

The Broken Body of Christ

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the church being a body that represents the heart of Christ, not a self-focused and self-indulgent institution that marginalizes the poor.

Duration: 50:30

Scripture: Ezekiel 34:1, Matthew 26:39, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 11:26

Topics: "False Prophets", "True Shepherds"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of false shepherds in Israel who are exploiting the people for their own gain. He quotes from Ezekiel 34, where God condemns these shepherds for not feeding the flock and instead feeding themselves. The preacher emphasizes that God is fed up with these charlatans and is going to send a word to deliver His people from their grip. He also highlights the importance of true shepherds who seek the lost, heal the sick, and strengthen the weak, contrasting them with the selfish and cruel leaders.

Transcript

1 Corinthians chapter 11, the broken body of Christ, beginning at verse 23. Paul says, For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat.

This is my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. And after the same manner also he took the cup, when he had stopped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood.

This do ye, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. Now the apostle Paul, in this particular passage, actually not just the passage, but this entire chapter of Scripture, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, is responding to reports that came to him of a self-focused and a self-indulgent spirit, which had gained a foothold in the church of Corinth in that time and in that place.

It was reported to him that people were coming together, and it was intended, as it is, this agape feast, or this time of communion, to be a meal where the true heart of Christ was manifested in his body. That means the heart that Jesus had for those that he gave his life for would be represented, in as much as is possible, of course, equal proportion among his people, that there would be the same care and compassion, one for another, that he had exhibited towards those, in particular, at the time of this last

meal that he had with his disciples. But something had happened to the church, and we have to consider this church is only just a breath away from the cross, as it is, and already corruption is beginning to set in.

Those that had lots were gathering together, and they were having a feast among themselves. They were eating to the full, and they were drinking, and they were happy, and a sense of party atmosphere had developed among the people. And others were coming into this time that was supposed to be a communion time, or representing the time of Christ with his people, and they were marginalized, as it is.

They were pushed to the sides and still hungry, looking on as everyone around them, or others around them, are eating and feasting, and they have nothing to give, they have nothing to bring, and they're receiving nothing from those who have much to give. And Paul was very distressed at this report that came to him. And he, verses 20 and 21, he says, When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

In other words, Paul was saying, what I hear is happening, this is not the supper of the Lord. This is not what Christ has called his body to be. For in eating, every one taketh before the other his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken.

And Paul says, it was an incredulous thing, Paul said, how could this be? How could this happen in the church of Jesus Christ that a selfishness gets in, to the point where as long as one segment of the body is blessed, they seemingly don't care about the other segment, the other portion, who are poor or perhaps have nothing to offer, or maybe are not of the same race or language or culture or social class, and they push them to the sides, and they leave them there to view this feast as it is, but viewing it from the outside, not really being invited in, not being made partakers of this provision, which is supposed to be a type of the love of God for his church and through his church. Now, I have been a shepherd for several years. I had a sheep farm in Canada and raised sheep, and so I've seen this actual principle in sheep, where we bring in oats to the barn and fill the feeding trough with oats, and when you put good food in the trough, as it is that the sheep will just come barging through the door en masse.

And I've seen them push their way to the trough, and watched in dismay as the stronger push aside the weaker, and the injured and the old are pushed out of the way as it is by those that are strong. And this very principle that Paul talks about that was happening in the church in Corinth, I've seen it in a barn, where the strong push the weak and the old and the young and the infirm out of the way, and I've seen this with the eyes of a shepherd. I've watched them standing and waiting on the sides of the barn as it is, hoping that after the stronger are finished and the fatter and the wealthier as it is, the ones that have obtained more provision in the past are finished, that there'll be something left for them.

One walks away satisfied and another looks on hungry. And Paul talks elsewhere in the Scriptures, actually quite extensively, if you research it, about this type of a heart that can get a hold of the body of Christ. And in Philippians chapter 3, verses 18 and 19, I'll just read it to you.

Paul says, For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. They're the enemies of everything that Jesus was about. Their behavior makes them such.

Paul says, Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame. In other words, what they think to be satisfying is actually something that's bringing them into a place of shame. And he concludes by saying, Who mind earthly things.

Their whole focus, what they do, what they're moving to, is not born of the Spirit of God, but it's born of the Spirit of this world. And they're doing this even in the name of God, not realizing that in marginalizing the poor and in letting their belly govern, even their theology, they are moving to what they think is fulfilling, and even in the name of God, but it is a shame that is coming upon them. What they're becoming is a shame, Paul says.

