

## **So That the World May Believe**

by Rev. Robert Griffith

Towards the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus prayed a prayer of faith which eclipses all prayers. What He asked of the Father was nothing short of outrageous and unbelievable – especially in the context of the society in which He was praying this prayer. From within the most divided and fragmented community on the planet, Jesus offered up this prayer for all His disciples then and now:

*“My prayer is ... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” ( John 17:20-23 )*

What an incredible expectation! He prayed that the unity He enjoyed within the Trinity would be our experience as His disciples. How bold is that prayer? How far removed from the dysfunctional reality of humanity is that prayer?

But then we flick over just a few pages in our Bible and we see that very soon after Jesus left us in bodily form and released the Holy Spirit, His prayer in John 17 was being answered. In Acts chapter 2 we read about the day of Pentecost and the birth of the Church of which we are a part today and in the closing verses of that chapter we have a snapshot of that new community which God had established in Christ:

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” ( Acts 2:42-47 )*

So fast forward a couple of thousand years and Jesus’ prayer in John 17 and the reality of the Church in Acts 2 should be a source of tremendous encouragement to us today. Jesus is still praying that prayer and God is still answering in isolated pockets across the world as the people of God are coming together across denominational boundaries and showing the world what the Church looks like and sounds like when are united in Christ, through Christ and for Christ.

A few years ago, two leading American Psychologists interviewed all the members of eleven major symphony orchestras and asked them how they perceived their colleagues in their orchestra. The findings were interesting. Apparently the percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving! String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and lacking athleticism. The orchestra members overwhelmingly chose "loud" as the primary adjective to describe the brass players. Woodwind players seemed to be held in the highest esteem, described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical. Now these were some of the leading Symphony Orchestras in the world. So with such diverse personalities and perceptions of their peers, how could any of these people come together to produce the magnificent music for which they are all so famous?

The answer is simple: there are two things which transform their diversity, discord and differences into unity, harmony and perfection in music. The first is the number 440. I am, of course, talking about 'Concert A' - the musical note which every instrument must tune to before they can play together and it has a frequency of 440 Hz. Listen now to an orchestra tuning to 'Concert A.' Unless all the instruments are in tune to that perfect single source, the resulting sound would be anything but beautiful. But once they are tuned in, they only need one more essential thing – the Conductor.

All the instruments may be in perfect tune to the one single note at 440 Hz, but without a Conductor they will not know what to play, when to play it, in what order, or at what tempo. It is the Conductor who directs each and every one of those unique instruments, perfectly tuned to the same single source. Under the Conductor's careful direction, a miracle unfolds and the result is breathtaking.

Well brothers and sisters, welcome to God's orchestra! The Body of Christ – the Church – the symphony of heaven. I'm sure this is not the first time you've heard that analogy applied to the Church. If we examine all the parts of the Christian Church today we see an enormous variety and we see a significant level of discord and division because one part thinks more highly of themselves than they ought to and other parts believe they are more or less important than other parts.

The world looks on and sees many, many separated churches. They don't see, hear or experience that orchestra coming together, in tune, eyes fixed on the one Conductor. Then, and only then, would the miracle of the Church be seen in all its glory. The world will never be drawn to Jesus if the Church which bears His name cannot speak with one voice, sing in harmony and show the miracle of transformation which the gospel brings. When the symphony of the Church does what we are called to do, the world will be in awe once more.

The unity and harmony of the people of God which Jesus prayed for is exactly what transpired in the early Church. We read in the book of Acts how the Holy Spirit drew previously separated and segregated people together as one. One of the most divided societies in human history suddenly came together and showed us what true unity within diversity looks like and sounds like. Like radically different instruments in an orchestra, the early Church members came together and produced a harmony and a new reality which took the entire world by storm. Nobody had ever seen or heard anything like this in their whole lives. How did this happen? The answer is as simple as it is confronting. The Holy Spirit was allowed to take the reigns for the first time and the result was a supernatural unity and harmony which fallen human beings could never produce.

The same is true today. Left to our own devices, we humans continue to separate and fragment. We find it so easy to focus on what divides us and not what unites us. The world can no longer look at 'the Church.' The world sees many, many 'churches' and so this unity I am talking about is so foreign to what they see with their eyes every day.

