

Theme: The Church is the Body of Christ, in which believers are united with one another and with Jesus Christ, their Head and source of life.

I. Intro - Rich Metaphors for the Church

- A. Metaphors can really help us understand things
- B. "Conscience is a man's compass." - Van Gogh
- C. Question 70: What is the Church?
The Church is the Body, Bride, and Temple of Christ, the community of all true believers for all time.
- D. This question looks at three metaphors for the Church
- E. There are others, but these are central
- F. We will unpack these over the next few weeks

II. The Church - The Body of Christ

- A. The Church is the Body of Christ
The **body** is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one **body**. So it is with **Christ**.¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one **body** — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Corinthians 12:12–13
 1. Paul uses the metaphor of the human body (v12)
 2. He then moves to the Body of Christ (vv12-13)
 3. We can learn about the Church by considering the human body
 4. Paul uses this same metaphor in Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:4, 11-16; Ephesians 5:23-30; Colossians 1:18, 24; Colossians 2:19; Colossians 3:15

- B. The Body of Christ expresses the oneness of the Trinity
The body is a **unit**, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form **one body**. So it is with Christ.¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into **one body** — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Corinthians 12:12–13
 1. The body is a unit; there is one body
 2. There is also one Church, the Body of Christ
 3. This expresses the basic unity of the Church
 4. Paul teaches this in many other places
Just as each of us has **one body** with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,⁵ so in Christ we who are many form **one body**, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:4–5

There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called —⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4–6
 5. The unity of the Church, not the variety of local churches or denominations, is the foundational reality - there is one Church.
- C. The Body of Christ expresses the diversity of the Trinity
The body is a unit, though it is made up of **many parts**; and though **all its parts are many**, they form one body. So it is with Christ.¹³ For we were **all** baptized by one Spirit into one body — **whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free** — and we were **all** given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Corinthians 12:12–13

1. Many parts (2x); all (2x); Jews or Greeks, etc.
2. Though there is one Church, there is a great diversity of members in the that Church
3. Paul really develops this idea through the rest of 1 Corinthians 12
4. Each member is given unique gifts and callings, all to serve the health and ministry of the One Church.
5. This diversity of members, gifts, and callings is necessary for the Body to adequately express Christ and for the health and success of the Body
Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith... Rom 12:4–6

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 arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ¹ Corinthians 12:17–20

- a. A healthy body has a great diversity of parts/ members, each fulfilling a unique role so that the body is healthy and can accomplish its work
- b. The same thing is true of a local church and of the universal Church - there must be diversity for there to be health and for the Church to effectively accomplish its mission.

- D. We must embrace the unity and diversity of the Body
 1. We struggle to embrace both the unity and diversity
 2. But God Himself causes unity and diversity in both local churches and the universal Church and calls us to embrace both
 3. This was the point of the recent series “The Beautiful Community: The Church As A Reflection of the Trinity”

III. The Reality of the Body of Christ

- A. The Body of Christ is a spiritual reality, not just a metaphor
For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1 Corinthians 12:13
 1. The Church is not “like” the Body of Christ; it IS the Body of Christ
 2. When we came to Christ by faith, we were baptized in the Spirit and into the Church.
 3. When we came to Christ we were given the Spirit to drink, and so became part of the Body of Christ in reality.
 4. I will speak about this more in AfterHours
- B. Christians are spiritually united with one another as members/parts of the Body of Christ
If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ¹ Corinthians 12:26–27
 1. There is a real organic connection between the individual members of Christ's Church.

2. This is not a philosophical or theoretical unity; it is an actual spiritual union of Christians with one another
3. This is why when a fellow believer suffers we must feel the pain; and when they rejoice we must feel the joy.
4. A body part that no longer feels with the rest of the body is diseased - and it is the same with believers in the Church.
5. When we came to faith and the Spirit came upon us we were not only joined to Christ; we were also joined to one another.
In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:4–5

C. The entire Church is united to Christ as its Head and draws its life from Him

1. Paul learned the unity of Christ and His Church through Jesus' words to him on the Damascus Road. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute **me**?"⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,**" he replied. Acts 9:4–5
 - a. Not "Why are you persecuting my followers" but "Why are you persecuting ME?"
 - b. Not "I am Jesus and you are persecuting my followers" - "I am Jesus and You are persecuting ME"
 - c. The unity between Jesus and the Church is so real that to persecute the Church IS to persecute Jesus
 - d. As Paul meditated on this I believe he came to understand the Church as the Body of Christ, truly united to its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Church draws its life and grows from its connection with its Head, Jesus Christ
Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:15–16
 - a. The Church is the Body of Christ, connected to its Head Jesus
 - b. It is from the Head, Jesus, that the Church grows and builds itself up as each part does its work
3. The Church can only be vital and healthy as it stays connected with its Head, Jesus Christ, drawing close to Him and drawing its very life from Him

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I see the Body of Christ is a spiritual reality?
 1. These metaphors are actually real!
 2. The Body of Christ is as real as my human body
 3. When I became a believer the Spirit was poured out on me and I was spiritually united with the rest of the Church, the Body of Christ
 4. This means the Church is as essential to my spiritual life as my body is to my physical life
 5. Do I live as if the Church is absolutely essential to my spiritual life, or as if it is an optional add on?
 6. Do I view my vital connection with Jesus in union with my connection with the Church, or do I view these as two separate spheres?

7. How would an outside observer judge my union with the Church by my actions? Would they see it as vital to my very life, or as an occasional option?

B. Am I drawing my life from Christ my Head?

1. If the Body loses connection with the Head it dies!
2. This is why we gather in worship - to receive life from Christ!
3. Do I see that I am not meant to try and receive life apart from the rest of the Body?
4. When the Church gathers do I regularly gather as part of the Body?
5. Do I come with the conscious intention of receiving life from Christ - or just to “go to the meeting”?
6. Let’s consciously come each week to draw life from Jesus Christ!

C. Communion - drawing our life from Christ

The Church - The Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

September 6, 2020

Communion

Ephesians 3:20-21

Teaching keywords: Church; catechism; union with Christ; community; fellowship; Holy Spirit

May God, Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ receive glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20–21

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