

Sermon on 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 prepare for Grace Church by Jonathan Shradar

Disneyland - California Adventure. As we were there I was thinking about the effort that went into the design and perfect ordering of the parks. We even tried to find bugs - something you aren't supposed to experience at Disneyland. It is intentionally the utopia of thrill and wonder and a significant part of the experience is how well it operates, how clean it is, how efficient, organized and even when there are large crowds it seems to be a peaceful place.

We enjoy these types of things because I think there is a base human desire for good design, for order and for peace. We pursue it in a number of ways both healthy and not, but it reflects what we were made to experience, a garden well built to meet all our needs, perfect peace. The human story took a wrong turn and in an attempt to become the designer ourselves we brought chaos into the picture and have been suffering the consequences since. But something big happened and the chaos has started to be undone. This Savior, the master designer, has come and is reordering things, bringing back the garden.

It is unfolding with a peace that we can always understand given to those that believe in him, and he has designed his church to be a sign to others of what he brings, of what the truer life looks like.

In our text today there is a correction for a church that has been sending the wrong signals and in the midst of it we hear the promise of peace and even the empowerment to experience it.

The church is meant to be a place of peace reflecting life in Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 “What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. [27] If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. [28] But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. [29] Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. [30] If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. [31] For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, [32] and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. [33] For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”

“As in all the churches of the saints, [34] the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [35] If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

“[36] Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? [37] If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. [38] If anyone does not recognize this, he is not

recognized. [39] So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But all things should be done decently and in order.” (ESV)

Paul has just made clear that in the worship of the church, intelligible gifts are preferred to the more mysterious manifestations of the Spirit that are not understood. It benefits believers as the church is built up and even serves unbelievers as they hear the truth of their sin and the forgiveness found in Jesus. And now Paul is making clear that the worship of the church is meant to have order over disruption, peace over chaos.

This text, though instructional, is primarily correctional. So we must see it as an answer to the issues in Corinth and recognize the higher purpose of a spiritually empowered church.

This is the landing point of the church’s interaction with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, a church where peace reigns unlike the patterns of worship found around them.

When it comes to gifts of the Spirit, these chapters open up horizons, increase our expectancy and broaden our vision of all that God by his Spirit wants to do in the body of Christ. Matching his purpose.

All hinges on verse 33. “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” The theological point is crucial: the character of one’s deity is reflected in the character of one’s worship.

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1) Place of Peace

We can assume from the way that Paul has corrected the church that their worship, the times they would gather in homes to take the Lord’s Supper and hear the Word of God, had been not only individualistic (focused on a personal experience over others) but unruly. Whether it was the influence of the ecstatic pagan worship or the newness of all members of society being free to worship together, the church “service” as we might think of it, was disorganized and confusing.

Where chaos once prevailed, the church is to have harmony, structure, and peace. Paul gets there by calling Corinth to pursue order and live under authority as the practice of the church.

a) Order - There is a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue and interpretation - all done for building up the church but not all at the same time. Things are done decently and in order.

Here everyone is participating, but rather than speaking over each other, there is deferral to one another and guarding against excess. Still prioritizing gifts that can be understood, someone may bring a word in tongues, with an interpretation, but only two, at the most three. The same applies to words or prophecy, two or three prophets speak and the whole church, “others,” are to weigh and discern if what is said is from the Lord.

There is also a setting aside of rights - again putting the good of the body over self expression. Remaining silent; if there is no interpretation for the tongue, or no one present with the gift of interpretation. In speaking and discerning prophecy there is hearing and then silence - not to speak over another.

Control “A fundamental truth is implicit in Paul’s teaching here. Speaking in tongues (and indeed prophecy) is not an uncontrollable phenomenon. The person with the gift can choose either to use it or not to use it; can choose to use it in private or in public; can choose to keep it private and silent even in public.”

Personal silence is preferable to talking over and disrespecting a brother or sister. The goal is encouragement and learning, for the whole church, having order instigates that.

b) Authority - there is mutual submission taking place, words are not only spoken but also evaluated, the church as the authority in discerning. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, not only do we have personal control but those with this specific gifts submit to one another rather than disrupting and confusing the gathered church.

As far as prophecy - or any spoken gift - is concerned, it needs always to be weighed, tested, evaluated... Some of the criteria for such testing are: Does it glorify God? Is it in accord with Scripture? Does it build up the church? Is it spoken in love? Does the speaker submit to judgment by others? Is the speaker in control of themselves? Does the speaker go on too long? Is the speaker demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in their life?

This idea of authority rolls on and then we come to verses 34 & 35... “the women should keep silent in the churches.” Now some of you haven’t really been listening, just waiting for me to talk about these verses! I hope you will hear what I say after we talk about them!

In this section of chapters that Paul has been outlining the worship of the church and what should take place, he very early on told us that women were to pray and prophecy in the church, under the authority of Christ, not disregarding her husband. And then we get here and they should keep silent. There are a few ways to read this directive.

Some will hold it up on its own and say “see, women can’t speak in church...” Plenty of well respected pastors have taken this approach. But given the weight of what Paul has already said, and what we find in the rest of the New Testament, this shouldn’t be seen as a comprehensive bar against women speaking.

