

# For the Good of the Order - the Unity of Nurture & Mission

by Michael Flowers

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of balance between care and service in the body of Christ, highlighting the need for nurture and mission to work together in unity.*

**Duration:** 15:47

**Scripture:** John 13:35, Philippians 2:5

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the church being a visible testimony to the world through their love for one another. He highlights the participation that believers have in Christ and the unity of the Spirit within the church. The speaker encourages the church to have the mind of Jesus Christ, who came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. He also emphasizes the need for believers to do good to everyone, especially those within the household of faith. The sermon emphasizes the supernatural community of believers infused by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Over the past six years, in my weekly conversations with our beloved Anne Smart, nearing the end of our discussions, and they're typically on the phone because we call each other typically on Monday or Tuesdays, Anne interjects this beautiful phrase, and I'm stealing it for the title of my sermon this morning. Anything else for the good of the order? I mean, it's been six years every week of hearing that question. At first, I just thought it was just sort of a happenstance phrase that just kind of comes out of your mouth in the flow of consciousness, and I wouldn't hear it again.

But now, week after week, anything else for the good of the order? She's a pastor. She thinks with nurture and care. She's also a deeply profound mother in the faith.

And so she has nurture and this grace of just embracing us, right? You've been embraced by Anne, I know. You've been embraced by her prayers, and I know I've been carried along by her prayers and the prayers of her team on a weekly basis. She has an intercessory prayer team, so if you have special needs of a confidential nature, you can get a hold of Anne.

And she has a team of people that's always praying for us. Like in today's passage, Colossians 4:12. So she's always thinking about you.

She knows your names. She knows every visitor's name. She knows when you're here and when you're not.

Someone says she knows when you're naughty and when you're nice. No, and she prays. She prays like Epaphras in 4:12 of Colossians today.

She's always wrestling in prayer for you, always wrestling. She and her team for the good of the order, for the good of the order. Today, I'd like to consider a healthy tension in the inner and outer workings of the body of Christ.

The body of Christ is the household of God. That word is a cause. It means family.

It's the family of God. And in relation to our local community, I'd like to draw some understanding about this. In today's reading from First Corinthians, twelve, seven, the Holy Spirit dispenses his grace, his gifts.

What did it say for the common good, for the good of the order? For the common good, the gifts of the spirit manifest through us, not for ourselves, but for others. There are gifts given to us to share for the good of the order, for the common good, not to be withheld, but shared. We're merely vessels.

We're merely jars of clay is another word that Paul uses if you interpret it that way. Clay pots through which the grace of God, this treasure in earthen vessels is to flow out. OK, and so regarding our reading in First Corinthians, twelve, Paul is bringing some correction about the misuse, the disordered way that the spiritual gifts were being manifest in Corinth.

Paul tells the Corinthians later on in that section in chapter 14, 40, dealing with speaking in tongues and prophesying and other gifts that were being misapplied. He says, let all things be done decently and in order. God is not a God of confusion.

He goes on to say, but of peace. And that word shalom speaks of God as a God of undivided consistency. In a sense, he is one.

He is whole. He's integrated without division. And so the prime aim of God's redemptive work in Christ is order.

Is order. What do I mean? Christ comes to restore order. He comes to restore order to the cosmos.

For when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, the Eucharistic prayer says the world and the trajectory of our lives become disordered. Sin brings disorder. When we became subject to evil and death, something about the whole fabric of the universe became disordered.

Sin entered into the world. God, our father, sin is only an eternal son to reconcile us, to reconcile us. Eyelash to eyelash in the Latin to Celia is the word for eyelash and to reconcile us is to bring us back to the father.

Eyelash face to face, eyelash to eyelash to reconcile us and to reorder our passions, our desires to reorder the whole of our lives. He comes to save us from ourselves. From selfishness.

Individualism and the narcissistic curve inward upon ourselves. He frees us to live joyfully for the sake of others. And we must be set free to live joyfully for the sake of others.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before his presence with a song. And so he comes to liberate us so that we may know the health and joy and peace of being a son or daughter of God.

Therefore, being able to share that message of redemption and adoption in Jesus Christ with others, not for ourselves, although that is a great benefit. But because that benefit is to overflow in our lives for the life of the world is another term that Jesus uses for the life of the world. Therefore, there's a healthy tension in the body of Christ.

