

Series Title: BE THE CHURCH

Sermon Title: The Right Tools *In The Right Hands* | September 22, 2024

CHURCH-WIDE PRAYER:

- **Church Renewal: Directors for India and other new countries & many global disciple-makers.**
 - **Pray for God's Provision:** for God to supply for the needs of CRI (finances, wisdom, passion, skillsets and staffing) in order to sustain this disciple-making movement!
 - **Pray for the Mentoring Groups and various events taking place:** Weekly online mentoring groups are underway, providing support and growth for MANY pastors & churches across the world! Pray for the coaches of these groups, as well as the various events being run globally such as SetFree and Hearing God Seminars!
 - **Pray for Pastor Ray & Fran, as well as all CRI Staff:** Strength and stamina for another ministry year, for wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit, and continued favour to reach those across the world serving the Church!
 - **Pray for the CR Weekend @ Southland, November 1-3:** Pray that the Lord would move powerfully throughout this weekend, both in the hearts of those at Southland as well as the guests that will join us from other churches. Pray for the SetFree, CRI Presentations, and the Sunday Evening Prayer Summit!

Recap: We are in a series called **BE THE CHURCH**. Last week we talked about our call as followers of Christ to BE **SERVANTS**.

In preparation for preaching two consecutive weeks I concluded that the necessary starting point for answering the question "**HOW can we BE THE CHURCH?**" was to first talk about servanthood.

- If you recall, near the end of the sermon last week I said that being a servant was not primarily a matter of *what you do*, but of *who you are*! To be a servant is to *yield to the Holy Spirit* in our process of formation, taking on our identity in Christ as *beloved children* of God, and *servants*!

Serving others must translate to outward acts (practical, hands on), but it starts with identity.

- And what an honour this is considering that we *get to* take on the same title/role as Jesus, who was a servant, 'THE Servant', to a "t" (literally, to the cross).
 - **Matt 20:28, "...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but TO SERVE, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**
- **John 13:14, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."**
 - Thus we concluded: we have received "**The HIGHEST Call to the LOWEST Position!**"
 - Last week we covered the **right HEART** for the job of being the church (be a servant... 'servant hearted'). **This week I would like to shift focus slightly and talk about the right TOOLS for the job of building the church.**
 - **BIG TRUTH:** When God has a team of people, each one set on being a servant by *putting God's will before their own*, and by *placing other peoples interests ahead of their own*, that's a team (*a church*) that will experience the power of God in their midst... that's a church that God *wants to* pour His Holy Spirit on.
 - And that will be a church that uses *the right tools for the job!*
 - And the craziest thing is... that is just what he promised He would do!

Read Romans 12:1-13

A | One Body, Many Members

If we're going to talk about the right tools for the job, we should first agree on what the job is exactly... That impacts which tools are needed, why they're needed, and further, how those tools would be used!

- **So, what's 'the job'?** Simply put, the job is to **BUILD THE CHURCH!** Or you could say, to *form the Body*, to borrow from Paul's vocabulary in this passage. *"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."* **Romans 12:4-5**
 - **The Church is not a building – it's a people (a 'called-out assembly').** We are called to build *one another up*, not just make buildings!
 - All around the world right now there are MANY disciples of Jesus. The church is growing, the Gospel is spreading, and the Body of Christ (i.e. the Church) is being formed!
 - And Paul says, *"...so in Christ we, **THOUGH MANY, form one body...**"* (Romans 12:5)
- Southland Church is just one tiny part of this larger Body of Christ spread all over the world! That's why when we talk about the church, you will sometimes hear us reference *big "C" and little "c" church...* When we refer to the Big "C" church, we're talking about the Global Church!
 - **Southland is a little "c" church, linked into the Global Body of Christ.** God cares for His Church, as well as this church! We're part of something much larger than ourselves!!
 - **And that's the "job" (mission) we've been given – we've been called to **BE THE CHURCH** by **BUILDING THE CHURCH!**** We've been tasked to participate with the Lord in forming this body of Christ. Though there are MANY of us here at Southland, and more in our community, our nation and across the world – the job is to form one body, the Church!
 - **Let's look at a few other passages that describe this.**

