

**Sermon Series:** “Be the Church!” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 1/31/2010

**Title:** “The Whole Is the Sum of the Parts”

**Text:** Ephesians 4:3-6, 11-16

**Intro.:** *Illus.: Church disappears – one brick at a time*

**Theme:** When Jesus calls us to become part of His Body—the Church, he transforms our world-view so that we begin seeing our lives from a interdependent relationship with other believers rather than a self-centered relationship with Him alone.

***Focused on what unites us rather than what divides us (Ephesians 4:3-6)***

- Too often, in church we are really good at listing our differences rather than our common ground in Christ
    1. What grieves God’s Spirit is when we act independent of each other – reflects on our attitude toward Spirit’s work
      - a. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. John 15:6*
      - b. *No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:3*
      - c. The Spirit made it so that we can’t have Jesus without his Body – so make every effort to stay united with it (**vs. 3**)
    2. What is counter to Spirit of Christ is when we set out to draw lines and distinctions – creating competing bodies
      - a. *"Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." Luke 9:49-50*
      - b. **Illus.: Ghettos of heaven (Lutherans, Baptist, Catholics, Disciples, etc.)**
  - What unites us under the banner of Christ’s Headship? (**vs. 4 and 15**)
    1. **Our common confession** – A God who made us, saved us, and keeps us in the faith
      - a. *One Lord and Savior* to whom we only have access through Spirit’s saving activity – humble before him/others
      - b. *One hope of heaven* — we all are going to be living together a long time (eternity)--might as well practice now
      - c. *One God who made us all* — we honor God when we honor the gift of God to each of us in each other
    2. **Our common mission** – to make disciples of Jesus Christ (those are our marching orders—making room for more)
      - a. *"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. John 10:16*
    3. **Our common leader** – Jesus Christ is head of the Church – not pastor, not leaders, not people – not a democracy
- Committed, Together, To Grow up in the Faith (Ephesians 4:11-16)***
- Build each other up
    1. **Following the lead** of those whom God has placed over us (leadership gifts in the church – **vs. 11**)
      - a. *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17*
      - b. Resisting independent streak in all of us – understanding that spiritual gifts are not mine or yours but on loan
      - c. *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7*
    2. Allowing yourself to be **equipped to serve** others (willingness to use spiritual gifts in service – **vs. 12**)
      - a. Submit to training for the sake of another (so that you can be “**complete**” – **vs. 13**)
      - b. Taking responsibility for being your “brother’s keeper” (their children, their marriage, their faith)
    3. **Using our speech to build up** rather than tear down (*speaking the truth in love – 15*)
      - a. Love is speaking the truth in a loving way – not slashing but also not shielding
      - b. *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29*
  - Mature spiritually, as measured by Christ (**vs. 13**)
    1. In the Word - *If you abide in my word, then you truly my disciples. John 8:31*
      - a. Helping each other (we) to avoid the secular deceptions warring against faith and to hang on to the truth (**14**)
    2. In His love – *By this will all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another John 13: 35*
      - a. Love is not liking someone but giving of yourself to them because they need it (sacrificial, unconditional love)
      - b. **Illus.: Teammates overcome their incomparability**
  - Striding together to get the great task of God’s kingdom done (**vs 16**)
    1. Because all of you are here because Christ placed you at LOL as a **perfect match**
      - a. **Illus.: United under the head**
    2. Because with your gifts and your ability mix – **you have a job to do which only you can do**
    3. Because you will stay healthy in your faith when we **all stay healthy in the faith together**

### **Church completely stolen one brick at a time:**

A 200-year-old building northeast of Moscow had gone unused for a decade, but the Orthodox Church, which was experiencing growth, was considering reopening the church building, and that's when they discovered their building wasn't there. They had to get to the bottom of this. After investigating the matter, the church officials did not blame aliens from outer space for the missing structure. Rather, they said the perpetrators were villagers from a nearby town, whom they said had taken and sold bricks from the building to a businessman. For each brick, the thieves received one ruble (about 4 cents). This two-story church facility did not go from being a building to not being a building in one bulldozing stroke. Rather, the bricks were apparently chiseled out one by one by lots of people. In the same way, some churches—built not of bricks but of "living stones," that is of Christians—are not reduced in one fatal stroke but rather by Christians one by one choosing not to be involved. Stay home and watch a TV preacher. Read the Bible and pray, but don't mess with the organized church. Do your own spiritual thing. Each decision means one less living stone. In the end, the church, intended by God to be the display of Christ's glory, is chiseled away. Conversely, each person who gets involved helps to build a holy temple in the Lord made up of living bricks, where Christ is glorified. **Craig Brian Larson, editor of PreachingToday.com; source: "Russian Orthodox church stolen one brick at a time," Associated Press, (11-13-08)**

### **Teammates overcome incomparability**

Time printed a photograph of the back of Washington Redskins quarterback Jeff George (his helmet off, revealing a big, white-skinned bald spot) sitting on the bench flanked by two African-American teammates, each with a supportive hand on his shoulder. The caption read, "What counts most in creating a successful team is not how compatible its players are, but how they deal with incompatibility." **"We Illustrated," Time (11-18-02); submitted by John Ottley, Johnston, Iowa**

### **United under the head**

At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jack Lipton, a psychologist at Union College, and R. Scott Builione, a graduate student at Columbia University, presented their findings on how members of the various sections of 11 major symphony orchestra perceived each other. The percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent, and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving. String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and unathletic. The orchestra members overwhelmingly chose "loud" as the primary adjective to describe the brass players. Woodwind players seemed to be held in the highest esteem, described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical. Interesting findings, to say the least! With such widely divergent personalities and perceptions, how could an orchestra ever come together to make such wonderful music? The answer is simple: regardless of how those musicians view each other, they subordinate their feelings and biases to the leadership of the conductor. Under his guidance, they play beautiful music. *Today in the Word*, June 22, 1992.

### **Ephesians 4:3-6**

<sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

[NLT]