

Have you ever started a church service with Beethoven's 5th? Anyone here? It's very nice. I don't know if you've ever been in a big symphony hall where a full orchestra is playing. It's amazing.

My first introduction to symphony orchestras was Bugs Bunny. Anyone like me? That's probably where I first heard Beethoven's 5th, right there. But I think this is a great introduction to what we're talking about this morning because I want to help you imagine a scenario. If you've never done this before, never been in a concert hall with an orchestra, I want to help you imagine that.

So you walk into this beautiful, prestigious concert hall and there's velvet curtains across the front and there's footlights at the— on the stage level, but the footlights are aiming at the velvet curtains sort of softening the harshness of those lights. The stage is empty except for chairs and some of the larger instruments. The audience is sort of abuzz with the anticipation of what they're going to experience. And then a world-renowned orchestra walks out and the conductor walks out with them and they're going to perform this legendary piece of music. And the crowd goes quiet.

Quiet, the lights dim, the conductor raises his baton and swings it down to indicate the music is going to happen. And then the first violinist stands up, puts her violin down, and says, I wanted to be the conductor. And she walks off the stage. Okay, well, we're down a violin, but let's see if Let's see what can happen next. But over on this section, the horns have decided they don't really care for Beethoven's 5th.

What they really prefer is the Brandenburg Concerto because they really get a shine on that piece. So they decide they're going to do some Brandenburg over here and drown out the other instruments who are trying to follow the conductor's lead. And then there's the little guy back here playing the triangle. Anyone get assigned triangle in elementary school orchestra? You're still, you're still wearing that, aren't you?

Let it go. Let it go. This guy playing the triangle decides, well, I'm not the timpani. I, I— the timpani gets the big drums. Did you see the timpani over there?

The big, the big, big drums? He was getting ready to beat those. Says, I'm not the timpani. I'm just a little triangle. No one's going to notice if I don't do my part, so I'm just gonna like sneak off the back and hope no one notices.

What was supposed to be a breathtaking masterpiece becomes a jarring, awkward, and ultimately disappointing experience because people didn't do what they've been gifted to do. And this is what happens when we, the church, don't use our gifts the way God intended. Being part of

the church is not like what you may think it is— you sitting out there and people up here performing and you watching and either approving and applauding when you sing a song that we like, like This Is My Story, This Is My Song, Blessed Assurance, or going, hmm, I didn't care for that one. That was a little off tune. I don't think the drummer got the beat quite right on that.

That alto Our altos are great, by the way. I'm not talking about our altos. Susan's wearing her biker outfit this morning. I'm a little bit intimidated by her, so we're going to be nice to the altos this morning. It's not like that in a church.

We are all musicians. We all have an instrument. We all have a part to play. You're all on the platform, and God— someone once very wisely noted— is the audience. And we are the orchestra.

Every follower of Jesus has been uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to strengthen the church, whether your role is very visible like the first chair violinist, or maybe less visible but, but you make it— you, you make your, your presence known like the trumpets, or maybe what you do is really behind the scenes and just adds a note, a sparkle, like the guy on the triangle. Whether your role is visible or unseen, up front or behind the scenes, your contribution matters because it helps the body of Christ grow towards maturity. So today we're going to look at a very famous passage on the church, and it's found in 1 Corinthians. So if you've got your, like, legit embossed leather Bible with you this morning, turn to 1 Corinthians. If you need to know where it is, It's— you start in Acts.

So after you go through the Gospels, the red letter books, you get to Acts, you get to Romans, and then you're in Corinthians. There's a first one and there's a second one, and we're in the first one. If you get to Galatians and Ephesians, you've gone too far. Now that's if you've got like legit— I'm going to call it a legit Bible. Henry's got one right there.

Henry, hold it up so they all know what I'm talking about. Now I'm going to use another term. It's the Bible. It's absolutely fine. It's not legit as far as I'm concerned, but it's all right because I use it too.

If you've got your Bible app, you can open that as well. It's the same words, it's the same meaning, it's the same Holy Spirit. So if you've got your Bible app and want to open it to 1 Corinthians, please do that as well. If you're too lazy to do either one of those things— raise your hand if that's you— then we've got words on the screen. Let's just identify ourselves so we know.

We just know. Here's why we're not doing it. We're just too lazy. So there it is. So I'm going to pray and then we're going to read

together.

Gives you time to open your Bible, find your scripture on your app, or turn your attention to the screen. Heavenly Father, as we continue in your word, looking at the church that you created, that you birthed, that you, you in your, in your plan, this was the culmination of your plan. We, we want to know what we are created for. We want to know why we're here and why we're part of this. So instruct us through your word this morning, in Jesus' name.

Amen. So let's start reading 1 Corinthians chapter 12. If you want to read along, please do. In fact, let's just stand together. Let's just do that.

If you got your Bible, you can read in your Bible. If you got your app, you can read in your app. Otherwise, let's just stand together and let's just read. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1. Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers, sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray by mute idols. Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, Jesus be cursed! And no one can say, Jesus is Lord! Except by the Holy Spirit. Spirit.

Now there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone, it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one just as he determines. Thank you. You can be seated. When I was in 5th grade, my 5th grade class was invited down to the library at Springville Elementary School, and we went in there and they administered a very informal test. They had us match tones, they had us listen to different melodies and see if we could hum that melody along, and what they were doing was basically coaxing us into the idea of signing up for orchestra.

Well, it worked for me. I thought, oh, They said, you've got a wonderful ear. And I'm very susceptible to flattery. And so I thought, whatever you want, I'll do it. They said, pick an instrument.

You've got your choice between clarinet and clarinet and clarinet. And I said, I think I'll take clarinet. Now, I wasn't good at clarinet. There was a lot of buttons, a lot of levers. I took too much— it took too much time to learn those.

I was lazy. Um, it took too long to get the right sound. It was squawky. It was horrible. It was— I couldn't even figure out really how to get the reed in.

And then you got it in, then you had to get it wet, a certain level of wetness. It was too wet, it was soggy, it wouldn't do it. It was too dry, it wouldn't really work right either. It's like, oh my word. Oh, do I play the clarinet today?

No, I do not. I couldn't even replace a reed, let alone remember how those fingers and notes are found. Here's the deal. God does not do like that 5th grade teacher did. He doesn't let us choose our gifts.

Instead, he, Paul says, distributes to each person when and where and how he determines. Now, the gifts are all different, all those different instruments we saw in the videotape. All those are different instruments, yet in many ways they are exactly the same because they share one purpose: to make the church healthy and keep it functioning as God intends. So when we're going through this series, we've talked about different metaphors for the church. We've talked about the church being a flock.

We've talked about the church being a temple by the Holy Spirit, built by the Holy Spirit. We've talked about the church being a family. All of these are ways that the, uh, the Bible describes the, the, the partnership of believers into one group, creating something new, one out of many, the church. But today Paul adds another metaphor: the church is a body. And he unpacks now what that means in verse 12.

Just as a body has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body. Whether Jews or Gentiles makes no difference. Slave or free, it makes no difference. We are one body, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Even so, the body is not made up of just one part, but it's made up of many parts. So far, Paul is doing an excellent job teaching some biology to the early church, but his main point is this: every part is necessary and every part is useful for the body to function the way it is designed to function. In verse 15, he goes on. He says, now if the foot should say, well, because I'm not a hand, I don't really belong to that body.

Just because it says it, Paul says, it doesn't for that reason stop

being part of the body. And if the ear should say, well, I'm not an eye, so I don't really belong to the body either, it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. Now, we may chuckle at this illustration Because it's a little bit ridiculous. But I think Paul's doing that for a reason. He wants us to understand how important we are to each other.

A couple of weeks ago, I had one of— little kid, uh, 12 years old. He was staying over and he's taken up trombone and he wanted to bring the trombone. You all are already groaning. You don't even know how this story is going to end, but you're groaning because you know how it's going to end. He wants to bring his trombone to the house and show me his trombone playing.

And I'm telling you, he's not bad. He's just picked it up and he's already got really good tone. He's a— I feel like he may be a natural trombone player. But still, a trombone played entirely on its own can lose its charm really quickly. There's a reason orchestras are not made up of only trombones.

Trombones sound better when they're played with other instruments, when you put some strings behind them, when you put a little percussion behind them, when you add a little something besides just the wah wah wah wah wah.

The trombone is meant to be part of something larger.

Like the trombone, you have been redeemed to work with others. You are not a solo instrument. You are not to go it alone. God intends for you to belong. He did not create us to be solo acts.

Instead, we are part of the body, so we recognize our value to God and to his church. Paul goes on, 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? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?

As it is, there are many parts but one body, The ear is not greater than the eye. The nose is not greater than the ear. You must recognize that others offer different but equally valuable service, even when it doesn't look like yours. Verse 21: The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you, and the hand cannot say to the feet, well, I don't need you either. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem weaker to us are actually pretty indispensable.

And the parts that we think are less honorable, well, we treat with special honor. The parts that are unpresentable, we treat with special modesty. So while our presentable parts need no special modesty treatment, God has put all of it together, giving greater honor to

those parts that lacked it. I'll explain maybe what that means later. So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

We know this, don't we? Something is a little off. My eye's twitching a little funny. Hmm, I'm a little blurry in this. What's going on?

All of a sudden, it doesn't matter that my ears work just fine and my hands are just great, my feet are fine. All of a sudden, what am I focused on? My little eye weirdness. And I got to go to the doctor and get that checked out. Little things matter.

If one part suffers, Paul says in verse 26, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, then every part rejoices with it. And if there's any confusion about this metaphor that Paul is using, he then makes it clear: you are the body of Christ. You are part of it, each one of you. Is part of it.

He talks about the different parts of the body. He says God has placed in the church apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helping, guidance, different types of tongues. Is everyone an apostle? No.

Are all teachers?

No. Are all prophets?

Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? No. Why?

Because the church is designed to function with all of these and not be focused on one or the other. Does everyone hold the same positions? No. Does everyone have the same gifts? No.

Are you angry about it? A little jealous, maybe upset that you didn't get your big starring role? Maybe you're just confused about all of it. Well, here's what Paul says: eagerly desire the greater gifts.