It's not the glory of Christ. It's not the heart of Christ. They're not ambassadors as it is for Christ.

Everywhere they go, they don't represent Christ. Neither in the Christian world, nor in the secular world. There's without God.

They stand and they are embodied as it is with shame, not with the glory of God, simply because their minds are fashioned by things of this world. They are like sheep pushing to the trough, even in the name of God for what they can get. Pushing aside those that have nothing.

Pushing aside the weak. Pushing aside the disenfranchised of society. As long as I'm happy, as long as I'm healthy, as long as I'm wealthy, then even broadcasting it as it is into other parts of the world.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, 22, he says, What? He said, Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? Paul says, I praise you not. He says to the Corinthian church, Do you not have houses to do this in? Why do you use the church as a vehicle to shame the poor? Paul's saying, If you're going to do this, do it at home. Do it in your house.

If you want to feast, feast in your house. If you want to be self-indulgent, be self-indulgent in your house. If you want to exclude the poor, exclude them in your house.

But don't bring this into the house of God. Don't think you can make this part of the house of God. How is it possible, Paul says, that you think you can use the church as a vehicle to shame the poor? If this was transpiring in Paul's day, the question that comes to our hearts is, How much more is it transpiring in ours? How much more are we, of this generation perhaps, not doing the same things? And I'm talking now to the church at large.

I'm not speaking just to Times Square Church, but the church at large, especially throughout much of North America and the Western world. If this was a problem in Paul's day, how much more has it become a problem in our day? I think of the times that I have been in Africa, and I have spoken in arenas, and spoken in fields, and seen people coming who have nothing. They haven't even shoes on their feet.

They are desperate, looking for hope and help, looking for a reason to live. Personal circumstances may not change. In Zambia, sitting in the stadium in Lusaka, realizing that a third of my audience would probably be dead within two years.

Their hope has to come from the Lord. Their help has to come from God. Their focus has to be a focus on eternity.

But I think of the self-indulgent Christian media from America being broadcast into these areas of the world. Preachers in standing, as it is at the trough, talking about how rich they are, and how prosperous they are, and how if you are a Christian, all this can be yours. You should have a wonderful big house and a nice car.

You should be happy and healthy and be wearing \$10,000 suits all the time. And talking about how much of a party it is to live for God, while all of the poor around the world are sitting and looking at this. I remember speaking in the former Soviet bloc country, in a missions conference, and speaking on the purpose of suffering in the body of Christ.

Now, in the natural, I would have wanted to go in, because it was a very subdued gathering. Many of the men and women, their lives are very hard. They have hardly enough money to put gas in a vehicle to even get to these meetings.

And when they get there, they don't have any food. We have to feed most of them when they come. And their heads are down, they can hardly clap their hands.

And in the natural, I would have wanted to give one of those, you know, you can do it in the strength of God messages. But the Lord gave me a message on suffering, and I spoke about the purpose of suffering through the life of Paul. I remember giving an altar call, and so shocked at the men and women who stepped out of their seats, and they didn't even make it to the altar.

They fell on their knees in the aisles and began weeping and wailing before God. But not for sorrow, it was a very strange meeting. I couldn't quite understand why they had such a response to this type of a message.

And when it was over, and when the weeping was over, oh folks, there was an outbreak of joy that was inexplicable. These folks don't do what they just did. They started to dance.

Even the worship team, they were dancing on the platform. There was joy broke out, and joy stayed in the meeting. And some of the people told me after, the ministers, they said, we thought somehow that we were outside of the favor of God.

We listen to tapes from America, and we watch television from America, and we think that if this is Christianity, and God blesses His children in the way that they say His children are all blessed, then we must be outside of God's favor. God must be angry with us, because we suffer, and we are cast out of our jobs, and our families suffer, and time and again we are ridiculed in our society, and we go through terrible hardship. We thought we must be somehow outside of the favor of God.

The poor as it is, pushed to the sidelines by a self-indulgent church that has lost the very heart of God. Now Ezekiel, if you'll go back in the Old Testament with me, because the Old Testament shows us the patterns of how God has dealt, and will deal with these things that are being propagated in His name. He's against theological indulgence, which uses His name.

He always has been, and always will be. And I want you to hear what the Lord has given me to say. There is a time when God says enough.