Then we hear those powerful words of Jesus again in John 17 and we are forced to ask whether that is even possible. Could we ever be one as Jesus and the Father are one? Is it too late for us to expect that our society might see what the first century society saw as the Holy Spirit moves like a tsunami through the people and creates this supernatural community of selfless servants and disciples of Jesus Christ? We have to believe such unity is still possible or we should shut down every Church and stop believing Jesus is still alive and building the Church He promised to build.

So how does that happen? It happens the same way an orchestra full of radically different instruments comes together to produce a magnificent sound which will stop people in their tracks. Firstly, we make sure we are in tune with our 'Concert A' and secondly, we must fix our eyes on the Conductor. It's that simple.

The Holy Spirit is our 'Concert A,' the One with Whom we are called to be perfectly in tune at all times so that there can be harmony in the midst of our diversity and differences. God has never called us to uniformity. He never wanted us to all be the same – and just as well, because we are not, are we? How boring would that be?

There are many different sections of God's orchestra across this city and we all have different parts to play. An orchestra full of violins would sound terrible. And orchestra full of percussionists would be outrageous. If everyone played brass, there would be no oxygen left in the room and everyone would go home deaf. Each section of our orchestra has its own strengths and weaknesses and on our own we only play part of the music of heaven.

But when God decides its time to get the orchestra back together, when the people of God are tuned to the Holy Spirit again and come together under the direction of the Master Conductor, Jesus, all heaven breaks lose and the 'sound' is amazing. Each instrument just needs the courage to step up and play again. When they do ... when we do ... the world will once again be stopped in their tracks. They will be amazed at the sound coming from this heaven-empowered symphony. They will instinctively know that God has indeed re-formed His orchestra and that Jesus Christ is alive and still building His Church.

Let me show you what that looks like. I want you to watch and listen to a short video now, not to be entertained, although you will be; not to be blessed, although you will be; but to be challenged by the Holy Spirit as we see prophetically what I believe has begun to happen in this city and what must happen, as we tune in to the perfect pitch of the Holy Spirit, respond to the direction of the Conductor, and show the world the Church as God sees us.

Put yourselves into this video as disciples of Christ, as members of our congregation. Put our congregation into this video as members of the wider Body of Christ. Then watch what happens to those who have been passing us by and ignoring us as isolated 'orchestra members' for years. Watch what happens when the orchestra comes together ... and let this be the promise of God for Lismore and for our whole nation. Let those who have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit of God is saying today.

Follow this link to play the video: <https://youtu.be/87qT5BOI2XU>

What you just saw happen in the physical realm, God desires to do in the spiritual realm. Are you ready? Are you willing? This city has one of the most united, prayerful, Spirit-led Ministers Associations I have ever experienced. There is huge diversity across the Church in this region and yet when those leaders get together and pray for their city, they are united by the Spirit of God and speak as one harmonious voice. If God can't get this orchestra together in this place, with that kind of surrendered leadership, then I doubt it will happen anywhere.

So I want to encourage each and every one of you to pray for the whole Church – the Bride of Christ - the Church God sees – the Church Jesus promised to build – the Church this society desperately needs to see and encounter.

We need Jesus' prayer in John 17 to be answered right here in our city. Pray that we, and all those who claim to be disciples, might submit more to the Spirit of God in us and in our midst, so that the unity and harmony of the whole Body of Christ might be seen and heard in this sick and broken world.

Let's begin that praying right now ....

*Our Lord and our God, we praise You and bless You for what You are doing in our midst and for what You have promised to do. We praise You for Your faithfulness to us when we have let You down in so many ways over so many years.*

*We thank You for the reminder today that You can and will use us to advance Your Kingdom in this place - not working in spite of our differences in the Church – but by bringing those differences into harmony in a supernatural way which will amaze us all and show the world the unifying power of Your Spirit. Then, and only then, will we start to see You answer our heart-felt prayer over many generations: “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

*Come Lord Jesus, pour out Your Spirit on this city and this nation. Revive us again. Get the orchestra playing together again Lord - let's make 'music' that will bring healing, hope, light and salvation to the world around us, just as You have commissioned us as your disciples.*

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!*

*In Jesus' mighty and matchless name, we pray, Amen.*