

Stand Together: One Body

September 20, 2020

June 4, 1940 is the date that one of the most famous speeches delivered in the English language was delivered in the British House of Commons. Winston Churchill told the rapt audience that Britain would likely be invaded by Nazi Germany.

He went on to say,

“We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”

Did you hear all the ‘we’s’ in his peroration?

John F. Kennedy said it best when he said of Churchill, “He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.”

The great effect of that speech and many others was the British solidarity built through his words. His words unified his people. People saw their common enemy. And Winston showed them their common cause.

We shall fight on the seas.
We shall defend our island.
We shall fight on the beaches.

We shall fight on the landing grounds.
We shall fight in the fields and streets.

Did you hear how many times Churchill said we? They had a common enemy and Churchill helped them understand that they had a common cause.

England had common cause because they had a common enemy.

Center Church has a common cause because we have a common savior.

England was united against a common enemy.
Center Church is united around a common savior.
England was united in battle.
Center Church is united for survival.
England was united as a nation.

Center Church is united—how? As a body.
A strange metaphor that we will explore this morning. Last week, we saw that local church unity is worth straining and sacrificing for. Last week—we saw unity is commanded by God. This week—we will see the first of seven reasons for unity.

PROP: We are ONE and must remain ONE.

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
Ephesians 4:1–6

PRAY

You might think, wow one sermon on two words? One Body?
Yes.

Why?

Because if we don't think together about what we are as a church we will not know how to make every effort to maintain the unity here.

1. One God, One Body

The reason a church can be called ONE BODY is because they serve the ONE GOD. The model and basis of unity is the oneness of the triune God. The trinity is hard to understand but what we can know for sure is that God is ONE and in three persons.

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

There is unity and diversity in the Godhead. The Father is not the son and the Spirit. The Son is not the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit is not the Father and the Son. The Father sends the son and Spirit. The Son became a man and died and rose again. The Spirit is sent into the world to draw men and women to Jesus.

But they are one.

The church is a poor shadow of the unity and diversity of the Trinity. But she is meant to be a representative nonetheless.

I'm going to take us for just a few moments to the theatre of the absurd and heretical. Ready? Let's Go.

Can you imagine that God the Father would have to break up a fight between the Spirit and the Son? No. Why? God is one.

Do you think it possible that God the Son would hold a grudge against God the Father and refuse to let go of it? No. Why? God is one.

Do you think God the Spirit can just decide to go rouge and decide he needs a higher profile and more songs about him? No. Why? God is one.

Why can't you imagine disunity in the Trinity? Because it is impossible. It defies everything we know about truth and the character of God.

Let me ask you a question that is related.

Can you imagine disunity a local church? Yes. Why? Because you have seen it. You have heard about it. You have experienced it. But that is not the way it is supposed to be.

The Church is the way that God connects to his people and his people connect to each other. His design is that his people would become one body. Not just that they are in the same place but that they are of the same mind.

We've seen One God logically leads to one Body, now we see—

2. One Body, One People

The reason we read in Ephesians 4 that there is one body is because there is one God. The primary way that God works in this world is through his body, the church.

“The body” is shorthand for the “body of Christ.” That means the church in this world is the primary representation of Jesus in the world. Christ is our head and we are his body. We are not just a random collection of people, but a body gathered together by Jesus Christ with him as our head.

It means—in part—that if someone wants to know what Jesus looks like, what Jesus would be doing in the world today, they would look at our church. The mission of our church is the

mission of Jesus. The reason we say we are fixed on Jesus is because he is our head and he is the one who we look to.

He calls us to—

[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19–20

That is the primary mission of every church. To make disciples of all nations.

And as those disciples of every nation are made by other disciples, they are added to a local body of Christ to become one.

Now one of the confusing things about the church in the world today is that there are so many denominations. There are so many traditions. There are so many churches that believe so many different things—right? Let’s see if we can cut through that a bit.

In the NT, the word, “Church” can mean—all of the people of God in all places for all time. OR it can mean a specific local body in a particular place. I’ll show you an example of both uses in the Bible—

[18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my *church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
Matthew 16:18

Jesus is not talking about a Church here, but the church. The church here means all of the people of God in all times and places. More of the people of God are with Jesus now than aren't.