Throughout history, throughout the past, and in the present, there is a time. God will endure the misrepresentation of His name. But there is a time when the people begin to cry.

There is a time when God, just for the glory and honor of His own name, says enough. Enough of this. He rises as a man in a fury, and begins to go after His bride that is being captivated by wrong ideology about who He is.

Listen to Ezekiel in chapter 34. The word of the Lord came to me, verse 1, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves.

Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and you clothe you with the wool. You kill them that are fed, but you feed not the flock. We have a vision here now of a ministry that has arisen, that looks upon the people only to receive from them.

The people are only a means to an objective, to achieve their own sense of destiny or greatness. He says, You eat the fat, verse 3, and you clothe you with the wool, and you kill them that are fed, but you feed not the flock. The diseased have you not strengthened? Neither have you healed that which was sick.

Neither have you bound up that which was broken. Neither have you brought again that which was driven away. And neither have you sought that which was lost.

But with force and with cruelty have you ruled them. And they were scattered because there is no shepherd. And they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered, verse 6. My sheep wandered throughout all the mountains and upon every high hill.

Yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not my flock.

Therefore, O you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, and neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more. For I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

God says, I'm going to deliver my people from those who have misrepresented my name, who have used what purport to be the words of God to pad their own ministries and to build their own reputations. They've not fed the flock, they've not gone after those that are living in sin, they've ministered to those who are living in idolatry and told the sinner, it is well with you when it is not well. For thus saith the Lord God, verse 11, behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out.

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so I will seek out my sheep and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people and gather them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be.

There shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. In other words, God says, I will bring them into rest.

There is something happening in the world of the church of Jesus Christ. There is a stirring. This is a stirring of the Holy Ghost.

God has finally said, it is enough. It is enough of thieves and charlatans speaking in my name over my people. God is going to send a word that is going to deliver people out of the grip of these men and women, these ungodly men and women who have stood in his name and done nothing but use the people of God for their own gain.

I will seek that which was lost, verse 16, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong. I will feed them with judgment.

As for you, O my flock, saith the Lord God, behold, I will judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. Verse 20 says, Therefore, thus saith the Lord God to them, behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and the lean cattle, because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the disease with your horns, until you have scattered them abroad. Therefore, he says, will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

You see, the Lord is saying, I'm going to judge the shepherds that taught my people to be greedy and self-consumed, and then I'm going to bring wrong theology into judgment, and those who have clean hearts, those who truly want to know God are going to be set free from this false presentation of Christ. Verse 23 says, And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David. Now, this, of course, is not King David, because this is after David, physical time.

But this is the lineage of David, which is Jesus Christ. And he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David, a prince among them.

I, the Lord, have spoken it. God says, I will deliver you, and Jesus will become your shepherd. You are going to hear his voice again.

You are going to know his heart. You are going to become his body. This last generation is going to have a testimony for Christ around the world.

Irrespective of the justice that must come to America because of its shed blood, there is going to be a testimony of Christ to a people that God himself says, I'm going to lead you to myself. I'm going to be a shepherd over you and speak into your hearts. There's going to be a testimony in other parts of the world, in spite of the difficulties that are going to be facing all of mankind as the rebellion against God intensifies.

There is going to be a people whose voices are raised, and they're going to say, this is our God, we know him. In the midst of the fire, they're going to sing songs of praise and victory, for they know him. They know who he is.

They know his heart. They're able to lead others into his fold. And in spite of whatever personal calamities people might be facing, they're able to cause them to come into a place of rest.

For rest is not found in this world. Rest is found in the person of Jesus Christ alone. Hallelujah.

And I, the Lord, will be their God, verse 24. And my servant David, a prince among them, I, the Lord, have spoken it. And the word in Hebrew for a prince means an exalted one, a king, a messiah.

It also has another curious meaning. It means the vapor which ascends from the earth and makes clouds. Or it may refer to the clouds themselves.

It really says to my heart, God is speaking and says, I will make the two of you one in the same. That which goes up will be exactly the same as that which comes down. There will be praise that goes up from a people who know him, and coming down will be showers of blessing.

The absolute life and favor of Jesus Christ will come upon this end-day church. There is a glory of God coming upon those that are his, those that know him. They will praise him in the midst of trial.

They will praise him in spite of what life brings. Their joy is not circumstance dependent. Their joy is found in him.

The more they praise him, the more they begin to know his life. The more they trust him, the more they are infused with his divine life. Every promise of God becomes a living reality within their hearts.

