

Date of sermon: 9/18/2021  
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke  
Bible passage or verse: Ephesians 1:15-23  
Title of Sermon: The Picture of the Church  
Series: The Bride - #2

---

<sup>15</sup>For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, <sup>16</sup>I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup>I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup>he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

---

When we discuss the issue of the church, Paul, in this book, chapter 3, speaks of an issue, and he says, "I'm talking about this church," and he said, "It's a mystery." I find that to be an interesting word. It's a mystery. In other words, it's not easy to understand. Maybe it's that people don't understand it, they might miss it -- he says it's a mystery. Well, why is it? Well, for a variety of reasons. For thousands of years up to that point, the people of God -- they've been in the temple. And by the way, Jews. Gentiles -- well, you had the Gentile court, and they could come into that, but the idea of Jew and Gentile being together -- I mean, it's like you might as well talk about harmony in the United States. Go figure -- no way! It's not gonna happen! Well, it will. But Paul's talking about a mystery. And one of the things that Paul does, and through the New Testament that is helpful to understand this mystery -- he's even praying in this passage, "Pray that the eyes of your heart might be opened." In other words, "I want you to understand something that I'm gonna call a mystery -- it's glorious, it's beautiful." And one of the things that the Scriptures gives us throughout the entire New Testament is a number of images -- not so much words, but images that help us describe the church. One of the places he calls it the "fellowship." None of these are exhaustive. They tend to be windows into the church. One in Matthew talks about the kingdom of God is advancing in forceful men. It's an army. It's the fellowship. It's the army. It's the family. It's the field of God. It's the flock.

Every one of these are images that are describing the church. Christ is the chief shepherd. The church is the temple of which God is the builder. And every one of these gives us an image, but also kind of gives us an expectation of what happens. In the fellowship, there's relationships. In the flock, there is kind of a shepherd that cares for it. In the temple -- it talks about the church as a temple, of which God is the Builder -- it has a space, and it has the concepts that they understand about the temple. Probably the most common one is given to us in this text -- Ephesians chapter 1. It says, in verse 22, "And God placed all things under his [Christ's] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church." He's head over EVERYTHING, for the benefit of the church. He's head over the church. That is included in "everything." "Which is his body." The most common phrase -- the body of Christ. Paul talks about the body of Christ in Ephesians chapter 4. He talks about the body of Christ into Ephesians 5. He talks about the body of Christ all the way through. In fact, he says, when he's teaching them about communion, he says, "This is the body of Christ." And later in that text, he's warning them, "If you do not consider, or take into consideration the body of Christ." So, it's a phrase that Paul uses all the time. And it's an image that we want to unpack today.

Now, coming into it, I think one of the things we might have to do is to realize that there are a lot of false pictures of the church today. It's not that they're completely false. There are some aspects of it that have truth to them, but in totality, I would suggest if this is your image of the church, we're in trouble. One of them is that the church is a gas station. What do you do at a gas station? You fill up! I've heard people say, "Man, I come to church, 'cause I get fuel for the week! I hear a sermon, and I'm fueled up. I

get my energy for the week!" And that's church for them. "I come because it's a battle out there, and I come here, and I get worship, and you pray, and you remind me that God is on the throne" -- and, the reality is, for people like that, it actually may, in their mind -- the church might be reduced to -- well, it's a gas station. In other words, they come on Sunday, and they get juiced -- but to be quite honest with you, they don't really think about the church six days a week. It's kind of like not on their radar. They don't think about a relationship to the church, they don't see themselves as a part of the church -- "I go to the church because I get fueled." I think there are a lot of people who, sadly, I will say, that's their view of the church.

Another one is, the church is a movie theater. And what happens there is that you go and you sit in a seat, and hopefully, the movie is about an hour. If it's much over that, people are going -- "C'mon, Pastor. Come on! If you can't say it in 30 minutes, don't say it at all. And at this place, I'd like to be entertained. No, not like I'm going to some show, but I want to be entertained. In other words, Pastor, can you make me laugh once in a while, because, to be honest with you, it's a heavy world out there, and I like to laugh! And I like the worship band to be, like, spot-on and it's like, you know, make your harmonies good, and please -- I mean, keep everything tight, because why? I'm here. And by the way, thank you for exchanging the pews for these chairs, because they're much more comfortable. And, if you don't get the air conditioning fixed, I'm gonna go to another church." It is fixed, by the way. But the reality is, if a person thinks about church as a theater -- fundamentally, they are asking, Was I entertained? Did I laugh? Did he make me feel better? Did I enjoy the music? And if I didn't enjoy the music -- I'm not going to church. This is stupid. I mean, good night -- that guy on the electric guitar, I mean, he acted like Led Zeppelin, for pity's sake. Zeppelin's good! It's an entertainment.

