

**Joke:** If you're interested. . .A friend of mine has two tickets for the 2022 Super Bowl tonight, they are box seats nonetheless. He paid \$11,500 each. They come with a ride to and from the airport, lunch, dinner and a \$400.00 bar tab. Also included is a back stage pass to the winners locker room. He didn't realize last year when he bought them, it was going to be on the same day as his wedding. So, if you are interested, he is looking for someone to take his place. . .It's at St Paul's Church, in Tampa at 3pm. Her name is Ashley. She's 5'4", about 145 lbs, and a good cook too. She loves to fish and hunt. She'll be the one in the white dress.

## **One series - Week 2 - Greater Than The Sum of the Parts**

We are each made unique and each one of us are made in the image of God.

What that means for us is that individually, you are awesome; collectively that makes us unstoppable.

I'm so glad you joined us today. This is week 2 in our series, called *One*.

My goal, my prayer in this series, is to look at what it means to be a community that comes together as one.

Truth is, as a culture, we have a tendency that leans towards independence. And there's nothing wrong with being independent to a degree.

Countries have fought for their independence. . .

But the truth is, we are wired to do life in community. We are created and called to come together as one.

And it is vital that we do that because, when we come together as one, there is nothing we can't do for the kingdom of God.

Last week we said that this community of one begins when we recognize what we are, whose we are and what that means for our lives.

If you recall we learned that you and I are what? Masterpieces.

You are a masterpiece - made in the image of God. God, the very same God who created this world that we live in after he created it said it was 'good'. But He didn't stop there, He went on to create man, you and I included in that and called us 'very good.'

And as a masterpiece, made in God's image, we are called to serve all the other masterpieces if for no other reason that they too were made in God's image.

When we recognize what we are – masterpieces and when we begin to live up to this idea by serving others the way Jesus served, we can come together as a community that serves and that will ultimately transform our world.

Today we are going to continue looking at what it means to be a community that comes together as one.

Maybe you have noticed that we tend to gravitate towards people who are like us? As the saying goes birds of a feather. . .flock together. And so we tend to gravitate towards those. . .

- People who think like us...
- People who believe like we do...
- People who vote like we do...
- People who are in the same socio-economic demographic as we are...

We like to be alike. Which is really quite ironic considering the fact that our culture values and even pushes independence and being your own person.

We claim to want diversity. We claim we want to be different. But the truth is, we really like to be like others.

Think for a moment about high school, there was that group of friends who all claimed to be the 'non-conformists.' Now that may not be the word they used back then. But they were the ones that all wore the same type clothes, had the same basic hair style. Listened to the same type of music. They all hung out at the same places. This group of people who all looked the same, acted the same, and listened to the same music, called themselves 'Non-Conformists.'

And ironically, to be a part of their group, what did you have to do? You had to conform to their standards. It's much like the cancel culture of our day we have been hearing so much about.

If you don't think that's the case, look at most churches on any given Sunday. Look around for a minute and see whose here.

Sunday morning has been called the most segregated hour of the week in America. And listen ai don't think it's isn't because we want to exclude others, but it's because we are naturally drawn towards sameness.

Churches that are marked by diversity generally are that way through lots of intentional effort.

Hear me when we were fellowshiping with Bishop Tate or Pastor Lilly often times if I was the only one from our church that went. I was the only light skinned one there. Now we loved them and they loved us. Preached for them often, spoke something most every time I was there. But for the most part there was not much diversity in any given week. Not that is was planned that way meant to be that way it's just that way.

And truth be told, sameness doesn't add life or strength. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

Uniformity decreases the strength and value of things. Think of it like this:

- If you have a building where the walls are all covered with the same masterpiece, over and over and over - it's called wallpaper.

- But if you have a building where the walls are covered with masterpieces of varying size, color and shape - it's called an art gallery.

Nobody plans a great heist to steal your wallpaper. . . But art galleries are targets because they have incredible value.

This may sound counterintuitive, but as a church, the body of Christ when everything is the same, that community will have a more difficult time transforming the world around us.

That's way God made us each unique, to show diversity in people. We need oneness in mission, but the uniqueness of people to fulfill that mission.

Here's something worth remembering. . .

We are not stronger when we are all the same. We are stronger when we are all different.

Let me put it another way:

When we are all together different, we are more than the sum of our parts.

Let me say that again. . .

When we are all together different, we are more than the sum of the parts. That is the one thing I want you to get today. When we are all together different, we are more than the sum of the parts.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 12:12. . .before we do that through let me layout a bit of information about this Scripture. . .

- This is a letter written by Paul to a group of Jesus followers in a town where it was very tough to be a Jesus follower.
- Corinth was a very diverse city. People from all over the Roman Empire lived there.

There were in that region the. . .

- o Jews
- o Greeks
- o Gauls (that would France, Spain, and the like)
- o African
- o Slaves
- o Free
- o Ex-Military
- o Those conquered by the military
- o There were many different religious backgrounds
- o As well as socio-economic backgrounds

They didn't all get along because they were so different.