They are taken from place to place, image to image, glory to glory. And when all the world is moving into a deeper encroaching darkness, Christ sets these ones on a hill, and they give light to all that are in the house. And I will make with them, verse 25, a covenant of peace and cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land.

They shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them in the places round about my hill a blessing. And I will cause the shower to come down in this season, and there shall be showers of blessing.

And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. And they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of the yoke and delivered them out of the hand of those that serve themselves of them. Now the apostle Paul confronts the Corinthian era just as Ezekiel says that God will.

If you go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, this is how the Holy Spirit will always confront theological practice which is in error. And he will do it by bringing Jesus Christ into full view again. You see, theological error can only be propagated as long as Jesus Christ is obscured.

But what the Holy Spirit will do is just, one more time, rend the veil. Where wicked men have rebuilt this veil that separates man from the Holy God. The Holy Spirit will rend this veil one more time.

And one more time reveal the person of Jesus Christ. Bring him out in clarity. Even in the book of Revelation, the churches had moved into practices which had veered from the person, and the purpose, and the purity as it is of Christ.

And so to confront it, it was not just a contrary argument that came against it. It is Christ himself who came and walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. And it's the appearing of Christ that confronts error.

This appearing, this sudden unveiling of the person of Jesus Christ when God begins to speak one more time. And this is how Paul confronts this Corinthian error. In verse 23 in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Now, you have to understand these verses 23 to 26. Paul is creating a contrast to this self-indulgent spirit that has gotten a hold of these people. And the apostle Paul is saying, your practice is not how I have received Christ.

This is not the Christ that I know. You are feasting while others are starving. You are self-indulgent and happy as long as your belly is full, and seemingly unconcerned when others who are also part of the body of Christ have nothing to eat.

And this is not Christ, Paul says. This is not the Christ that was revealed to me. He goes on and he says, for I have received of the Lord, verse 23, that which also I delivered to you.

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. Now, firstly, Paul says it was a night of betrayal. The gospel, in great measure, had lost its popularity.

1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 3, Paul says, The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables. It was a night of betrayal. And folks, we're living in a season where the gospel is no longer popular.

We're living in a very, very perilous time, as the scriptures tell us, when evil is becoming good, and good is becoming evil. As we saw in that video where signs can be put up in the middle of Times Square. Wicked is wonderful, and seemingly people have no problem with this anymore.

Yet, in the midst of this betrayal, in verse 25, it says, After the same manner he took the cup, and he said, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, this do you as often as you drink it, and remember it's of me. One of the other gospels says that he gave thanks. He took the cup, and he gave thanks.

In John chapter 18 and verse 11, Jesus said, The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it? You see, this is the Father's purpose for my life. It's not the one Christ ultimately could say to us today, that I desired in my flesh. For we know that in the garden of Gethsemane he said, Father, if it be possible, take this cup away from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done. It's not the one which he desired in the flesh, but yet it was the Father's will, and therefore Christ embraced it as his own. And folks, this is the cup.

Paul is saying, this is what was in the heart of Christ. That it was not perhaps in the natural, in the part of him that was fully man. It was not first choice to do this.

But he was led not by that part of him which was man. He was not led by this nature, he was led by the Spirit of God. And he said, nevertheless, it's not what I want, it's what the Father has for my life.

And Paul said, this is the cup that Christ took. And in verse 24 it says, when he had given thanks, he broke it, after he had taken the bread rather, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.

This is my body, he said. Take and eat from me. Find nourishment.

And find it in the yielding of my life for yours. This is my body. He took a loaf of bread, you have to see this, and he broke it.

And said, this is my body which is broken for you. Then he says, do this in remembrance of me. And he was offering his own brokenness as nourishment.

As it is for those who had before him are going to need it. They're all going to fail him. They're going to need the strength that only Christ can provide to live the life that God the Father has called them to live.

Now scripture tells us that not a bone of the body of Christ would be broken. So the brokenness he speaks of is manifested in another way. First of all, what is this brokenness of Christ? His hands were not free to be used for his own need.

On the cross, there were nails put through these two major wrist bones into the cross itself. And his hands were no longer free to reach out for his own gratification. He was completely yielded to the will of his father.

His feet were not free to pursue his own path. And I think, I can't help but contrast this with so much of what presents itself to be Christ in our generation. Greedy people reaching out, using their hands as it is, scooping and gathering into themselves, using their feet and pursuing whatever direction which they think in their own minds is going to be gratifying.