Here's another one. The church is a drugstore. What do you get at the drugstore? Relief. Issues for your pain. Things are stoved up in your body, you go to the drugstore. You go to the drugstore when something happens in your life and you need to be treated. And so, therefore, when I think of the church, it's a place to have my hurts addressed. Now, I said earlier, at the very beginning -- there are parts of these that are true! Unless it becomes your driving image of the church. In the nineties, if you were hanging around the church, man, preaching shifted huge in the eighties and nineties. And it shifted from exegetical preaching of the Word of God to what we call "felt need" or "therapeutic teaching and preaching." It swept the US with rare exception. It's kind of coming back, and the pendulum's swinging. But man, let me tell you what, in the eighties and nineties, straight up -- I mean, it was like, people were like, "Pastor" -- and this is the word; they always told me, "Pastor, you gotta make the preaching of God's Word relevant." What does that mean? What was that word -- what did it mean? Why did people use it? You mean, I need to make this -- I thought it was relevant. I mean, God said it, and He said it was profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training and righteousness. So, you're trying to tell me that God's Word is sometimes relevant and sometimes not? No, what they are really telling me is -- are you dealing with the things I'm dealing with? And so, preaching shifted huge towards "felt therapeutic needs." When I want to go to church, I want it to be relevant. I want it to meet my needs. I want it to address the things that I feel and hurt. Again, I mean -- the worst thing in the world, you come to church and this guy preaches, you think, "Good night. What planet does he live on? It's not the world I live in!" But if you come every week and your entire criteria is, Does he make me feel better? -- is that the church?

Last -- maybe, I think in some ways, most profound, is -- the church, for a lot of people is what we would call a "big box retailer." Do you have what I need? The church is a producer of programs by which, if you meet all the needs of my family, we'll be there. If you don't meet all the needs of my family, we might not be there, or we may participate in this church for Bible study, and this church over here for youth group, and this church over here for worship, and we love the preacher here, and so we began to create a definition in our mind, What is the church? It's a grocery store -- it's a big box retail store. It's a place where I go and get my goods and services. And by the way -- I don't know about you, but I don't have a ton of loyalty to the local grocery store. I'm polite, I like 'em -- I like to shop, but to be quite honest with you, if another store has a sale, I don't feel sinful and guilty going there. In other words, I'm predominantly looking at that grocery store for what? As a consumer. I think that may be one of the greatest tragedies is that we have taken our view of the grocery store, our view of Home Depot, our view of Costco, and we've said that's the church. The interesting thing is, you're not gonna find any of this in

the Bible. Oh, you'll find parts -- but in totality, not at all. It's not. What's in the Scriptures -- Paul says -- is, the church is the body of Christ.

Now, there are two ways that Paul uses that. In 1 Corinthians 12, he talks about the body of Christ as in its totality. That is, Christ and the church together is the body of Christ. So, when he's talking about, he's preaching there or teaching there in 1 Corinthians 12, he's giving us this picture of the church in its totality, it has Christ included. Here, he doesn't. They're intrinsically connected, if you will, head and body, but here, interestingly enough, he kind of separates them out, and he says, "Which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way." What he's really talking about here is two separate things, and we want to put them together. He's talking about a body of believers, and he's talking about a head of which Christ is over the church. To get there, he ramps into this -- let's go back and do it with him. He says that he's praying that the eyes of their heart might be enlightened. What does he want them to see? What's on his heart? "I want you to see in particular the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. And, by the way, his incomparably great power." Now, he's gonna take that power and he's gonna extrapolate that all the way to the end. I want you to see Christ's power. What's it like? Well, it's like the working of God when He raised Christ from the dead. What kind of power is it? Incomparable. That's what He says in the text. You might have a different word there, but in my NIV, He uses the term, "And his incomparably great power for us who believe." What's incomparably great power? It means that there is nothing on par. Nothing.