Called To Build The Church: *God's idea, we participate!*

- **Jesus said, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."** **Matthew 16:18** (first time term *Church* is mentioned)
 - **Context:** Jesus asked his disciples: *"Who do you say I am?"* Peter spoke up, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* **Correct answer!** The Church is built on the foundation of Jesus' identity – He is God incarnate, promised Messiah + the Son of God!
 - Jesus responds, **"I will build my Church, you will be involved, and it won't be overcome!"** We don't have time to get into detail on this whole exchange. There is some deeper significance to what Jesus is saying, and WHERE Jesus is saying it! But what's important to see is that the idea of *building the church does not originate with Paul!*
- **The church is not a human idea...** I've heard people make this claim, saying that the church was a man-made idea that came along after Jesus... an 'add-on'. NOT SO!
 - The Church has always been God's plan. We are simply invited to join and participate.
- Let's look at another famous teaching from Jesus. We talk about this one LOT'S, and for good reason! **The Great Commission:** *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* **Matthew 28:18-20**
- Again, this shows that the church is NOT a building. Rather, *it's a people (i.e. it's about disciples)!*

- Furthermore, as we can see, the Church was *not our idea*... it is the Lord's command!!
 - o Pause: *Why am I emphasizing that point so much? What's the big deal that it was God's idea? ANSWER*: If the church was a man-made idea... just a good thought some person had one time... then we don't have to be so *serious about* or *committed to* building it.
 - o ***Being The Church is hard work at times***. If you have been a part of the church for some time, you know this. Being the church by building the church means that you will have to serve other peoples needs before your own. Not easy. It means you are going to have to forgive people when they let you down. Not easy! It means striving to preserve unity, never compromising on truth but also abounding in love/grace. NOT EASY!
 - **Building the church is not optional** – it's a command! And we can't quit on it.
- One more passage, from Paul, where we see this calling a more clearly. **Eph. 4:11-13, 16**, *“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, **SO THAT the body of Christ may be built up** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ... From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **grows and builds itself up in love**, as each part does its work.”*
- Notice the importance of Christ's provision (all proceeds from Him), yet our participation!
- **Summary**: The church is a Body, both local and Global, and it was God's sovereign plan to build His church! To form one Body from many. **OUR JOB IS TO PARTICPATE IN THIS!**
 - o **And that is a massive job which is, truthfully, very challenging at times!**
 - In order to accomplish this, it is going to require **unity**. That is to say, God's people moving in the same direction, submitted to the Head of the Church, Jesus!

B | Unity In A World Of Individuality

Romans 12:4-6, *“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, **and each member belongs to all the others**. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.”*

- **Forming one Body in Christ requires unity!** Being united, unified and joined together.

Yet, we live in a very individualistic culture. That is to say, we tend to think about ourselves as individuals (or separate family units) above/before members of a larger community. *We tend to first ask “What's in it for me?” rather than “What can I give?”* I don't think it's a new problem (selfishness is not new) but our world has advanced in many ways that allow us to be more self-sufficient and increasingly less reliant on other people than perhaps ever before. We are in the deep end of independence.

As I reflected on this passage, it struck me that there are aspects of it that many people in our culture today would likely find compelling. For example, the part where it says we *“do not all have the same function... **we have different gifts**.”* This pairs well with the lines that are repeated to us from a young age: **BE YOURSELF! YOU DO YOU! Find that thing that makes you sparkle... and do that!**

- We place strong emphasis on self-autonomy and self-actualization (who are you? or more accurately, who do you *want to be*? what makes you unique? Then... make it happen!)
 - o Question is, how does this thinking shape us? does it prepare us to think others minded?
 - o Maybe it's not all bad... but I wonder – do we subtly train ourselves to think ME FIRST, instead of OTHERS FIRST when we ask questions like *“What do you want to be when you*

- grow up?*”. This is different than asking, “*What are the greatest needs around you that you could consider meeting? How can you help others by being part of the solution?*”
- God puts dreams, desires, passions and giftings into all of us, and that is not bad! In fact, its good! I’m not saying that we should never ask kids what they want to be when they grow up. Rather, what I’m saying is that there’s an *important balance* within this passage that we need!
 - **That balancing statement is that WE BELONG to one another.** That is to say, we’re called to steward our individuality (our dreams, passions and gifts) in such a way that *builds others up*.
 - o The idea of “belonging to one another” may seem odd to us. So while we may find part of this verse *compelling*, we also find it *confounding*. We resist it at times, don’t we? It seems almost possessive. “*You don’t own me! I am my own. I can do what I want! Just let me do my own thing!!*” Yet Scripture is very clear on this.
 - o “***You are not your own; you were bought at a price.***” **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**
 - **BE THE CHURCH, not “Me. The Church.”** We have an obligation to one another. Brothers & sisters, we are not our own – **we belong first to Christ, and second, to one another!** (Rom. 12:5)

And now we are at the crux of the issue: it’s why we need to hold in tension the call to BE SERVANTS.

Our individuality still exists and still matters as followers of Jesus. You don’t cease to be a person when Jesus calls you to follow him. And you have unique gifts. But you’re called to steward it well.