And yet Christ said, no, this is not my body. My body is broken for you. My hands are yielded.

My feet are yielded. Even his heart was not free from our need. For at the end of the crucifixion, when the centurion came and took a spear and pierced underneath his rib in the area of his heart, even then life-saving blood and life-giving water poured out of his heart.

Even his heart was not free. Everything that was in him was yielded and broken as it is for our need. This is my body, he said.

This is who I am. This is my body. My body is not a self-consumed body.

My body is not a body that reaches out for its own gratification, pulls levers and commands money to fall out of heaven. My body is not a body that moves in its own course by the leading of its own natural mind. My body is yielded to the Holy Spirit of Almighty God.

My body does not have a heart that is untouched with the failings and fallings and the perishing of humanity around it created in the image of God. My body can't turn away from human need. The Scripture says, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, and although he sits as king, the firstborn from the dead, and he possesses the resources of heaven, yet even today he still invites the poor, the lame and blind to a wonderful banquet, and he makes sure that all who come to him are fed, all who are thirsty are given drink.

Even today the voice of Christ still cries out, you who are thirsty, come to me and drink. If you're hungry, come to me and eat. This is the cry of Christ.

And how far in how short a time the church in Corinth had fallen away from this heart. How much their gathering was a misrepresentation of the very nature and mission of God through his Son, Jesus Christ. Verse 26, Paul says, As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are to show the Lord's death till he comes.

As often as you are yielded to the will of the Father, as often as your body is presented to God as a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service, as often as you say in your heart, Father, not my will, but thy will be done, as often as you and I choose not the way that seems right to the natural man, but the way

that God has prescribed his church to walk. As long as our heart is moved with the struggles of those who have no hope and no help, we show his death, we show the reason why Christ died. We show it to our generation.

I don't know about you, but I am tired of passionless preaching. I don't know how the people stand it. I don't know how they turn on the radio and television and listen to these passionless, absolutely passionless, except for their own greed.

No passion for the things of God. No passion for the poor. No passion for the widow.

No passion for the orphan. No passion for the dying and distressed. Deep down in their heart they say, let them all go to hell as long as I'm rich and my refrigerator is full.

But there's only one body that shows his death. There's only one body that shows this world who Christ is and why he died. This is a body that says, Jesus, it is only reasonable that I should follow in your footsteps.

Jesus, you gave me an invitation to take up my cross daily and follow you. Jesus, you said that the same spirit that raised you from the dead would quicken my mortal body. You would enable my frail heart to care.

You would enable my frail feet to walk in the pathway of God. You would enable my selfish hands to reach out and touch that which you love. You would enable me.

When you and I are in a contentious place, and we choose to walk humbly for the sake of another, the Lord can point to himself through us and say, this is my body which is broken for you. When we refuse to get argumentative and proud, but we humble ourselves before God and man. Many, many people don't realize it, but the Holy Spirit is always looking in every place for somebody he can point to and say, this is my body which is broken for you.

He or she is not acting this way because they really want to. They're acting this way because they know they have to. Because your soul is more important than their pride.

When we yield our plans for the plans of God, we show the Lord's death till he comes. When people come and say, why are you doing what you're doing? And we're able to say, I do it because God loves you. I do it because there's a passion in the heart of God for your soul, and for your family, and for your children, and for your situation, and for your future eternally.

And God has shared a measure of it with me. And because of it, I'm enabled to yield my own desires. I'm enabled to walk away from the trough of my own feeding and justification.

The devil has always been after that in the Christian church. That is why in the wilderness he tried to get Jesus to turn the stones to bread. If he could move him to using his position to satisfy his own need, he would have circumvented the entire gospel.

When we are wronged, when we are ridiculed, when we are falsely accused, and we take it patiently for the sake of other people's souls, the Lord is able to point to us and say, this is my body, which is broken for you. Broken for you. And we don't fight back, and we don't argue back, and we don't, as the scripture says, respond in like manner.

And we don't do it just not because we don't have a reason, but because there is a higher plan. There's a higher purpose. The very people who are ridiculing us as Christians are headed into a Christless eternity.

And the only gospel they ever may see is the gospel that Christ will preach through you and through me. When you continue to be a servant, and you wash the feet of those who might fail your expectations, the Lord can point to you and say, this is my body. And we show his death until he comes.

