

Welcome to our podcast

We are going to continue in our study of  
Ephesians

You might want to pause now and read it for  
yourselves,

Ephesians 1.15-23

## **Sermon**

‘The church is Christ's body,

the completion of him who himself completes all  
things everywhere.’

This is really starting at the end of this passage

‘The church is Christ's body’

What an amazing thought.

‘The church is Christ's body’

We are Christ’s body here on earth.

Everything that we do,

And say

Should be to represent Christ here on earth.

‘The church is Christ's body’

(pause)

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do  
good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all  
the world.

Yours are the hands,

yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes,

you are his body.

Is a famous prayer by Teresa of Avila

(pause)

This is what Paul is trying to get across in the whole of Ephesians.

Particularly in the second half of the letter.

How important the church is as the body of Jesus.

What it means for us to be the body of Jesus.

We have seen all ready how central Paul makes Jesus in everything

In the bringing back together all the discordant elements of creation.

To reconcile humanity with God.

It was to bring all things

And all people,

Into unity that Christ died.

But, clearly, that unity does not as yet exist.

(pause)

It is in Jesus that all people and all nations will become one;

but before that can happen they must know about Jesus Christ.

And it is the task of the Church to let people know about Jesus.

It is our task to let people know about Jesus.

We know him.

We know him as our Saviour.

We know him as our friend and brother.

We know him as our Lord.

And we need to let other people know all about him too.

By our words

and by our actions.

By what we say

and by how we live our lives.

'The church is Christ's body'

(pause)

Christ is the head;

the Church is the body.

The head must have a body through which it can work.

The Church is quite literally hands to do Christ's work,

feet to run upon his errands,

a voice to speak his words.

God's plan for one world is in the hands of the Church.

(pause)

Barclay in his commentary on Ephesians tells of an old legend.

A legend which tells how Jesus went back to heaven after his time on earth.

Even in heaven he bore upon him the marks of the Cross.

The angels were talking to him and Gabriel said:

"Master,

you must have suffered terribly for men down there."

"I did," said Jesus.

"And,"

said Gabriel,

"do they all know about how you loved them  
and what you did for them?"

"O no," said Jesus,

"not yet.

Just now only a few people in Palestine know."

"What have you done," said Gabriel, "to let  
everyone know about it?"

Jesus said:

"I have asked Peter

and James and John

and a few others

to make it the business of their lives to tell others about me,

and the others still others,

and yet others,

until the farthest person on the widest circle knows what I have done."

Gabriel looked very doubtful, for he knew well what poor stuff people were made of.

"Yes," he said,

"but what if Peter and James and John grow tired?

What if the people who come after them forget?

What if away down in the twenty first century people just don't tell others about you?

Haven't you made any other plans?"

And Jesus answered: "I haven't made any other plans.

I'm counting on them."

To say that the Church is the Body means that Jesus is counting on us.

Is counting on us to tell the story of his love.

To live the story of his love.  
(pause)

This passage is entitled Paul's prayer.

He has heard how they are fulfilling the commandment to love God and love their neighbour.

He has heard that their faith in Jesus is strong.

'For this reason,

ever since I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus

and your love for all of God's people,

I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you.' **Ephesians 1.15 & 16**

We have faith in the Lord Jesus

Or that is where our faith is meant to lie.

Not on a distant creator God.

Not on a scary being who holds all the power over our lives.

The power of life and death.

In a distant heaven.

No our faith is in Jesus.

Our faith is in the man who walked amongst us.

The man who taught the parables that we all love so much.

Our faith is in the man who cared so much about the people that he encountered that he performed so many miracles of healing.

Fed the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes.

Who washed the disciples feet

Who died on a cross that we might be set free  
from the power of our sins.

That is who we have faith in.

That is who we love.

That is who we live for.

(pause)

And because we have faith in Jesus

As a consequence of loving Jesus we love all of  
God's people.

That is what Paul heard about the people he is  
writing to.

That they had faith in Jesus.

That they loved Jesus.

And over and above loving Jesus they loved all  
of God's people.

Not clear from this passage whether this phrase means all of Jock Tamson's bairns.

All of humanity.

All people whom God created.

Or whether he just means the people of God.

The new people of God.

The people of Christ's body, the church.

Their fellow disciples,

Their fellow believers in Jesus.

(pause)

The mark of the church is faith in Jesus

And love for one another.

The two have to go together.

You can't have one without the other.

You can't claim to have faith if at the same time you hate your brother.

Jesus said the same.

If you believe in Jesus.

If you love Jesus.

Then you have to love your sisters and brothers here in the church.

And you have to show you love them by how you treat them.

How you speak to them.

How you think of them.

(pause)

Our love for God's people is shown by us serving them.

Serving and caring for one another.

Our love for Jesus is shown by us loving one another.

If we don't love one another,

If we don't love God's people,

Then we can't claim to love Jesus.

If we don't love God's people then we are not living out our faith in Jesus.