There's a lot of things that have power -- Satan has power. Satan has a lot of power. To dismiss it would be to be foolish. Social media has a lot of power. Seems like all we want to talk about today is how powerful social media is, and clearly, they do. I mean, they're talking about the power of social media to create all kinds of issues of depression and even rise of suicide. I mean, they're gonna blame it for everything. And I'm not so certain that they aren't to fault for a lot of those things. The reality is, social media has all kinds of power. Our president has all kinds of power. Temptation has power. I guarantee you, there's areas in your life where you are tempted, and you struggle, and -- it has a lure. It has kind of a magnetism that draws you. All of those have power. But Paul wants you to make sure -- "I want that the eyes of your heart would be opened and enlightened, that you might know" -- what? "The incomparably great power of God. What's it like? Give me an image. Paul, give me an illustration. Oh - - it's like the great power that God demonstrated when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places. What's the net result of that power? That's where He comes to. What's the implication of God's great power? It's huge for us. Because of His power, He has seated Christ at His right hand. And not only seated Him at His right hand, but He has -- what? Appointed Him to be head of the church. And we are Christ's body. He has intrinsically related us to Christ. God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head. The question is not, Will you make Jesus head of the church? He already is. The point is not, Will we as a church recognize that Christ is head of the church? He is. The point is not -- Will, in the United States, people recognize that Christ is the ultimate authority over all things, and particularly, the church? That's not the question. He already is. The question is, Do you understand the implication that Christ is the head of our church?

That's Paul's point. And that is -- Christ is the head of the church, and in this text there are some really significant implications. Number one -- the body is always directed by the head. I can tell myself, "Fingers, I want you to pick up those glasses," and I can pick those up. The reality is, my fingers are operating directly in correlation to what? My head. My head is directing my glasses, and my eyes tell my mind, "I'm not seeing so well, you're pressing into 60 and that Bible seems to be getting smaller all the time." See, my head is having a conversation with itself. And so, it tells my fingers, "Fingers, your eyes -- whom you love -- need you. Please put the glasses on this person's head so that his eyes are happy." And my fingers -- why? -- because they are directed by the head, and come under the authority of the head, they have now cooperated with my eyes, my head has now had a message from my eyes, sent it to my nervous system, told my fingers, "Cooperate" -- all of that works together, and I could read the text. Why? Because the head directs the body. Out of the head comes direction. Implication? Christ directs this church. Now, you might say, "Does He always?" Well, we can be disobedient. But Christ has the ability, because He has all authority. Because He is over ALL authorities. That includes you and me. Even if we're rebellious. Can Christ exercise His authority over the church? I would say absolutely. Whether they acknowledge it or not. Christ will direct the church. He will discipline the church. He will guide the church. He will unleash the church. He will inspire the church. He will teach the church. And at times

the church can be resistant to Him; at times the church can close the book, and the reality is, nothing's changed. Nothing. Christ is the head of the church, and the head always directs the body. I mean, my leg can, like -- "I want to be on the right-hand side of the stage." "No," my head says, "Huh uh, we're on the left." It can be as rebellious as anything, but it can only be rebellious to a point of what? Attachment. See, my leg can't have a mind of its own, it can't go over here, and sometimes people say, "Well, I don't really -- I don't wanna be bound to the church." Well, why not? Christ is. "I don't want to just work within the confines of the church." Why not? Christ has. He's made that decision. I have intrinsically connected myself, and so therefore, our calling as followers of Christ is to what? Be responsive to the head. Is to understand that the head is going to direct, the head will lead, the head desires to lead, and the head understands that if you cooperate, because Christ who sees all and knows all understands the needs just like my mind listened to my eyes and asked my hand, "Let's work together." And when that happens under the direction, good things occur. The fact is, the head always directs the church.

But there's something else that the head does, and this is really powerful, and this is something that is kind of, I think, in some ways humbling and sobering, and that is that the head has chosen to work through the body. This is pretty radical. In your body, it's not radical. You take it for granted every day. Your head has never said, "Body, stay in bed. I've got this day." Your head has never said that. Your head has never said, "Hey, body -- you have COVID. I don't want it, I'm separating." Can't! This is radical, friends. You see, Paul, when he's saying to the church in Corinth, "Do you not know that when you, a believer in Christ have sexual relations with a woman who's not your spouse, do you not know" -- and here's the text, he says, "Do you not know you become one with her?" What's that language? You become united like marriage, but here's the really radical part. "And do you not know," he says, "that you unite Christ with you in that act." That'll make you sick to your stomach. If you take the Scripture seriously, what Christ is saying is, "Where my church goes, I go." "Where my bride goes, I go." Why? Because the head has chosen to work through the body. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fulness of him. Now, I just pray that God would let that sink in, because the implications of that are so radical. The idea that I can go do my thing apart from the church, Christ says, "Since when? Since when?" That's like the body separating from the head and saying, "We want to go do our own thing. I don't need the church!" And Christ says, "Yes, you do." Not for salvation, but because Christ has absolutely connected His heart to the church, and therefore, it is only through the vehicle of the church of which what? The gospel moves out, the glory of Christ is revealed -- chapter 3 -- and the heavenly realms are acknowledged and made aware of this mystery.