- God made you unique and special, but he also made you to be a part of something much bigger than yourself! He made you, and placed you here and now for a purpose, to live with purpose!
- **Did you notice that Paul talks about two “bodies” in Romans 12.** The individual, and corporate!
 - o **Body # 1: YOU...** “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*” **Romans 12:1** (called to die to self, but also live for others!)
 - o **Body #2: The CHURCH...** “*...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.*” **Romans 12:5** (we’ve been given gifts for the task of building the Church!)
- **BIG TRUTH:** When God has a team of people, each one set on being a servant by *putting God’s will before their own, and by placing other peoples interests ahead of their own*, that’s a team (a church) that will experience the power of God in their midst... that’s a church that God wants to pour His Holy Spirit on.
 - And that will be a church that uses *the right tools for the job!*
 - God wants to put the right tools (gifts) into the right hands – *the hands of a servant!*

C | The Right Tools For The Job

Now we may finally ask: what are the right tools for this job of BEING THE CHURCH by BUILDING THE CHURCH? Let’s take a look. Paul beings to make a list.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is servicing, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” **Romans 12:6-8**

- **Unity + Diversity:** *Aren’t you glad we aren’t all the same!? Ex. Piano has many keys, different notes! When believers work together in unity by using our diverse gifts, we should harmonize!!*

- This is one of a couple places within Scripture where you will find *a list* of what we typically call “*the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*”. You can also observe the gifts at work throughout the Gospels and Acts! In today’s sermon I will not unpack these gifts in detail or explain how each is used to build the church. *In fact, that is not even my intention.* Rather, I’m simply trying to highlight that the gifts are available to us, and more importantly, WHY they have been given to us.
 - o **You know, I don’t think we consider the gifts enough...** I personally want to think about and desire the gifts more!! Consider how sad it would be for a church to attempt to build itself up without using the right tools for the job. Imagine the frustration as these tools, these GIFTS, sat idly by collecting dust while we try in our own strength and cunning to complete the task. Not only would that be sad – *it reveals our pride!*
 - o **Borrowing Tools Example:** we are doing a small reno at home currently... I was hanging drywall the other day. I called my friend and asked to borrow some tools. He lent me a few things... a roto zip, a T-square, a toe kick, and his drywall screw gun. Let me tell you – the right tool for the job makes a HUGE difference!!
- **Brothers and Sisters** – Paul is highlighting these tools and URGING US TO USE THEM! The question is... are we? Are we even open to them? When is the last time you evaluated your life and the call you’ve been given, then evaluated the gifts that the Lord has provided to you? **OR** took note of the needs of others around you and asked the Lord for a gift(s) in order to help!!
- **You may say, “What gifts has he given me? I don’t recall getting any gifts...”** *Have you asked?*
 - o **“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.”** Romans 12:6
 - o **Paul lists seven in just two verses:** Prophecy, serving, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, and mercy. **BONUS:** Hospitality is mentioned in verse 13 as well.
- **Elsewhere:** *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”* **1 Corinthians 12:7.** According to Paul, we’ve all be given gifts! **He continues...**
- *“⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a **message of wisdom**, to another a **message of knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ 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**. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”* **1 Corinthians 12:8-11**
- **Understanding the Gifts:** When we look at a such passages that outline the gifts, we can likely get a sense for which areas we might have a gifting. Are there some that seem to draw you in naturally? Its likely that the Lord has already given you a gifting there, *or at least a desire!*

It is not as though we can only get one and that’s it! The Holy Spirit has these gifts to equip us for the mission of building the church and serving others. Additionally, we’re told in Scripture to *desire the gifts* – that is to say **ask for them** – as well as to “fan them into flame” in our lives (increase/develop them)!

- **Summary:** Again, I haven’t explained how each gift is used to build the church, and *that is not my intention today.* (Come to the next Empower for a deeper dive!) What I’m simply trying to highlight today is that the gifts are available to us, and most importantly, WHY these gifts are available to us. **These gifts are here for the common good, to build one another up!** And that is VERY appealing for someone who resonates with the call to be a servant!

Conclusion:

Remember: *“Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” (Rick Warren)*

- **Some people’s pride leads them to the spotlight...** it’s dangerous, and must be guarded against!
- **But some people’s pride keeps them in the shadows...** this is tragic, and must be avoided!

BIG TRUTH: When God has a team of people, each one set on being a servant by *putting God’s will before their own, and by placing other peoples interests ahead of their own*, that’s a team (*a church*) that will experience the power of God in their midst... that’s a church that God *wants to pour His Holy Spirit on*.

- And that will be a church that uses *the right tools for the job!*
- God wants to put the right tools (gifts) into the right hands – *the hands of a servant!*

Southland, are we going to be this kind of church?