



Preparation for Worship:

We are One in the Spirit Watch on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGD_BFSf90c&t=66s

We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
And we pray that all unity
May one day be restored

And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, By our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians
By our love

We will walk with each other

We will walk hand in hand
We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news
That God is in our land

And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, By our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians
By our love

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Hymn: Great are You Lord Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt0JWi12DjY>

You give life, You are love
You bring light to the darkness
You give hope, You restore
Every heart that is broken
Great are You, Lord

It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise
We pour out our praise
It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise to You only

You give life, You are love
You bring light to the darkness
You give hope, You restore
Every heart that is broken
Great are You, Lord

It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise
We pour out our praise
It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise to You only

Bridge:
All the earth will shout Your praise
Our hearts will cry, these bones will sing
Great are You, Lord

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Prayer

It's Your breath in our lungs, So we pour out our praise

Lord God, we come before you today and we pour out our praise to you. Even though we may be worshipping in different places and at different times, nevertheless we come together as one body. We are the body that you have created and Jesus is our head. We are the body to which you have added your Holy Spirit and he is the breath that fills our lungs and gives us life.

As we give thanks to you, we reflect upon those bodily poses we take up when we are joyful. We might throw our hands to the sky. We might punch the air. We might clap and applaud. All of these things we bring you today as an expression of our praise for you are the great creator of this world in which we live and breathe. You are the author of our salvation, not withholding your son out of love for us and sending him to die on that cross for our sins. And you are the shaper of our future, leading and guiding our lives every day.

For all this and more we raise our arms; we punch the air; we clap our hands. All that is in us rises up joyfully and with praise of your name. **Amen**

Hymn: StF 620 Thou God of Truth and Love

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04K576Bke3s>

Thou God of truth and love,
We seek thy perfect way,
Ready thy choice to approve,
Thy providence to obey;
Enter into thy wise design,
And sweetly lose our will in thine.

Why hast thou cast our lot
In the same age and place,
And why together brought
To see each other's face,
To join with loving sympathy,
And mix our friendly souls in thee?

Didst thou not make us one,
That we might one remain,
Together travel on,
And share our joy and pain,

Till all thy utmost goodness prove,
And rise renewed in perfect love?

Then let us ever bear
The blessed end in view,
And join, with mutual care,
To fight our passage through;
And kindly help each other on,
Till all receive the starry crown.

O may thy Spirit seal
Our souls unto that day,
With all thy fullness fill,
And then transport away:
Away to our eternal rest,
Away to our Redeemer's breast.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12 v. 4-27

Message:

As we reflect upon today's passage, I want to start not with an introduction but with a conclusion. Or perhaps with an introduction that will also be the conclusion in a few minutes time. Here it is. When we are not fully letting the Holy Spirit lead and empower us as a Church then three things follow:

1. We are missing out on all that the Holy Spirit can bring us - the Holy Spirit who is God's gift to the Church and to us as individuals.
2. We are missing out on God's order, design and plan for the Church.
3. We are not fully revealing Jesus to the world in all his glory.

How do we get to those conclusions?

In the passage we're looking at today, Paul uses the illustration of a standard body. It has all the requisite parts in all the right places and it needs all of those parts to work in harmony so that the body can function to maximum efficiency. If you think that Paul has come up with this idea himself, then think again.

It's not a new idea. Greek and Roman writers had been using the illustration for a while. For some, it was about being part of a town or city and the mutual responsibility to work together for the common good. It was also used globally by looking at the whole physical world as the body and human beings as its members. So as Paul delivers his illustration you can imagine his Corinthian audience thinking they'd heard it before. "The body is not made up of one part but of many". "Yes, Paul", you can hear them thinking, "and you're going to tell us that the church is a body and we all have our part to play in it". Which is a really good illustration in its own right but Paul actually says something significantly different. This is what he says, "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." And then again, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it". The body at the heart of his picture isn't a human organisation. It isn't just the church as people. It's the church as the body of Jesus. It's a spiritual body.

That's why the role of the Holy Spirit is so important. In both the Old and New Testaments, the Hebrew and Greek words for 'Holy Spirit' – 'Ruach' and 'Pneuma' – can also be translated as breath. It's the Holy Spirit that breathes life into the Church just as a human body needs to breathe to stay alive.