And the church in Corinth - the community of Jesus followers - reflected the diversity of the community. what that meant was that sometimes the people in the church didn't get along very well.

But the differences and the friction weren't simply limited to Race/Culture/Economics/Social Status/ or even their Religious Background.

Some of the friction was caused by the fact that different people had different gifts and different roles in the church.

Some were the more obvious gifts like. . .leaders, teachers or the preachers.

Some were more behind the scenes types. . . like the gift of Hospitality, service, or encouragement. You do know those are gifts right?

And, just like many of us today, they began to look at each other - and even look at themselves - and assign value based on how obvious and out front. . .how desirable certain gifts were.

And we do that same type thing in our our culture today. Think about for a moment:

- A CEO is more important than the regional manager.
- A Regional Manager is more important than the store manager
- The store Manager obviously he must be more important than the janitor. Right?
- The principal is more important than the teacher
- The teacher is more important than the lunch lady

It's our nature to look at the differences, determine some to be better than others and to then pursue the 'more important' positions and to dismiss those in the 'less important' positions or roles.

And unfortunately that attitude often times carries over into the church.

I mean, if you're a preacher, a worship leader, or a member of the worship team. . .you know a job that's up front and visible. . . then you must be more important than someone who sets up the chairs or hands out food or cleans the kitchen.... right?

So, this little community of Jesus followers is struggling with the whole difference thing and the whole “whose most important” issue.

Even the disciples, the twelve Jesus called struggled with this. . .

Luke 9:46–48 (NIV): An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

An argument started among the disciples. . .

So this idea we are looking at today has been something that people have struggled with for quite some time.



So, as Paul writes this letter to those in Corinth, and he begins to explain the power of differences.

Paul understands those differences shouldn't divide us. Those differences, if we allow Jesus to have his way, actually bring us together as one and make us stronger.

Paul understood that when we are all together different, we are more than the sum of the parts.

And that's why he could say this. . .

1 Corinthians 12:12–14 (NIV): Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

In helping them work through their "differences" he goes to one of the best examples from everyday life that he can find. Something every one of us can relate to.

The human body.

"The body," Paul says, "is made up of many parts. And every part has a role to play. And every part needs every other part. And if the whole body were the same part, it wouldn't be the body."

Now if you take the time to read the rest of the part of his letter, he goes on and on about how all these different parts coming together are better than any one part. And how the whole thing fails if each part doesn't show up and play their role.

Paul is saying:

When we are all together different, we are more than the sum of the parts.

There are no insignificant members of the local community of Jesus followers. It doesn't matter what you can or can't do. Every one of us who consider ourselves to be followers of Jesus are an essential part of the community.

- It doesn't matter if you are "only" a nursery worker. You are an essential part of the body.
- It doesn't matter if you are "only" a greeter on Sunday morning. You are an essential part of the body.
- It doesn't matter if you are a musician on the stage or the worship pastor. You are simply one part of the body... but an essential part.
- It doesn't matter if you are the pastor and you preach most Sundays. You are simply one part of the body... an essential part sure, but still only one part

Here's a truth you need to cling to. . .there is no junior Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in us, is given to us, so that the gifts within us, can pour out from us.

Paul sums the whole thing up by saying. . .

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV): Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Collectively – we are the Body of Christ. . .And you – individually – are each a part of it.

We – as a community of one – are the Body of Christ.

Paul stays on that theme of a body. The church is called to be the body, the physical representation. . .the hands and feet of Jesus in our world.

But a lot of churches are crippled. I think the body of Christ comes off as crippled because we don't use our gifts, talents, skills, abilities, and our passions, to serve the church and to serve the world through the church.

- You have gifts and abilities
- You have skills
- You have talents
- You have passions

Every one of these skills in all of their differences can be used to create a community of one that changes our world.

What if everyone here used a skill, talent, gift, ability, passion to engage in serving the church and through the church serve the community? What would happen?

Now imagine what happens: if we were to take those gifts, skills, talents, abilities, passions out of the church building and into our neighborhoods and serve our friends and neighbors.

We would be unstoppable.

When we are all together different, we are more than the sum of the parts.

Let me close this message, by issuing a challenge.

I want to challenge you to step into ministry. I don't necessarily mean full-time, vocational ministry. But I want to invite you to step into ministry. I want to challenge you to take your gifts, skills, talents, abilities, passions and start to use them in the church to serve the world.

And I'm fully aware that. . .

1. You may need to spend some time identifying them.
2. You will need to pray and see where they can best be used.
3. You may need to explore – and be free to fail.
4. You may need to start something new.

Listen, I believe so much in the gifts you all carry and I want you to be able to pursue them, activate them, use them, in this local community we call The Potter's House.

There are some here with a healing gift, some who have the gift to intercede, others of you have a prophetic gift the list goes on and on.

And if we will all take those gifts, skills, talents, abilities, passions – and come together – different as we may be. . .we will begin to change our community.

When we are all together different, we are more than the sum of the parts.

Prayer