

The Body of Christ 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

We move forward today on the topic of The Body of Christ, firmly planted on last week's foundation ... Love. If we have left last week's message parked in last week's parking spot, we gain nothing! I implore you to carry that message of the necessity of love, into today's message, and into as much of your attitude and behaviour as you possible can. Without love underpinning all things, we have nothing. What we say and what we do is empty.

So let's have a look at the Body of Christ and the gifts with which He has blessed us! Christ used His body for many things – to listen, to heal, to feed, to teach, to forgive, to share, to lift up, to correct.

For us, the Body of Christ means the church. Everyone who loves Christ becomes part of His Body.

The first Biblical reference to the Body was made by Jesus recorded in Mark 14:22 – the Lord's Supper ... a remembrance that we are part of

the body, and as such, we are called to know what our gifts are and use them. To be a member of the Body of Christ is a very important community to which we belong.

I spent a great deal of my life training and showing horses. I belonged to a horse club. We all shared a love of horses. I was part of that community.

I spent a great deal of my time playing sports. We all shared a love of sports. I was part of that community.

I am sure that you have had similar experiences. Consider the many different communities of which you have been part. The joys and the blessings of being part of a community are wonderful.

The church is one important community that we are all part of. I dare say that the church is so much more profound and life changing than any other community than you have been part of. The church as a community, is not just a group of religious people gathered together to enjoy certain mutually desired functions. It is a group of people for

whom a life of faith is important. They want to grow their faith. They want to express their faith into the lives of others with kindness, and compassion. As Christians we belong to the same Lord, we are filled with the same Spirit, and we are given gifts by that same Spirit. The end goal is to live out our calling - to change the world with the love of God. That is the work of the church.

And so we come to this well known, well loved image that Paul uses – the Body of Christ – that image is so familiar and so immediate. We all have one of these don't we ... a body?

Raise a hand. Now a foot. Close one eye. Cover one ear.

Think about the function of the stomach. Now the kidney. Now the lungs.

Think about bones, now joints, now muscles, now tendons and ligaments.

Each of these body parts is unique. Each of these is essential. Each of these are essential to the efficient working of the whole body!

Think of a car. It has so many different parts – doors, windows, a horn, gears, a brake, a steering wheel ... I am sure there are many more parts but none with which I am familiar. Each of these unique parts are essential. They each have their own important function. Together, all of the various parts make up the whole car ... it is incomplete without all of the parts!

So it is with the Body of Christ. All of us together, make up the Body of Christ. Each one of us is essential to the efficient working of the Body of Christ!

Now as we all know, the real work of the church is getting together and having a great meeting on Sunday morning. Isn't that right?

That is hardly the work of the church! Sunday mornings are fun!

Sunday morning worship lifts us up! It renews and refreshes us and equips us for the week ahead ... at least it is supposed to. But I think we all know that what happens on Sunday morning is not the purpose or maybe even not the most important part of the church. Sunday

morning worship can be wonderful for sure ... but is that the primary purpose of the church? ... to get together to re-connect, to sing and to pray and to listen and to proclaim and to worship? I think of Sunday morning as a great celebration, an essential celebration. When done well, it can propel us into the week ahead full of grace and hope and light and love. Propel us into the lives of God's children so that we can shine a light. I think church on Sunday morning enables us to be the church Monday to Saturday.

Being the church, being the Body of Christ, is going out into the community, into the world, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, lift up the downhearted, free the oppressed, bring good news to one and all. We are being the church when we are being kind, and generous, and unselfish and compassionate to others. That is the work of the church! When we do that for one another and for those who are not part of our congregation - that is the working of the Body of Christ at its best.

What we do on Sunday mornings, or at least aspire to do, is to prepare ourselves to be the Body of Christ in its fullness and to go out and function as the Body of Christ. Sunday mornings, we gather for training. We gather for becoming equipped so that we can fulfill our call as members of the Body of Christ out there. We come to get close to God, that we might be refreshed and renewed by God, so that we might transmit the love of God into the lives of others.

So, The Body of Christ ... each one of us a member of it, each one of us, a part to play.

If you were to ask 3 different people what you are good at, there would be some common words they come up with ... it could be baking, or leading, speaking, listening, carpentry, teaching, mechanics, or helping. It could be numbers, or praying, or supporting. It could be imagining, or strategizing, or fixing things. Those who know us well, know the things in life we are good at and those which we are not. Our gifts

come in all different forms. They comprise the parts of Christ's Body that we account for.

The mouth speaks. The ears don't speak, they listen. The feet help us move. The hands don't, they help us lift things and open doors and hug others. All gifts are required! Whatever your gifts are, God needs them.

God's work is endless and utterly varied. It requires all gifts to be on hand to jump in and help out! Just as our human body has many parts and each part its own function, so too the Body of Christ.

Of all the gifts that God has given to his people, what one would you say is the most important ... the most essential?

No gift is more important than another. No gift is less necessary than another. All gifts are important and essential in the body of Christ.

In the next few weeks, we are going to look at Gifts of the Spirit.

In the meantime, I want you to do some reflection. I want you to speak with others who know you well – ask them what gifts they see in you – spend time in prayer. Ask God to reveal to you the ways He has gifted you.

I want to close today, as I did last week, reading to you this same passage from 1 Corinthians from The Message.