We are not showing any sign of our faith in the Lord Jesus

As we are not doing,

We are not living as he taught us to.

(pause)

The greatest commandment he says was to love God

And to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Was to love our brothers and sisters.

To love our fellow human beings.

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul,  
with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.'

The second most important commandment is this:

"Love your neighbour as you love yourself."

There is no other commandment more important than these two."

We read in **Mark 12.30 and 31**

(pause)

Paul would maybe have paraphrased this as

Love the Lord Jesus with all your heart,  
with all your soul,  
with all your mind, and with all your strength

Love all of God's people as you love yourself.

(pause)

Paul is remembering them all in his prayers.

As we should remember one another in our prayers.

He prays that Jesus will give them

'the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you,

so that you will know him.' **Ephesians 1:17.**

(pause)

We to need the Spirit in us individually

And as a fellowship

If we are truly going to function as church.

If we are going to be able to live as the body of Christ.

(pause)

We need the Spirit so that we will be led deeper into the knowledge of the eternal truths of God.

Without the Spirit we can't really understand anything.

Without the Spirit we can't know God.

Without the Spirit we can't live for Jesus

And be his hands and feet here on earth.

(pause)

Paul prays for a fuller revelation

And fuller knowledge of God.

He would be praying that for us to if we he knew us.

He is praying that for us to as we are also recipients of this letter that he sent to the Ephesians.

(pause)

We all need to study the Bible to come close to God.

And we all need the Spirit of Wisdom with us to help us as we study.

To help us to understand and be changed by the scriptures.

We'll only be changed by them,

Our lives transformed by them if we do study them,

If we do welcome the Spirit into our hearts to help us to understand.

'I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light,

so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you,

how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people,

and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.'      **(pause)**

Paul's prayer reminds us that learning to know Jesus does not happen all at once.

Rather, it happens slowly over time, perhaps over our life times.

As we reflect upon the scriptures

As we read them

and as we understand them.

As we work to try and apply them to our lives.

We are never too old

Or too young

To read and apply them in our lives.

(pause)

We need our minds to be open

And we need to be open to having our minds opened by the Spirit.

As we read

And as we think about this letter

And all the other books and letters of the New

And Old Testaments,

we need to be open to the Spirit

(pause)

‘and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.’

We may not think enough about this power

Or acknowledge enough that the Spirit can

And will work in us in power.

And do amazing things.

Perform miracles.

Bring non-believers to faith.

Transform our individual lives

And the life of our church.

(pause)

In the Christian life we should be working to get to know God better.

Every day we should be working at our relationship with our loving heavenly Father.

As we develop and build a friendship with God.

A friendship which does not grow closer with the years tends to vanish with the years.

And it is so with us and God.

We need to build the friendship.

Keep the relationship alive every day.

Growth in knowledge of God.

And understanding of

and experiencing of His grace is essential in our lives as disciples of Jesus.

(pause)

Paul prays for a new realisation of the power of God.

For Paul the supreme proof of that power was the resurrection.

‘This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death

and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world.’

with the resurrection and ascension we must come to know

and come to terms with the risen,

the cosmic Christ

who is “seated at the right side in the heavenly world.

Where he rules above all other rulers.

(pause)

God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things.

(pause)

We have hope

And we have to share that hope.

Hope in the risen Christ.

Hope in our own resurrection.

When we will be with Jesus.

Our hope is that destruction of this world and society is not the end.

A new world,

A new creation is going to come into being.

(pause)

In Jesus all nations can become one.

But before that can happen they must know about Jesus.

And the church has to be the one doing the telling.

(pause)

‘The church is Christ's body,

the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.’

Christ is the head,

The church is the body.

The head must have a body through which it can work.

Does he have us?

Are we a body working together to advance the gospel?

Or are we a body that is divided against itself?

The church is Christ's body,

the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.' **Amen.**

## **Let us pray**

Father we are the body of Jesus.

We want to be the body of Jesus

To serve him with all our hearts and souls.

(pause)

But we know that we so often fail Father.

We fail to love our brothers and sisters.

We fail to care.

And so we fail to share the hope that we have in you.

Forgive us Father for all our failings as your disciples.

And may we know in our hearts that we are forgiven.

Forgiven for our hurtful words.

Forgiven for our uncaring actions.

Forgiven for our thoughtlessness to others.

(pause)

Unite us as one body Father

And use us in service of you.

Use us to build your Kingdom.

Use us to share the gospel.

Use us to make disciples.

(pause)

Use our hands Father in service

To bless our neighbours and friends.

Help us to look with compassion on this world  
and care for those who have any needs.

(pause)

May we always seek to care for others

May we always help where and when we can.

May we always love as you love us.

(pause)

In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

## **Benediction**

Go into your week with your ears open  
to the sound of God's voice calling your name.

Go into your week with your eyes open  
to see the face of Jesus in unexpected places.

Go into your week with your heart open  
to receive the Spirit of God,

the Spirit of Peace.