When somebody has failed us and we wash their feet and say, I'm willing to give whatever God has given me that you might be made stronger in this area of your life. When we take a towel and gird ourselves, and we don't attempt to make ourselves the dominant one in every situation, but the one who serves, the Lord can then point and say, this is my body, and this church shows my death until I come. When you give up your seat in church or on the subway for a raggedy, poor-looking man, sometimes it's a more powerful preaching than those that stand with a Bible in the subway.

I want you to think about this for a moment. I've heard people preach in the subway and most of them are very annoying. I have to be honest, they're very annoying.

There's something very, very wrong. I've heard a few that have a genuine cry, but most are extremely annoying. It's like an empty can quoting scripture.

But give up your seat for a poor man. And Jesus, you're not even aware of it, but the Holy Spirit begins, there's 20 people around, and he points to you and says, this is my body. This is my body, broken for you.

When by God's incredible grace, you and I are enabled to consider every man better than ourselves, we show the Lord's death until he comes. And folks, this does and will take incredible grace. When we genuinely care.

When our caring is not something we do just to pacify our conscience, but we genuinely care. When we are moved by human need. We're not using people for advantage, but we are using what we have for their advantage.

When we see every person created in the image of God, special to God, cherished by God, loved by God, desired by God, and we trust this empowerment of the Holy Spirit that God gives us to allow his life to flow through us to them, be it a glass of water, a kind word, a dollar in a bucket, I don't know, whatever it is. We show the Lord's death until he comes. I've been praying this week, and it's been a simple prayer.

I wrote it down. God Almighty. Because it has to be God Almighty who answers this prayer.

Take me there. And let me show your death in my situation. My home.

In my family. In my church. In my community.

In my city. In my world. Take me there.

Because I can't go there in my own strength. God, you have to take me. This is something so far beyond me that I'm as far as Christ was in Gethsemane in some areas.

Oh, God, take this cup from me if it's possible. But to go beyond that, I need this incredible grace. I need this life of the Holy Spirit.

My prayer has to be as Christ was. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. God, I have to trust you to put this in me.

I have to trust you for the strength to be what I'm about to preach. I began to realize in preparing this message, this is something where I need the same strength that every person in this church needs. I can't do this without the Spirit of God.

But my prayer is, let me show your death through my life. Let people see the reason why you died. Let them be able to look at my life and see Christ.

That's the cry of my heart. Let them hear Christ. Let it be Christ.

I know that you and I are not perfect in this and we're flawed and we will fail. But more and more as we trust him, I believe that he has a church that will be seen. He will be seen in his church in the last days.

A people who don't push out human need any longer, who don't use Christ for their own gain and glory. A people whose hearts are, as Malachi says, moved by God back to the children. And the children's hearts go back to the fathers.

This talks about an inclusiveness. It talks about the spirit of selfishness that will virtually dominate the world and cause there to be a loss of family affection will not be found in the church of Jesus Christ. There will be an inclusiveness in the body.

There will be a compassion that will be occurring. It will be not something that is programmed that can't be. It has to be supernatural.

This must come from the spirit of God because you cannot work this in the flesh. And it comes to the heart that says, Jesus, I want this. I recognize this is truth.

I recognize that this is Christianity. I recognize that this is what the body of Christ of who I am part of now is all about. I recognize that's why I'm left here in this world.

It's not to indulge myself at a banqueting table. It's to be an ambassador of the Christ who went to a cross. It's to be an ambassador of that passion in the heart of God for every person ever born in the image of God.

It's to stand and cry in the marketplace without uttering a single word from my mouth. Something emanates from your very life within me. And it's about you, Holy Spirit, being able to point to my life.

And silently, my life walks. If I walk through a corridor, you can point to my life. It's a church that goes into the marketplace.

The Holy Spirit can point to your life. You go through your neighborhood, the Holy Spirit can point to people who are looking out the window with you. And all you're doing is you're carrying your groceries going down the street, but the Holy Spirit can point to you.

And say, this is my body which is broken for you. This is not a person who walks in pride or self-indulgence or is argumentative or confrontational or proud. This is my body that is broken for you.

This is the cry of my heart. It's the cry of God's heart for His church in this last hour of time. Only the Holy Spirit can take us there.

But the good news is that Jesus said, ask, you shall receive. Seek, you shall find. Knock, it shall be opened to you.

