

*Building the Church Christ envisioned,
loving the world he died to save.*

That statement looks different in seasons like the one we just had.
What's the new normal? What is changing?

I think many of us have been feeling what Pastor Fred preached at the beginning of April –
***Massive historic shifts like the one we are in in our culture are often prophetic
of shifts that need to happen in us.***

There's been a shift in THIS church.
But many are also feeling that there's a shift happening in THE Church.

Title – **TAKE IT OUTSIDE**

ROMANS 11:13-14 & 32 (MSG) *“My personal assignment is focused on the so-called outsiders, I make as much of this as I can when I'm among my Israelite kin, the so-called insiders, hoping they'll realize what they're missing and want to get in on what God is doing ...In one way or another, God makes sure that we all experience what it means to be outside so that he can personally open the door and welcome us back in.”*

Romans was written while Paul was on his third major missionary journey in the year 57AD. And a massive shift had occurred amidst God's people, which he's explaining here. God had taken a religious system that had been largely focused on the Jews and thrown the door wide open to the Gentiles.

The Message version of Romans 11 is speaking to this shift. But insiders and outsiders in your text might read Jew and Gentile. And yet I believe the terms used by Eugene Peterson in the Message translation paints a prophetic picture for what has just happened and what we feel shifting in this season where we've been pushed outside of the Church building...

“...In one way or another, God makes sure that we all experience what it means to be outside so that he can personally open the door and welcome us back in.”

so that we can “realize what [we're] missing” and make the necessary shifts.

Ephesians 1 (MSG)

At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

“The Church is Christ's body.”

We've been in this season of Coronavirus. COVID.
Not able to meet in the Church. Not able to go out to a lot of places.
Quarantined. Sheltered in place. Socially distanced.

*Who has felt that overwhelming itch to get out?
Who has felt moments that feel claustrophobic? Even disorienting?
Who can't wait to hug somebody?
Who has voiced the same desire Steph has had - to have face to face interactions during the day again... with someone other than your kid?*

These are all valid feelings in this season. And consider those feelings.

Because if the Church is the Body of Christ...

It has been living sheltered in place.

It has been quarantined in our comfort zones.

It has been socially distanced from the world Jesus died to save for far too long.

Jesus would say what you've felt for a couple months within the four walls of your home, I've been feeling for years as my Body – specifically the American church - has largely sheltered in place.

The Barna group found that **51%** of church attendees in the United States were unfamiliar with the term "Great Commission."

25% of respondents said they heard of it but did not recall its "exact meaning"

7% said they were altogether unsure.

17% knew it and could tell you its significance.

How many of us know the Great Commission but aren't doing it?

In one way or another, God makes sure that we all experience what it means to be outside

Why? Because that's where Jesus was.

Out of his 112 encounters and episodes recorded in the Gospels.

10 happened in the temple.

The rest all happened outside of the four walls.

God is calling us outside again.

If the Church was only about gathering, then the gates of pandemic just overcame it.

Hell managed to knock out the Church with a pandemic.

Yes we're called to gather, but one reason we gather is so we can be equipped to GO.

1 Corinthians 12

Is our Body healthy as we GO?

Vs. 12 – the human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

UNITY

Yes we need unity. But unity doesn't exist with uniformity.

This is why Paul wastes no time before touching on diversity.

Vs. 14 – the body has many different parts, not just one part.

DIVERSITY

The Body of Christ is a wealth of wisdom.

The Body of Christ is a wealth of experiences and perspectives.

I need to hear from people who have the wisdom I need.

I also need to hear from people who have different perspectives. Different life experiences.

I lack the experience of a police officer who wakes up every day to serve and protect...

I also lacks the experience of an African American male who hugged his wife tighter and hugged his kids longer on his way out the door this week because he just saw yet another person that looked like him was senselessly taken and won't get to do that again...

Verse 25 Paul says of the Body of Christ - ***“[Diversity] makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it.”***

EMPATHY

When one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it.

Steph and Raj's brain malformations ... we have an appointment next week with a neuro.

We don't go to other surgeons so they can do surgery on other organs.

Is it because those other organs don't matter?

No. None of us would even think that.

And yet in the body of Christ when one part of the body is hurting, , I see members of that same body say the equivalent of *“well, all body parts matter.”*

That's about as helpful as somebody telling *“Raj's whole body matters.”*

When a part of the body is hurting, it gets your focus!

We, the Body of Christ, need to grasp that Jesus – the same Jesus that said love everyone from your neighbor to your enemy to the least of these – would have wept over George Floyd's death and every other name that became a hashtag before him.

It would have pained him.

So the question I ask: **Does it pain his Body?**

Are all the parts suffering when one part suffers? Or are we divided?

Spiritually, the American Church in 2020 suffers from a disease that was common when Jesus walked the other side of the earth.

The Modern American Body of Christ suffers from spiritual **leprosy**.

Leprosy was a scary disease in Jesus' time when they didn't fully understand it, but it is nerve damage that effects your ability to feel pain. In worst case scenarios, you could lose hand, feet, or limbs due to unnoticed wounds and repeated injuries.

Leprosy is when one body part suffers isolated from the rest of the body.

And it wreaks havoc.

The good news? Jesus heals. Jesus heals multiple lepers in the Gospels, nearly a dozen total. If the answer to the question “does it pain us?” is yes, the follow up question is quite simply: *how do we find healing in the world around us?*

Seek Reform

We need some **Proverbs 31:8** – *“speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.”*

Some **Jeremiah 29** to *seek the peace and welfare of the city and nation God has placed us in this side of Heaven.*

Some **Isaiah 1:17** – *“learn to do good; seek justice; rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless; plead for the widow.”*

Seek Revival

Yes, let’s fight for reform and reconciliation here in our country. But we have to bear in mind – horizontal reconciliation has proven elusive again and again in our world and our nation because we skip the first most important step – vertical reconciliation with God, made possible through Jesus.

So one thing doesn’t change- We make much of Jesus.

Because here’s the truth about Jesus:

Jesus knows about suffering

Jesus knows about injustice

Jesus knows about racial tension

Jesus knows about being wrongfully treated, even wrongfully killed

Jesus knows how to show mercy to criminals

Jesus knows our weaknesses, and he knows how to sympathize with us

Jesus knows about living in a wicked world

Jesus knows about dying at the hands of wicked men

Lastly, he knows about the glories of heaven, where God himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes, where there will be no more death, no mourning, no crying, no pain.

We – the Body of Christ - have to be courageous enough to realize we have a call to play a role to bring healing to the hurt around us.

We – the Body of Christ – have to realize we’ve been called and commissioned out of a life that’s sheltered in place, or quarantined in our comfort zone.