Oh -- we're called to the same thing that Christ has been called to. For the person who says, "I want to go do my own thing, Christ says, "I've chosen not to." It's not that Christ has never worked outside of the church. He did when He came to the apostle Paul and he convicted Paul along the road to Emmaus, and Paul was like, "Whoa" -- you know, this was kind of the shining glory. Well, the church wasn't there, to be quite honest with you. Jesus kind of showed up on His own. It's not that He never does that; it's just that He seldom does that. In fact, so much so that in chapter 3 of this book Ephesians, He says, "Now through the church the manifold wisdom of God is going to be revealed." Now, for those who want to argue that, "Oh, he's talking about the universal church," I think that's a terrible stretch, because, by the way, he's writing to a local church. It makes no sense that he is applying this directly to the universal church when he's writing to a local church. And therefore, we have been chosen by God to display His glory, and we become the very vehicle of which Christ has attached himself to us. Christ is head of the church, and therefore, God wants to direct us. Your assignment, my assignment is to be responsive to His direction. Because Christ is the head of the church, He's chosen to work through this body. He's chosen in part to use this church and a variety of other beautiful churches in our city to become the conduits of His grace, the stewards and the caretakers of His gospel, the reflection of His glory. You see, if I reduce myself that the church is a place that I get entertained, I miss all of this. If the church is a place where I just get my needs met or my hurts mended, then I miss all of this. Because I tend to at that point restrict the church to the moment that I encounter it, whatever it is, when my children go to class or when I'm in church or when I get fueled from a sermon. But the reality is, what Christ is talking about every day of the week, seven days a week, all the time, the church is working. And it's there that Christ has chosen to work through this church. And therefore, staying connected to the head is your responsibility. See, one of the dangers of the first four that I utilized -- they all had one thing in common -- me. I want to be

entertained. I want to be healed. I want to be fueled. What Paul is praying -- "I pray that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened." Why? "That you would see and understand the incomparably great power for us who believe." That power -- what's he -- what's his interest? It's that you would understand one of the privileges is that you need to stay connected to this head.

John Stott said there's a grotesque anomaly of a person who thinks that they can be an unchurched Christian. Let me be clear -- you don't need the church to be saved. That's not our polity, that's not our theology, that's not our belief at all. But when Christ saves you -- when Christ saves you, if He is the head of this body, my friends, what is He saving you into? He's not saving you to be an orphan. He's not saving you to be a detached arm. He's not saving you to go do your own thing. If Christ has so intrinsically connected himself to the body, when He saves you, what does He bring you into? The fellowship. The flock. The body. That's what He brings you to. And so, to think of anything other than that would be to imagine that this arm can detach itself from this body and have a fulfilling life. It would be these fingers who say, "I don't care about my eyes! I really don't care about the system, the brain. I don't care anything! I want to float out of here, and I just want to pick an ear!" Well, great -- have at it. But you're not helping. I think one of the reasons why Christ used -- we talk about this in the membership class, *Discovering First*. Is there anywhere in the Bible where it says, "Thou shalt become a member of a church"? Let me answer that for you -- no. So, some churches say, "Well, why do you have it?" The same reason that the arm doesn't have to be told, "Stay attached." It's so intrinsically taught with this image. Staying connected is my privilege. What does it mean to stay connected? It means to understand that when I connect with Christ, I will intrinsically and automatically and always be connected to the body of Christ. It means that when I find my place in the body of Christ, when I find my place of service, when I find the place that I make this church strong -- in that very moment, I am strengthening my connection with Christ. When my arm exercises and it gets stronger, it's pulsating blood through the entire rest of the body, and so, the same is happening -- when you are serving and when you're doing something in the body of Christ, at that very moment you're strengthening your relationship with Christ. And by the way -- when you strengthen your relationship with Christ, He always, always draws you closer to the body of Christ. What does it mean to be connected? It means to understand that as you move horizontally, or as you move vertically, you're strengthening the other. Always.