This was always the big challenging question. Well, what is the greater gifts that we should challenge, that we should, that we should go after? What's the big gift that everyone should have? What is the greater gifts? I think the question is answered by looking back at some things Jesus said to his disciples.

And one of the places he said it very clearly is in Mark chapter 9, verse 35. And I don't have the scripture up there, but if you want to look it up, you can. In Mark chapter 9, verse 35, he's speaking to his disciples and he says this: Anyone who desires to be great must be a servant. Anyone know? Servant. Anyone who wants to be great must be a servant.

How do you think Jesus would define what a great gift is? It would be a gift that serves.

Anyone who desires the greatest gift will be looking for gifts of service.

In just a few weeks, we're going to have our hymn sing. In fact, Becky and I are going to be going over some of that, I think, this afternoon. And I hope that all of you will come to that. Whether you love hymns or hate hymns, it's really irrelevant. The body of Christ is going to be gathered for worship.

Show up, be part of it. Add your voice to the voices that are going to be in this room lifting up Blessed Assurance and Amazing Grace and Goodness of God. I don't know what the hymns are, but it'll be those types of songs where we get to share together, adding our voice to the voices of others in this beautiful expression, this beautiful symphony of worship. In the past, we've had a small orchestra. I'm not sure what, what music, what band instruments, what instruments Becky has picked for this and, and what she'll be helping arrange and organize.

But in the past, I have come to those rehearsals, and I've got to be honest with you, The first rehearsal— Shawna's already laughing because she knows what we're going to say— the first rehearsal is pretty rough. And these are all fine musicians, they're all excellent musicians, and yet the first rehearsal is a little tough. You might think we are practicing for Armageddon when really we're just trying to get Amazing Grace down as a group. It can be pretty rough, but the old saying is true: practice makes perfect. And as the musicians work together, the music becomes recognizable eventually.

And by the night of the performance, it's not just recognizable, it is really beautiful. It sounds fantastic. But that beautiful act of worship requires us to work together. It requires us to value both our gifts, our skills, our instrument, and the gifts and skills and instruments of others. Because God did not write any solo parts.

He wrote a symphony, and he's asked us to be part of it. We can't be like the violinist who refuses to play simply because she's not in charge. We can't be like the trumpets, convinced that, that their passion, their gift, their interest, their musical preference is the only one that truly matters. We can't be like the triangle player, assuming that because our contributions, such as encouragement, or administration or hospitality happen mostly behind the scenes? Well, because it happens behind the scenes, no one will notice if we don't— if we don't show up, no one will miss us.

That's not true.

But those kind of attitudes keep the orchestra from playing its best,

and those kind of attitudes keep the church from functioning at its highest level. So use the gifts and opportunities God entrusts to you to build up what is dearest, dearest to him— his bride, the church. Jesus loves his church. He loves all the little children, but he died for his church. He's building us into a people before whom even the gates of hell cower in fear.

And he invites you to be part of it. It's not complicated. As we talked about a couple of weeks ago, if you've never fully trusted your life to Jesus, the entirety of who you are, your soul, to Jesus, this morning I invite you to do that, to accept Jesus and then be baptized into his body, the church. Commit to the local body of Christ here at Sherwood Oaks Bedford or at First Assembly or at First Baptist or at Free Methodist. Find a place and commit yourself to the body of Christ in that place.

Show up, do your part, engage, give, serve, and grow with that body. I want you to make this church your church home. I want you to, to show up here and experience firsthand what it means to be an integral part of the body of Christ where you can grow and serve and give. If you desire to be baptized or you want to make Sherwood Oaks your church home this morning, I'm going to be down at the front like I was a couple weeks ago. You can come and talk to me.

We will pray together. We'll introduce you to the congregation. If you've not been baptized, we'll make arrangements to do that, and, and you'll be part of the body of Christ.

But now we're going to share in a time of communion. At communion, we remember that the church is not held together by our individual talent. It's not about my amazing charm. That's not what the church is about. It's not by Heather's faithfulness alone. It's not, it's not by any of our individual contributions, our individual talent, our individual importance, our individual effort.

It's not about that. The church is held together because Jesus died for us and gave his life for us. We are one body because Jesus gave his body for us. We're gonna take bread and we're gonna take a cup, and the bread points to his body broken on the cross. The cup points to his blood poured out for our forgiveness.

And in this moment, we remind ourselves that before we can bring any gift to the Lord, the Lord has poured out his gift to us in Jesus. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, this morning we do not come as solo artists. We come as one body of Different stories, different places we've arrived from. We all have different strengths. We have different traumas and hang-ups and hurts. We're all dependent on the same grace by the same Holy Spirit.

So this morning, as we take the bread and the cup, we want to give thanks to you, Jesus, for making this new life possible, this new life in, in one body possible to so many different lives. We so many different stories. We take the elements with gratitude, thankful, thankful for you who died for us, thankful for your body, thankful for your blood, but also thankful for the body of Christ that you've put us into, this new thing that you're creating. Thank you for bringing us and making us part of it. In Jesus' name, amen.

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