

“WE BELIEVE IN ONE HOLY CHURCH”  
I Corinthians 12:12-27, Acts 2:41-47, Hebrews 3:12-14, 10:23-25  
September 16 & 17, 2023

“Many people have a feature called PIP - picture-in-picture - on their television. It means that you can look at your show and at any time bring up a little screen in the corner that has another channel going. You can watch a movie on the main screen and a football game on the little PIP screen. But the PIP is not the main show. The main show is what covers most of the screen. The PIP is simply another show to glance at while you’re watching the main show on the television.

“For many of us who attend church, the service is like a PIP. People go to church once a week and receive a PIP experience. They receive spiritual information, hear spiritual truth, and sing spiritual songs, but it’s not the main show. Instead, **when they leave church** is when the main show begins. They go back to work, family, and life - back to day-to-day struggles, and that is what their focus is on. Sunday morning is only PIP, something people glance at while they enjoy the main show.”<sup>1</sup>

But that’s not the real purpose of the Church. The reason for the Christian Church is to help people have a relationship with Jesus that will **BE** the main show in the lives of the people who attend, because they have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and desire to live out their lives through Him. The work, the play, the hobbies, the entertainment, all the other things in life, should be the Picture-In-Picture experiences surrounded by the life lived for Jesus. All our work, all our play, all the hobbies, all the special activities that we have in our lives are really to be **the result** of our faith in Jesus. The main show should really be our life of faith. Our faith in Jesus should not be the PIP.

And that really brings today into focus as we look at our statement of faith in the Nicene Creed that addresses this. “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.” The Christian Church is to be a holy place, open to all people, making Jesus Christ available to those who seek Him, and to reach out to all people so that we might become a part of the body of Jesus Christ **together**. The Church is to teach, encourage, inspire and support folks in their faith journey so that they might be able to hear about,

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 61, #151)

believe in, receive, and follow Jesus Christ as Savior, enabling Him to become their all-in-all, their main show, and allowing them to live their lives with Jesus being the very center of their lives. The Church is to be the entity that keeps calling the rest of the world back into a relationship and worship of the Lord God Almighty, and to let Jesus provide the full forgiveness of their sins in order that everyone might gain eternal life. All we do and all we say is to be a witness to the love of God seeking all peoples.

But that's where the problems begin, because we are all different in so many ways - location, language, economic situation, education, family structure, and culture - and we begin to lift up some folks while at the same time putting other folks down. Because of our differences we often categorize people as either worthy or unworthy, and we treat them differently based upon those differences. But we are all worthy in the sight of God to let Jesus Christ become our Savior, while at the same time we have different skills, different roles and different positions upon which we can serve in the whole body of Christ. And within the Church itself, each of us is an intricate and vitally important part of the whole Body of Christ. We are all important in the eyes of God, and we each have a particular role to play in the life of the Church as we walk side by side in our journey of faith in Jesus.

Our first Scripture lesson of I Corinthians 12:12-27 helps us to get an idea of the importance of everyone being involved. Here, Paul compares the Church with a human body, with all its various parts. He says, "*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ*" (I Cor. 12:12). We all have similarities and differences, but one person or one group of people is not more important than another group within the body. The human body has so many different parts, but they are all connected to the one body. They all belong to the one individual, so even though some parts seem more important than other parts of the body, everything is vital to be the whole body.

So Paul goes into the discussion about some parts of the body looking at another part of the body and declaring that other part is not needed. Well, sure it is! But though there are some parts of the body that are more visible and seem to have more importance, it could be easy to begin to dictate which parts of the body are not needed. However, all the parts of the body are needed, but each one has a different

role in how the body functions.

Hands are pretty nice things to have on the body. So are feet, and eyes, and ears, and legs, and arms, and teeth, and a tongue, and lungs and a heart. But none of those is superior to any other part of the body. If the body were missing any one of these parts, the rest of the body would suffer for it because something would be missing. While the body can certainly live **without** some of its body parts, the integrity of the body is complete when all the parts of the body are present and active, functioning together for the life of that body.

Say a person doesn't have eyes or is blind. While the rest of the body **can** survive, it is much more difficult because the eyes are not there to do their part for the body. Say, a person is missing a hand. That person **can certainly** live, but it is much harder to live because the full body is not there. So no part of the body can say to another part of the body "*I don't need you*" (I Cor. 12:21). Likewise, no part of the body can say, "*because I am not a hand...or an eye, I do not belong to the body*" (I Cor. 12:15-16). Each part of the body is important, and the body suffers without the one part. No body is made up of just one part, but many parts (I Cor. 12:14), and it only functions at peak capacity when all the parts of the body are present and working together for the success of that body.

