

Epiphany 3 24th January
Nehemiah 8:1-10, 1 Cor 12:12-31, Luke 4:14-21

Intro

Who here likes doing Jigsaws?

Any special types? pictures?

Have you seen the one that is a picture of a mass of baked beans?

Or the 3D ones that make a globe?

My dad was the king of jigsaw puzzles. But none of us were allowed to help!

He had his own system for sorting the pieces, not just by colour but also by shape

And if we came along and moved them about woe betide us!

And what about the last piece!! How many of us have hidden the last piece - of any size jigsaw - just so that we can be the one to complete the picture!!!

Or been the one who has had to HUNT EVERYWHERE to find that missing piece

Why?

Because the Jigsaw puzzle is not finished, is not complete, looks odd, is disappointing until that last piece is in place.

It doesn't matter if it is a corner piece, or an edge piece - although these will have been missed very early on if you do a puzzle the same way as me and start with the corners and outside edge

Or whether the last piece is a small odd shaped piece or plane blue sky !!!

It matters and is missed if it is not there!

Whether it is a 1000 piece beautiful landscape picture.... with LOTS of blue sky!

Or a 9 piece chunky wooden puzzle of Thomas the Tank Engine

The corner pieces hold it all together and are obviously important to the completion of the whole picture

But a small piece of boring blue sky is also vital to make the picture complete

Each piece is indispensable to the true completion of the jigsaw puzzle

And I wonder if Paul were writing his letters today instead of 2000 years ago, if he might have also used the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle?

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Paul instead uses the image of the human body

Does anyone know how many bones make up the inner ear?

3 - the hammer, the anvil and the stirrup

If you search number of bones in the body it will say 206 but that does not include the 3 in each ear Not sure why... didn't have time to research that

But I tell you - if we were missing one of those bones, even though tiny we would know about it

Our hearing would be significantly impaired

These bones are TINY and yet crucial

Our femur, or thigh bone is the largest and strongest bone in our body.

When I was learning first aid as a teenager we were told that if someone had broken this bone then it was very serious because the pain involved could cause significant shock.

Whether a TINY hammer bone in our ear or our large, strong thigh bone

each is indispensable to the well being and complete functioning of our body.

And this is true too of the body of Christ

Every one of us is an indispensable part of the whole body
Each with our own attributes, our own personality, our own set of gifts and abilities, strengths and weaknesses
And each indispensable to the complete and best functioning of the body of Christ
Whether that be through the seen or unseen part that we play

Every week a dedicated lady in our body here cleans the toilets here in church. Unless you are here at that time of the week you wouldn't know who it is
But boy would you know if she didn't do it for a few weeks!!

Every Sunday morning there is someone who lights all the candles, usually before you are in church or who makes sure the right pieces of paper are in the right places for me to use
Without these unseen things being done our times of worship together here would be inhibited

Each Sunday there are people who make cups of coffee for us to enjoy after the service as we spend time chatting together
You get my point..... without each one of us, each unique and special, being an active part of the body, the picture is incomplete and the body does not function at its best

Do you know what part you play? Do you know how important you are to the good functioning of this body of Christ here in Owlsmoor?
If not then please chat to me...

Just as each part of the jigsaw, no matter what its shape, size or place in the puzzle is important so is each and every person in our church family here important, no matter what their age, abilities, personality...
And just as each part of the puzzle must be looked after and kept safe so no part goes missing, so must each one of us be cared for and looked after so that no one goes missing and each may fulfil the part they have to play

As well as that care and nurture as different part of the body so is our corporate worship of God

Nehemiah 8:1-10

ALL important to the worship of God
Corporate worship has always been and still is an important part of our life as a Christian
In the reading from Nehemiah it says at least 8 times all or together
All the people gathered
All the people were attentive ! :-)
All the people answered Amen
All the people wept
All worshipped the Lord

The people Ezra was reading to had been a scattered people but they had come back together, as one group, as the body of Christ and worshipped together.

In our individualistic society there can be a tendency to say that it doesn't matter, we don't need to come together, we can be Christians on our own

I don't think that is how it is meant to be. If we are a body, each different part important, then how can we relegate coming together to worship God to a lower place in our priorities. As a young Christian I can remember being told the importance of being together, or worshipping together with other Christians.

The person teaching us said it is like coals in a fire. When they are all together they burn well and create a good heat.

But if you take one of the coals out of the fire and leave it on the side, it will cool down and not burn and create the heat that it was meant to.

I have always remembered that and at times I have chosen to take myself out of the fire, away from the body of Christ and tried to go it alone and the consequences have not been good.

My faith has gradually cooled down, distractions have crept in and my worship of God has dried up

It's not always easy but it is important

And not just for us as part of the body, here at St Georges but also as churches together in Sandhurst

And sometimes, when opportunities arise, the wider church too... Spring Harvest, Big Church Day Out

We are part of the Deanery and the Diocese and of the whole body of Christ across the world

Luke 4:14-21

Our purpose as the body of Christ here is not for ourselves

If as we as Christians are to imitate Christ Jesus then by looking at His agenda, partly set out in Luke 4 then we should be concerned with the poor, those who are held captive, the blind, the oppressed

And this does not mean just physically but also spiritually

Looks at Jesus' focus, His agenda

It was to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to let the oppressed go free

We as a church here in Owlsmoor should not just be about ourselves

Part of our duty, our responsibility, part of our worship is to reach out to those outside our church family

And, I would suggest, particularly to the lost and the lonely, the poor, the captives, the sick, the oppressed.

As well as being Education Sunday today, it is also Homelessness Sunday

What provision is there locally for the homeless?? I am ashamed to say that I don't know

I AM going to find out this week

We live next to RMA where Army Officers are trained

And sadly a high percentage of homeless men in Britain are ex servicemen

I heard a statistic last week that 1 out of every 122 people in the world is now a displaced person

Displaced from their home for one reason or another

That, as part of the body of Christ is something we should be concerned about AND doing something about

During lent we I would like you to use a booklet produced by Open Doors called Live Like a Refugee as a daily reading so that we can at least gain a better understanding of what it is like to be homeless in that way

We have the Foodbank in Bracknell and Crowthorne where people who have no money for whatever reason can get 3 days supply of food
Ask Judith if you want to know more. I am sure they would always welcome more help

I could keep going..... I won't... today ! :-)

It is a privilege to be a part of the body of Christ

Each of us, EVERY ONE of us is important and a valuable part of the body

Each of us has a role and a purpose

Corporate worship is a vital part of being part of that body

And our agenda, our purpose is to take the joy of the Lord out of the building here to others, especially the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed, the sad and lonely

Lets be a people who are known for love and worship of God, our love and care of one another, and the love and joy that we share with those not yet a part of our church family here.