And what is the purpose of the Church, the body of Jesus, into which the Spirit breathes life. The answer to that comes with our understanding of whose body it is. We are the body of Christ; the body of Jesus. What did Jesus say and do when he was here on Earth? What were his purposes? Did those purposes change when he ascended to Heaven, risen and exalted? No they didn't. In short, our purpose as the body of Christ is to be the walking, talking presence of Jesus here in the world, living out his purposes. Bringing people to God. Bringing people to freedom. Bringing people to all that is good

and true and wholesome. When we live as that body then all of that should be made visible in us through the Holy Spirit. People should be able to see Jesus

Let's return, though, to our human body and ask the question as to how each of its parts came to be in the places that they are. Who decided that? Who decided I'd have two ears either side of my head? Who decided I'd have hands and feet at the ends of my arms and legs? Was it my parents? Or the midwife that delivered me? Did it depend, as in nature, on a seed that was sown determining the body that was grown? Could one kind of seed give you hands at the end of your arms and another kind give you hands at the end of your feet? No. Through the eyes of faith, you have to say that it's down to the creator. God, Paul says, has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wants them to be.

Paul says that God has designed the body that way and, therefore, no individual part should think it can go it alone; no individual part should see itself as more important than other parts or seek to exclude the functioning of other parts. And, conversely, no individual part should wish it was something else. To do any of these things would be to disregard and even to disrespect God's intention.

It's no different, Paul says, if you are a Christian and part of the spiritual body of Christ. God has placed you within the body of the Church to fulfil a particular function just as the individual parts of a human body all perform their particular functions. And through the Holy Spirit, the breath that breathes life into the body of the church, God will give you what you need to fulfil the particular role he has chosen for you. Paul describes this as the Holy Spirit giving us spiritual gifts. *Verse 4 - There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.*

Verse 11 – (Having listed some of those gifts) All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

When we realise that the purpose of the church is to live out the purposes of Jesus as his body, then we shouldn't be surprised to see that the various types of gifts that Paul describes – here and elsewhere – all point us towards attributes of Jesus.

- Speaking out a message of Wisdom
- Speaking out a message of Knowledge
- Exhibiting supernatural Faith
- Healing
- The ability to perform miracles
- Prophecy = Speaking out in God's name either in one's own language or in a different tongue with others given the gift of interpretation
- Teaching
- Spiritual discernment
- Being an apostle – Calm, solid, respected, Godly leadership
- Helping and other pastoral gifts
- Evangelism
- Encouraging
- Intercessory Prayer
- Administration etc. etc.

So, finally, let's move towards our conclusion. What happens if as a church we aren't fully open to all that the Holy Spirit is wanting to do in our midst? What happens if as individuals we want to receive from church but not give and play our God-given part? What happens if we deny that role God has for us in favour of something else that seems more glamorous or safer or [insert your own reason here!] What happens if, because of all that, other people end up in roles that have to be done but don't align with their spiritual giftings?

It will mean that the Church isn't operating fully in the power, the strength, the help that the Holy Spirit has for us. It will mean that we're disregarding the order, design and plan that God has for us in placing each part of the church body where he knows it will function best. And we're consequently not making Jesus known as well as we might to people outside of the church. They're not seeing a fully-functioning and complete body of Christ.

So, today, let us pledge the opposite. Let us pledge an openness to the Holy Spirit that allows him to do as he will as he breathes life into us and into our churches.

Hymn: StF 706 Longing for Light Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIDPd8d3oQE>

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

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Prayer

Didst thou not make us one, That we might one remain, Together travel on, And share our joy and pain

We pray for our travelling companions, those with whom we are one.

- For those with whom we are one as members of your body in our local church
- For those with whom we are one as members of your body in the place where we live and our local community
- For those with whom we are one because we are part of one worldwide, global church
- For those with whom we are one, in a different, but still very important way – as friends and neighbours and all those others we stand alongside as fellow human beings, wherever they may be.

We pray that, in each of these different expressions of life shared together, you will help us to find the role that you have for us and the spiritual gifts you are wanting to give us to empower us in that role.

Help us to share one another's joy and pain and to always be ready to intercede for others and to live out our faith in practice.

To borrow from the words of a well-known hymn:

Make us, and all Christians, channels of your peace

Help us, as we work together, to bring your love where there is hatred and division:

Help us to bring the reality of your forgiveness where there is injury and hurt;

Help us to bring true faith where there is doubt;

Help us to bring hope where there is despair;

Help us to bring light where there is darkness and light where there is joy;

May we be known, not as people who receive but do not give, but as people who give no matter what the cost. And as people who reflect your light and love in all we do, as the moon reflects the sun.

Amen

Spend time reflecting upon and interceding for people and situations that have been on your mind. Pray for the change that can come to each of these as God's people, each with their own gifting, learn to work together for the common good. Pray for the kind of real and lasting change that only God can bring.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: STF 449 Lord of Creation Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHEfi5TKezY>

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

is taught by your Spirit and shines from your Word.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom, your service is song;
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart;
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to cheer me, whatever betide.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses man's knowledge to find.
What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if ever I disown you, I stumble and fall;
but, sworn in glad service your word to obey,
I walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Jack Winslow 1882-1974