Everyone that asks receives. He that seeks shall find. He said, if you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? I have a simple altar call today in the annex in the main sanctuary.

We're going to stand in a moment. And if this message is spoken to your heart, I'm going to ask you to make your way in the annex and stand between the screens in the main sanctuary. You can join with me at the altar.

But it's very simple. Jesus, in my situation, would you please help me to show your death through my life? And you may have a specific situation or it might be just a general prayer that's in your heart. You might have a situation right now.

You say, God, I need you. I need you so that I can walk humbly in this situation. Help me, Lord Jesus, to show your death, that you can point to my life and say, this is my body which is broken for you.

Help me, O God, to do what is right. If this is the cry of your heart as we stand, would you please make your way to this altar? And we're going to pray together and believe for an outpouring of God's strength to do this very thing in us. All of us.

That we might be his body. Would you just make your way? Slip out. Dock and you can go to either exit.

Main sanctuary. Slip out of your seat. Make your way to the altar.

Thank you, Jesus. Lord, you will have a church. In the last hours of time, you will have a church.

You will have a glorious church. You will have a church that has your heart. A church that walks in your path.

A church, O God, that you are able to lead. A church that you are able, O Jesus, to say, this is my beloved body. Hallelujah.

Father, you know that our hearts are sincere at this altar. And we pray today that as a church body, that you deliver us from all selfishness that tries to masquerade as Christianity. And give us your heart and hands.

Give us your feet. Give us the willingness to obey God. And to be and to do what God has called us to be as a church.

Lord Jesus, I pray today that you might be privileged to point to those that are gathered in this house today. And say to this world in which we have to go today, this is my body. Which is broken for you.

They've yielded their plans. They've given up their ambitions. They're not living a life of self-seeking and using my name.

They're given for you. They're broken for you. I pray that you might give us the heart of Christ.

That this might be our deepest possession in this final hour of time. That we might have a heart of compassion for a lost and a dying society. Father, you know our cry today.

You know this is what we need. I pray now for those who are in very difficult situations and need to die. That others may live.

Need to yield that others may be set free. Need to be a servant that others may find Christ. I pray for great grace for those who are being belittled and persecuted and scorned.

That they might have that very same strength. Father, that you gave your son Jesus. To put on a towel and to wash the feet of those who are failing him.

I pray God that you would break pride in us. And break everything that would want to come. And cause us not to look like the church of Jesus Christ.

God help us. I pray for this body. For the pastors, the elders, the choir, the musicians.

I pray for a unity first with you Jesus. And secondarily with one another. That truly you can convince the world that you are risen from the dead through your church.

I pray today God as we go on the decks of this aircraft carrier. That you might point through the thousands of DVDs that are going to go into Iraq and Afghanistan. And other areas.

And you might point to the soldiers and say this is my body which is broken for you. I pray you deliver us from any arrogance speaking or singing. I pray God that there be an entreaty in us.

An entreaty oh God for these fine young men and women who are fighting. For the cause oh Lord for which they have enlisted. I pray that you help us to represent you.

Oh God almighty. Not only today but in the days that remain. May this truly be a house to represent you.

I pray that the poor and the widow may find comfort here. The fatherless may find great grace and strength oh God. Through the voices and hands of those around.

I pray that we never marginalize or push to the side any person. Not a single person who comes into the walls of this church. This house would ever be pushed to the side.

Father God I pray for an inclusiveness that comes from the Holy Ghost. And cannot come from anywhere but the Spirit of God. Now Jesus we rest in the fact that when we ask you say you will give it to us.

You tell us Lord that we will have the things that we ask for. Now we ask for this father. I ask for it from deep within my heart.

That truly I may stand for Christ. We ask you Lord that everything that is unlike you be taken out of us. Lord that you just go into the body of the temple of the Holy Ghost.

And take out all these things that may offend you that have found a resting place. Lord may we truly truly be your temple. Truly be your people.

Truly be a body that you can point to and say this is my church. This is Christ. This is Christ's dwelling place.

Father we thank you for this God with all of our hearts. We thank you. You've heard our cry.

We don't even have to vocalize it. You know it when it's in our heart. And you will respond to it.

Now Jesus you promised that you would send showers of blessing. You said you would deliver a people from wrong thinking. And send showers of blessing.

So we open our hearts now God to receive the strength that we need to be the people of God in our generation. And we give you thanks. And we give you praise.

And we adore you for it. We thank you God. We thank you Father.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

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