Joints and ligaments and muscles and all of these things are working together, not against each other, but there's tension there. And likewise, in the community of Christ, in the household of God, in order for us to live joyfully for the sake of others, for the life of the world, to help others become fully alive in Christ is another way of saying it. In order for that to happen.

And that's called mission. We must maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We must live in love with an aim to build each other up, to heal, to restore and to serve one another within, because we're on the front lines in mission.

Effective mission requires care for its members, for the common good, for the good of the order. Anglican Archbishop William Temple is famous for this particular quote, the church is the only society that exists not for the benefit of its members. And if you take that in the extreme, you get a mission driven church, possibly with no pastoral care, with no care, with no nurture, where the body is out of joint and burned out and frazzled trying to do its mission.

Right. And so though we do not exist for the benefit of its members, the church, the church is the church. It's the body of Christ.

And there's a there's a call to to make the world jealous through the way that we love one another. Jesus said the world will know that you're my disciples. The world will know that's the missional front, that you're my disciples when they see you internally loving one another.

And so the visible structure and relationship within is the visible testimony to the world. And it makes them go, wow, I don't have that. I don't have that.

And so how shall we then be such a church? Here's another passage that we can just consider this morning out of Philippians two. It comes from having the mind of Jesus Christ. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from his love, any participation in the spirit, it's so easy just to read over that.

Right. And you're like, OK, yeah, this is deep waters right here. This is deep waters for us.

I'm just going to read again. Any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, his love living in us and any participation in the spirit. See, this is a supernatural community that he's talking about.

This is a sweet society infused by the presence of the Holy Spirit. If there's any participation in the spirit, any affection, any sympathy to these relational mothering, almost terms coming from the mothering, like a mother hen, I wanted to gather you, Jesus said, right. We need the good of the feminine, the nurture, the

care that is in that pastoral heart.

And this is written by one of the most effective missionaries that we've ever seen. But Paul didn't just stress the mission. He first stresses the participation that we have in Christ, which out of which we share that life with one another, culminating in the Eucharist today, his body and blood, all of this for the life of the world.

So if there's any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. The unity of the spirit is working here. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

But each of you look out not only for his or her own interest, but also for the interest of others. For the sake of others, for the good of the order, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Here it is.

This is something that we don't have to attain. We have to receive. It's all in Christ.

We don't have to strive for this, but we do have to open up and receive every gift that God gives us. And there are many gifts awaiting those in so many churches because they've not yet received. What's being offered in Christ, and so we have to come to a place of complete humility and openness and in a bankruptcy, in a sense of our own resources and say, God, I am yours.

I surrender all. I receive everything that you have for me. It's just a mindset.

To obtain and live in this mind of Christ, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Verse six, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself. By taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in him, being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

That's so different. Then striving after our own promotion in this world. It is so different to go low, it is so different to humble yourself.

It is so different to take the path of the cross. It's counterintuitive in many ways. But the Lord says, have this mind and focus upon the cross.

And the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who the very word of God, who called the worlds into existence, took on human flesh and descended and became a human being and not just a human being, but a servant. He went to the very bottom of the social status so that he could connect with, relate to and save everyone on every level. You've got to go to the lowest to reach the highest.

And so Jesus becomes a servant and he says, I didn't come to be served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many. This is the mind that he wants his church, his body to have. And so there's a lot of little daily deaths involved in that.

But as we offer those promptings and those, those impulses to the Lord, those passions, those desires that are counterintuitive with the kingdom of God, we receive resurrection life. His life comes to us and affirms us and equips us to share for the life of the world. So then, as we have opportunity in Galatians 6, 10 is another passage, let us do good to everyone.

That's a big order, isn't it? Let us do good to everyone. And especially to those who are of the household of faith, you see here, even this mission crazy apostle is pulling back and saying, I want you to be a witness. I want you to serve.

I want you to share the love of Jesus with everyone. But I want you to recognize especially to those who are in the household of faith, they take priority because when the world sees us loving one another, they will know that we are his disciples. Ponder that with me, how we may apply that priority.

That's a pastoral priority so that mission can be healthy, so that mission can have a sense of integrity so that we can be sent out to do the work that he has given us to do. We pray that every Sunday. And so we must continue to value care and nurture as we are sent out to do the work that he has given us to do.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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