So it is with the Church. No one person is better than another within the life of the Body of Christ. Though each person has different responsibilities and skills to enable the Church to function effectively, it doesn't mean that one is superior to another - they're just serving in a different capacity. Sometimes the very ones we think are the most useless, are the ones that are the most essential. Sometimes the ones that are content to be in the shadows off stage are the ones that are really pointing and driving the direction of the Church. So when we say that "we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church," we are to recognize that all believers in Jesus Christ are a part of the worldwide Church.

Now the Christian Church is the community of all TRUE believers under the Lordship of Christ. So to paraphrase I Corinthians 1:2-3, "the Church of God is made up of those who are sanctified in

Christ Jesus, who have been called to be His holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - their Lord and ours..." The congregation has many more people involved, but the real Church is composed of those who live their lives with Jesus Christ being the Main Show. Jesus is the center of their lives and they strive to make a positive difference in the world, helping those around them, who have not yet professed Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, to see the difference that Jesus makes when we have Him at the center of our lives.

Now anyone can call themselves a follower of Jesus, but in order to be a part of this one holy worldwide and apostolic Church, they must first believe in God, then they must receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, and then they must live their lives in conformance with the teachings of the Bible. It's one thing to proclaim that you are a follower of Jesus, but it's quite another thing to live with Jesus as your Main Show in your life. If Jesus is just a Picture-In-Picture in your life, then you need to reevaluate your faith - you're not a true follower of Jesus. If you're not living according to the TRUTH of the Scriptures in the Bible, you're not a true follower of Jesus. We must follow all the teachings of Jesus, and the whole Bible, if we are a true follower of Jesus Christ. Picking and choosing what we want to believe and follow out of the Bible, does not make us a follower of Jesus. Rewriting the Scriptures to make them fit into our desired lifestyle does not make us a follower of Jesus. We must have Jesus Christ living in our hearts, working in and through us before we can call ourselves one of His followers.

Acts 2:42-47 describes it pretty well. These folks who became convicted of their sins and claimed Jesus as their Savior, "*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer...*" (2:42). Jesus became their Main Show and they reorganized their lives to let Jesus be first in all their ways. They sought to grow in their relationship with Jesus. They hung around the apostles, learning about Jesus. They prayed for God to use them to touch the lives of others. They saw the needs of those around them and they did what they needed to do to meet those needs, even sacrificing their possessions and treasures for the sake of the Church. And as they did that, "*the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*" (2:47).

You see, we are not a social club for the gathering of the rich and famous. We are not a financial institution ready to dole out free money to anyone who wants to use the church as their “one-stop-shop” for their every whim or wish. We are not a group that promotes the most recent trends of the day. Nor are we a gathering of folks who believe whatever they want.

But we are a gathering of faithful followers of Jesus Christ, desiring to make a difference in the lives of those who are in need, especially as we help them to come to understand the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. However, sometimes we fall short, and those are the times that we need to reevaluate the ministry here and begin to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in ourselves.

“A young couple got married and was on their way home from the honeymoon. A tractor-trailer pulled out in front of them suddenly and the young groom swerved to avoid it. The car went into a tailspin and crashed. The groom was okay, but his new bride was bleeding profusely. He knew if he didn’t get his new wife to a doctor, she was going to die. He got out of the car and saw a sign just a little ways away: ‘The Office of Dr. Rufus Jones - Internal Medicine.’ He picked up his beloved and struggled up the hill toward the doctor’s home.

“He began knocking on the door. An old man came to the door and the groom said, ‘Dr. Jones?’

“The man said, ‘Well, yes?’

“He said, ‘My wife is bleeding. She’s dying. Please save her!’

“Much to this young man’s surprise, Dr. Jones said, ‘I’m sorry, son. I can’t help you. You see, son, I stopped practicing medicine many years ago. I don’t have any equipment here. I don’t have medical supplies. I stopped practicing medicine a long time ago.’

“Distraught with frustration and grief, the young man said, ‘Dr. Jones, if you can no longer help hurting people, then please take down the sign.’

“We’ve got a world out there bleeding to death. We tell people to come to the church where we offer Dr. Jesus, the medicine of the Holy Spirit, and the healing power of the Word of God. We tell people to come to the hospital. But if we’re not going to be the spiritual hospital, then we need to take

down the sign. There's no need in having a sign that says 'Fountain Park Global Methodist Church,' if when people show up, they don't get surgery. Let's either be the real hospital or take down the sign. Let's not have everybody thinking that we're a hospital and practicing physicians and when they show up they die at our doorstep because we stopped being a church a long time ago. Let's be the church - the authentic representation of that which Christ gave His life for."<sup>2</sup>

If we're going to be the Church, the body of Jesus Christ here in Sheboygan, to reach out and guide others to the saving power of Jesus Christ, then **everyone** needs to be involved. If you're a part of a group, then be committed and active to that group, giving it your best. If you're here only on Saturday nights or Sunday mornings, and that's the only "religion" you get, step it up. If you're not reading your Bible every day, if you're not praying for those who need help, if you're not working to touch the lives of those around you for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, step it up! If you don't have someone that you can pour your life into and help them grow in their faith in Jesus, there are so many that need what you have, so don't neglect them, but reach out to them! If you want a deeper relationship with Jesus, don't just call me, but get a group of you together and start a Bible study, or a Bible reading group, or a discussion group that critiques the sermon from week to week. If you claim to be a member of the church, but aren't active in the church, are you really a member?

You see, each of us has been called to be using our unique gifts in the Body of Christ to build the Church. The best way for a church to die is to hold back on using your gifts and let the pastor be the only one doing ministry. That pastor will either wear himself out with all the work that needs to be done, or he'll have a heart attack trying to do all the work.

Hebrews 4:12-14 and 10:23-25 help us to see the work of the church. Listen to these great verses. (READ Hebrews 4:12-14, 10:23-25)

Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. And it involves every one of us to make it

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<sup>2</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations*, pg. 63-64, #159)

happen. When one person of the Body of Christ **does not do** their part, the whole Body suffers for it. When one says that **they don't belong** because they don't have certain gifts and graces, the whole Body suffers. When one thinks that they are better than another, the whole Body suffers. God knows your gifts and abilities - He's the One who gave them to you to use for the benefit of the Church. Don't compare yourself with anyone else, but use your gifts to bring glory to God and support the life of the Church. Do it freely, not expecting to get paid for it. We need to "*hold firmly to the faith we profess...*" (Heb. 4:14) and get a move on for the work of the Lord.

Oh, and if you think you're too old to do something for the Lord, or "you've been there and done that and don't want to do it again," think again. There's no retirement from the Christian faith. As long as you are alive here on the earth, you can be at work to help touch the life of another. You can spend time with one who is discouraged. You can drive someone to a doctor's appointment. You can call to encourage someone who is having a rough time. You can send a card to someone recovering from surgery. You can sacrifice that Sunday afternoon watching football and come help get the Community Meal together. You can take your eyes off of your own problems and show love to someone who is difficult to love, even if they don't return the favor. Who know the difference you might make in their life. AND you can pray, YOU CAN PRAY, for the folks on our prayer list. There is so much you can do within the Body of Christ to glorify God and uplift another. It doesn't have to be monumental - it can be simple and it can be generous; it can be quick and easy and it can be a surprise; it can be a sign of appreciation and it can be a sign of the light of Jesus Christ shining out from within you. Let God use you in a marvelous way to support the rest of the Body of Christ.

And when you gather to worship the Lord, give thanks to Him that you can "*spur one another on toward love and good deeds...*" (Heb. 10:24). Every little bit helps as we reach out to those who do not know the Lord. When you take the time to notice one who is hurting, it can make all the difference in the world. When you speak to the stranger, or the outcast, or the rebellious, or the addict, give them the love of God, without judgement or rebuke, but with sincerity and love. They'll notice.

“In my house, we have a den that we use as a family room. We also have a living room that is rarely used. It just occurred to me that we don’t do a lot of living in the living room. That room is not really named properly. It’s more of the visit room than the living room. Now, the living room is in the house, but it really isn’t the life of the house. It’s not where we live. Most folks live in their den, or family room. Some folks live in the kitchen. Rarely do we live in those specially decorated places in our homes reserved for guests.

“For many of us, God is in the house, but He’s been relegated to the room in our house reserved for special occasions. He is only allowed in the living room. He’s not allowed in the center - the den or family room. He’s not allowed into the places where we live our lives. He’s not allowed in the center of our lives; He’s only allowed in designated areas.

“Many Christians say that He is the centerpiece of their lives when He is really not at all.”<sup>3</sup> But that can change as we begin to seriously live our faith, believe in the holy worldwide and apostolic Christian Church, and start using the gifts and abilities that God has given to us to bring about the complete Body of Christ. Only you can make that change in your life, but I pray that it happens in the Name of Jesus Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let’s pray.

Father, Thank You for the Church, the Body of believers in Jesus Christ. Thank You for giving us a part of the Body that only we can fulfill. Help us not to diminish our importance, but look at ourselves and those around us as vital and important members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Give us the courage and the guidance we need to begin making You the Main Thing in our lives, so that we see life through Your work through us. Thank You for allowing us to worship here today. As we look around us, give us Your eyes to see the hurt, the need, the disappointment, and the fear in the lives of those here today, that we might be able to reach out and bring hope and encouragement and peace. Help us to see each other, REALLY SEE each other, and then begin to use the gifts You’ve given to us to bring about new life as we grow together in our faith. This we pray in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.

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<sup>3</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 65, #164)