands on it.

This thing's mine, you know. And as they grew and tried to teach them and, you know, they learned. And they learned it, et cetera, et cetera. Now, they're more like, this is mine?

Okay. But how many times have they heard, you know, to share, et cetera, et cetera. And so they would say, okay, this is mine. Awesome. Well, you can use it too.

Austin would look at Bo. You can use it too. Bo would look at Austin. Here, this is awesome. I'm going to love this so much. And you can play with it too sometimes. They figured out that the gifts are not strictly for their use, right?

[35 : 02] Yeah, it's theirs and they have some measure of right to that. But really, it's for everyone, you know. When we got them a trampoline a few years back, they loved bouncing on that.

They understood that that's there to share. That's not Austin's trampoline or Bo's trampoline. It's everybody's, right? Mommy and Daddy get out there every once in a blue moon. So that is exactly how it is with our spiritual gifts we get from God.

They're not just meant for us to enjoy. They're meant to be shared for the enjoyment of the whole body. Would you bow your heads with me real quick?

What has God given you that you're not blessing somebody else with? What gifts has God bestowed on you?

Maybe you love to be a kind person. Maybe you love to do things for other people. You try to be thoughtful. You try to go out of your way to be a blessing to other people and show kindness. [36 : 12] We have people in our church very much like that. God wants to use that. Not just to make you look good and to make people like you and love you and gravitate to you.

God wants to use that to truly bless others. To truly inspire others to be like that. To show that, man, one of the foremost attributes of God is his kindness and compassion.

It's how he deals with mankind. So maybe there's something in your life. Maybe it's giving.

Maybe you do like to be generous and you like to give from what God has given to you. And you haven't been doing that like you should. And you say, God, help me to give of my resources, my finances, of my time, my emotion.

When I listen to someone tell their story. I don't just tune people out. Whatever it is that God has gifted you with.

[37 : 25] Are you using it? Is the whole church benefiting from that? If not, I ask that you would sincerely ask God right now to help show you how you can use his gifts that he's given to you.

For the good of the whole body of Christ. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.