Ephesians 3 uses the word church in much the same way—

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, [10] so that through the *church* the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 3:8–10

Some call this use of the word church as the universal church or invisible church. Universal, because it incorporates all the people of God from all time, even our dead brothers and sisters. And invisible because we can't see our dead brothers and sisters and of those in our churches, not all are brothers and sisters. But that is another conversation.

But now, Let's go back to Ephesians 4 again—

Vs. 1,

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit with one another. Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Can we do that with saints who are with Jesus? Let's do a little thought experiment.

Let's pick a saint with Jesus right now. Let's say: Jim Elliot.

Elliot was a missionary to the Auca Indians—latter called Huaorani—in Ecuador. In an effort to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ Elliot and four other missionaries were killed in 1956.

Is Jim Elliot our brother? Yes.

Is Jim Elliot a part of the church? Yes.

Does Jim Elliot worship Jesus like us? Yes.

Is Jim Elliot saved like we are? Yes.

Can we obey the call to—Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace with Jim Elliot? No.

Why?

He is not here.

This is why all authentic Christians are a part of a specific church. Most of the time that the word church is used in the NT, it refers to a specific local church at a specific time.

A couple of examples—

“To the *church* of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” 1 Corinthians 1:2

[1] Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—[2] and all the brothers who are with me,
To the *churches* of Galatia:” Galatians 1:1–2

So back to Ephesians. When we read, “Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...” we must think, “I as a member must consider myself one with the body of Christ at Center Church. I must work to maintain unity. How?”

[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

If you are not a part of this church, but another you are to—

[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Why?

Because we are one body.

3. One People, One place.

Here and now. Center Church.

As members of Center Church—how can we stay united in one body?

[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- *Humility OVER Hyper-criticalness*

A robust personal humility and not sense of hyper criticalness is crucial. Humility is slow to offer opinions, refuses to make judgments, does not jump to conclusions, thinks the best of others until proven otherwise.

Hyper-criticalness

Always looking for what is wrong. Thinks if they just listened to me or did things my way, thing around here would go so

much better. Hyper-criticalness says, “I told you so” or “I knew it a lot.” Considers others the weaker brother/sister a lot.

But we are ONE body.

We are united together in Christ and to one another. To be united to Christ means that you MUST be united to his people and have a church that you say—I’m ONE with that church. If it is Center Church, you are to be one with this church.

We are ONE body, united together in the ONE Christ.

We are ONE and must remain ONE.

- *Gentleness OVER Unkindness*

Gentle

Not weakness. Easy, natural, expected to be unkind, demanding, asserting of your rights. Having the strength to speak gently to others here when they don’t deserve. Because sometimes in a spurt of emotion people can say hurtful things. The Gentle are strong enough to absorb those words and not respond in kind.

Why?

We are ONE Body.

Think of what Jesus absorbs from us. All of our mutiny. All of our rancor. All of our anger. All of our frustrations. All of our sin. And he is perpetually gentle to us.

We are ONE body, united together in the ONE Christ.

We are ONE and must remain ONE.

Humility OVER Hyper-criticalness

Gentleness OVER Unkindness

- *Patience OVER Exasperation*

In a room full of redeemed sinners like this we are all going to need to be patient with one another. Normal to get exasperated.

Exasperation can threaten the ONENESS of this body.

Exasperation over something small or thin like masks.

We all have opinions about masks. We can all agree they are not for Halloween anymore.

One may be for wearing masks everywhere. Another may be against masks anywhere. Great. All of us as disciples must follow Jesus according to our conscience. But, should the unity of a church be threatened by the fabric of a mask? No.

Why?

We are ONE body, united together in the ONE Christ. We are united in Jesus but we will not be uniform in our opinions about the necessity of masks.

We are ONE body, united together in the ONE Christ.

We are ONE and must remain ONE.

Humility OVER Hyper-criticalness

Gentleness OVER Unkindness

Patience OVER Exasperation

- *Bearing with OVER Unforgiving*

This must be a safe place. The culture out there is dangerous. It is to quote Counting Crows, "A lot of oysters and no pearls." But here it is different.

We must bear with one another because we are ONE body. We are aren't going to be perfect or faultless so we must be forgiving to be ONE body. Imagine if my right index finger had something against my left eye.

AND I had to perpetually officiate between two sniping parts of my body. Ludicrous.

It MUST be more Ludicrous at Center Church to be unforgiving with another person in this church.

We are ONE and must remain ONE.

PRAY