Because Christ is the head of the church, it also means that suffering with the head is our privilege. "In this world," Jesus said, "you will have trouble." You will. In this world you're gonna have trouble. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't be discouraged. Jesus says, "I've overcome the world." But mark my words -- Christ said, "The world hated me." Jesus said, "The world hated me, and they will hate you." If you're the kind of person that has to have everyone like you, you're gonna deeply struggle if you want to follow Christ. If you're the kind of person that has to have peace at all costs -- in other words, you're a peacekeeper, not a peacemaker -- you're not reconciling opposing thoughts, you're throwing things under the carpet so that you can have some quiet in your house. That's a peacemaker. If you're that kind of person, it's gonna be really hard for you to follow Christ and to connect to the body of Christ. Because the world is not gonna like the church. I have not seen it this clear in my entire life as I do today. That when we align with the Scripture, when we say, "There is one way to God -- the way, the truth and the life is Jesus Christ," the world hates that. When we say, "When you're born, you're born male or female -- there are not 71 genders -- the Scripture seems to indicate to me that there are two. And I don't see that God gives us the option of 71." And when we say, as politely or as kindly as we can, "I think this is what the Scripture teaches, and this is where I stand" -- then the world may hate you. And it is our privilege -- it is our privilege to suffer with Christ. And the scars that you and I will experience -- and we will -- the scars of rejection, the scars of gossip and lies, maybe the scars of firing. Maybe the scars of being removed from your family. Those scars that are not easy -- they're painful -- we will carry within us the wounds of the body of Christ. See, one of the things that you're gonna see when you get to Heaven is the wounds of Christ, the scars of Christ. And he said that we will fill up the suffering of Christ. That's what Paul said. We will fill it up. What does that mean? Does that mean that His was insufficient? No. It means that when you attach yourself to the body of Christ with Christ as the head, that which He experienced in this world you're gonna experience. I will. I don't like it. Some days I struggle with it deeply. But if the body of Christ had wounds on it -- and it does in Heaven -- then the body of Christ will have wounds on her on this earth.

It's not that we will, if you will, be nailed to a cross, but we will be rejected. We will be mocked. We will be laughed at. And out of fear, we may even be like Peter, who takes the sword and he cuts off Malchus's ear. Probably wasn't going for the ear -- he was probably going for the head. And Jesus attaches it back on -- "Peter, that's not the way we're gonna fight this." No, because Christ is the head of the church, we will suffer. And therefore, be very careful. If the church in your book is a drugstore, then when you are hurting, you're gonna think, "This is not what I came to church for. I came to church to feel better. I want to align with a group of people that make me feel better! I want to be done with the pain of this world." What if Christ calls the church to suffer, and there's no prescription that you can take -- you just simply have to suffer. What is your world is, "I want to be entertained? I want to laugh more." I don't have anything wrong with laughing -- I think laughter is wonderful, and it's great to do it, but what if we don't laugh once in a while, what if, in fact, following Christ is not always easy. And what if the body of Christ needs to learn at times to forgive -- if it's gonna heal and it's gonna live and it's gonna be vibrant. And if entertainment is your passion, and your expectation -- forgiveness is going to seem strange to you. In fact, out of date. Clearly not relevant. Yeah. So, be careful. Because the enemy would love for you to pick up one of those false images. The fact is, Christ is the head of the church, and we are its body. And therefore, let's submit to His direction. Let's rejoice in the fact that He wants to work through this church to this city, through this church to each other. Let's stay connected and understand that Christ has never imagined in His wildest dreams that you would go off -- "I'm gonna do my own thing apart from the church!" And Jesus would say to you, "I've chosen not to. And if you want to follow me, come with me to the body of Christ."

Suffering -- oh, yes. We will suffer. But once we grasp that we're the body of Christ, we will see how we fit. In 38 years of pastoring, I've had a number of people say, "I just don't fit in the church." Yes, you do. Christ has never made a person in His life that He hasn't created to attach to the church. Here's my question: Are you gonna go with how you feel or are you gonna go with the conviction of the Scriptures? He made you to fit. He made you to belong. He made you to strengthen this body or another body. He's made you not to walk alone but to walk with Him as His head, with this body, working together, directed by the head -- so that what? We can put the glasses on each other and we can see. Because when we do, ah, we see the power of God. The world becomes a very beautiful, beautiful place -- when we put the lens of the church on, it's then we see where we fit.

Copyright by First Baptist Church, Salem OR (September 18, 2021). Please do not copy without written permission of the copyright holder.