Some don’t think that this is suppose to be in the text, that Paul didn’t write it; one scholar cites how Paul usually speaks of women, specifically husbands and wives and how this is different. The flow of the argument is also not how Paul usually writes - take it out and viola you have the right flow. And the language in different manuscripts over time has been found in two different

places - where we see it and at the end of verse 40 - which makes it suspect. But it is in all known manuscripts and as I see it, the Spirit allowed it to remain over these 1500 years...

Some think it indicates that a women can't challenge a man's word of prophecy, that is what is shameful. But that doesn't jive with Paul saying the "others" are to weigh it - others includes the women of the church.

So what is going on here. Again remember this is corrective over and against being instructional, so Paul is speaking to a particular issue in Corinth. "if Paul is the author, it seems to be that some form of disruptive speaking out was going on, which then qualifies the apparent absolutes of verse 34." Was it chatter, not being used to worshiping, maybe. Given that if there is anything they desire to "learn" I think it was more of questioning, asking what was going on, what does this mean... and it was a disruption.

But there is a submission to authority in it. Like before the marriage relationship is the marker - and it extends to everyone - no one should speak out of turn or in a disruptive way - because there is not meant to be confusion but peace.

This extends to spiritual authority as well. Paul uses sarcasm to show the necessity of recognizing commands of the Lord, trusting and submitting to the Word which is the ultimate authority in the church.

So there is order and authority and it turns into practice.

c) Practice - **14:39-40** "So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But all things should be done decently and in order." (ESV)

Paul urges the church not to hamper, hinder, prevent or restrain speaking in tongues... don't despise a gift, use it rightly.

Restating his main point of the whole chapter - do things in order, be eager to prophesy, to make much of Jesus, to have gifts for the good of others.

This makes the church a place of peace. Gifts being used for the good of the body, building up others. Understandable proclamation of the good news of Jesus and flourishing in relation to one another and the authority of Scripture.

And Paul's purpose is not merely a tidy little church service; yes there was needed correction for the misbehaving house churches in Corinth, but ultimately he wants all churches to function in the gifts they are given by the Spirit for the glory of God. They are meant to point to the source of peace himself.

The church is meant to be a place of peace reflecting life in Christ.

How the church functions, how it is gifted, why it exists is all within the purpose of Paul's writing, to retrain their eyes on Jesus and living in response to his grace. All of this is meant to reflect the overwhelming power of Christ and him crucified.

This power brings peace.

2) Peace of Christ - Where chaos once prevailed, Christ brings peace.

Into the disruption of life outside the garden, Jesus lives a life that is marked by the exact same things the church reflects in rightly pursuing the gifts. He lived in perfect obedience, in the miraculous empowerment of the Holy Spirit and in the most known act of human history, in God-honoring submission, he gave his life as a substitute for you, taking on the pain, the separation from the Father - that in believing in him he would bring you to God - to where you belong - in relationship headed back to the garden.

And in Christ, by believing in him, having faith in him, we have peace. We can rest knowing he is in control, he is the authority, and he has declared us righteous, chosen, secure.

Through his work on the cross we have peace with God.

Romans 5:1 "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (ESV)

No longer under wrath for our sin, welcomed in and made children. And through his work we have the peace of God... even when life gets crazy and disorganized...

Romans 5:2-5 "Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (ESV)

Philippians 4:4-7 "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (ESV)

Into our busy lives, into our hard conversations, into our struggles and pain, into our celebrations and times of mourning; into our chaos, Jesus comes with peace, purpose and power that we would both find rest in him and live for his glory forever changed. That we would be united with him.

Hudson Taylor, missionary, movement leader bringing the gospel to inland China. Writes of this peace, of union with Christ, in a letter to his beloved sister.

"...Oh, my dear sister, it is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Saviour; to be a member of Christ! Think what it involves. Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be rich and the left poor? or your head be well fed while your body starves? Again, think of its bearing on prayer. Could a bank clerk say to a customer, "It was only your hand wrote that cheque, not you," or, "I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself"? No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited if offered in the Name of Jesus (i.e. not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ's credit—a tolerably wide limit! If we ask anything unscriptural or not in accordance with the will of God, Christ Himself could not do that; but, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us, and...we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him."

"The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realise this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things, or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money, and brings me his purchases. So, if God place me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer's oneness with Christ. And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I wish I could tell you, instead of writing about it."

This is what the church experiences, what it speaks of when it gathers and what its decent order points to, that the God of peace would be revealed over the chaos of our world. That individuals are in faith made one with Christ and one with each other in the church.

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Psalm 29:11 "May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!" (ESV)

Response: Church, Practice - Seek the Lord, be filled by the Spirit and receive the gifts he gives. Live under the authority of Scripture and live your life of peace in Christ.

Unbeliever - Watch and meet the God of peace. Pursue Jesus and the peace that only he gives, the purpose that can only be found in him.

The human desire for perfect design, order and peace might be glimpsed in places like Disneyland but the church points to the only true match for our longing. It is fulfilled only in Christ. May the Lord use us to reflect his peace as we enjoy the gifts that he gives.

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. [15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV)