

CHURCH OF OUR LORD
SERMON FOR **2 January 11 (CHRISTMAS 2)**
2011 AD: A SONG FOR COOL

Luke 2:21-38; Let us pray: "Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence, may your Word be our rule, your Spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen."

Mary and Joseph needed Simeon and Anna at that moment; the old man and old woman needed them, had been waiting for them, and thanked God for them.

Max Lucado, writing on the Book of Acts in "Outlive Your Life," underlines Acts 2:44, *Now all who believed were together*, with the following personal testimony. In 1976, he found himself as part of a team of ministry students in the highlands of Guatemala in the face of the ravages of a destructive earthquake. As he stared at the homeless children, the severely injured, and the rubble around him, he began to stack bricks to rebuild houses. His partner turned out to be a man whom he had instantly disliked during their orientation session before leaving the U.S. He describes their differences as follows: "I-the open-minded, relevant thinker-favoured contemporary, upbeat music. He- the stodgy, close-minded caveman-preferred hymns and hymnals." Yet the destruction from the earthquake dwarfed their differences in worship styles. As they worked shoulder to shoulder they began to sing together. They sang old songs and new, slow and fast. **THEIR COMMON CONCERN GAVE THEM A COMMON SONG.**

Jesus works in community. For that reason we find no 'I' or 'my' or 'you' in the earliest description of the church (Acts 2:42-46). We are in this together. We are more than followers of Christ, disciples of Christ. *We are parts of his body* (Eph 5:30 NCV). *He is the head of the body, which is the church* (Col 1:18 NCV). I am not His body; you are not His body. We-together-are His body.

But His body, Max Lucado explains, has been known to misbehave. *The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'* (1 Cor 12:21). Max Lucado calls this "mutiny on the body." We cannot say, "I have no need of you." This service needs the other service. The hall needs the sanctuary. (The sanctuary needs the hall). The praise songs need the hymns. (The hymns need the praise songs). The 9:30 praise team needs the choir. (The choir needs the 9:30 praise team). The worship leader at 9:30 needs the music director at 11. (The music director at 11 needs the worship leader at the 9:30 service.) Guitars, keyboard, and drums need organ, piano, clarinet and flute. (Organ, piano, clarinet, and flute need guitars, keyboard, and drums.) Worship needs evangelism (if they are to become one in the NT sense). Taize needs the Skys. The pastor-collar or no-collar-who delivers the 'talk' at the 9:30 service needs the pastor who preaches from the pulpit at 11. (The pastor who preaches from this pulpit needs the pastor-collar or no-collar-who delivers the talk at the 9:30 service.). Eyes (our visionaries, prophets) need to partner with feet (our steady labourers, our hands-on people).

Co-operation, concludes Max Lucado, is more than a good idea; it is a command. *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3 NIV). Unity matters to God. There is *one flock and one shepherd* (John 10:16 NIV). When believers agree, Jesus takes notice, shows up, and hears our prayers.

As we read the account of the explosive growth of the Jerusalem church in the Book of Acts, one word jumps out at us from the page. *One accord*. Acts 2:46 describes their religious devotion as meeting twice daily (they had a morning service and an afternoon

service) *in the temple* in a spirit of unanimity. In modern English we might translate *one accord* as 'with a united purpose' or 'in unity of spirit.' They assembled for fellowship, Gk. 'koinonia.' The old English "fee-lay-ship" suggested each brother and sister brought something (a fee, a talent, a ministry) to benefit others in the body of believers. J.W. Conley in "The Young Christian and the Early Church" describes the following features of their worship. There was no bondage to place. In the upper room, at their homes, wherever there were devout hearts there was a place of worship. Spirit and not form was the essential thing. There was manifestly no ritual and there were no prescribed forms, but the expressions of faith and love were of the most simple and direct character.

A.T. Robertson, commenting on Philippians 2:2, describes Paul's understanding of *of one accord* as a harmony of feeling. It is the common disposition that ensues where there is unity of thought and affection. Our word "accord" (heart to heart) suggests two hearts in perfect key, a symphony of the spirit. The whole church is a choir and must be kept in tune. Musical natures are sensitive and high-strung and readily get out of tune. But if each one of us keeps his life in tune with God, in tune with the Infinite, it will not be impossible to get in tune with each other. The discord will all be lost in the glorious orchestra that blends in common praise to God. Our church will have variety in plenty, but it will be the variety of concord, not jarring notes out of tune with the rest.

CONCLUSION

Commenting on the same passage, Bible teacher Stuart Briscoe also follows this musical analogy. To live unitedly, he explains, requires a knowledge of our part of the score, respectful submission to the conductor and appreciation of the part played by others in the orchestra. Our score is the Word of God. Just like Jesus we are to answer every question, solve every problem, and settle each dispute by turning to the Scriptures. The conductor is the Holy Spirit. The rest of the orchestra are our fellow-believers. So if we haven't already made it a part of our New Year's resolutions, let us check to see if we are scraping our fiddle in harmony or just blowing our own trumpet to the intense irritation of everyone within earshot.

Let us pray: "O Lord, we have been called to be part of a holy community. You did not call us in isolation but placed us in the body of Christ., along with every other believer in Jesus throughout the world in every age. Let us grow as a team, weep, laugh, and live as a team. Grant us the wisdom and the strength to partner with you and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. For Jesus' sake and in His Name we pray. Amen."