



**SERMONS**

by

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**Bible readings: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a and Luke 4:14-21**

**Title: "The Body of Christ: unity and diversity!"**

### **Introduction**

In our passage from 1 Corinthians, we are presented with a letter from Paul in response to a report from Chloe's people about problems in the Corinthian church (1:11).

To offer a bit more context, rather than celebrating one another's gifts, the Corinthian Christians had become prideful concerning their particular gifts and dismissive of the gifts of others. Therefore, they were in danger of tearing the church apart.

### **So, how does this relate to us?**

This is interesting when you consider some of the challenges that we as a Church are experiencing:

- 1) Lack of interest and individualism. A "I don't care" attitude or "it is not my problem" mentality.
- 2) The error of apostasy – deviation from God's original principles.

The greatest danger to the body of Christ is disunity and wrong discipleship through the communication of the doctrine. A doctrine that's largely based on personal experience and feelings, rather than being rooted in scripture.

Conference, Paul's message is clear: we are one. Meaning we all have different body parts but this does not change the fact that with all of those parts, you still have one body.

In verse 12-14 it says:

*"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."*

Therefore, through Christ, we are united within our diverse gifts. There is one body, one Spirit. No one is less significant than another in the body of Christ. Similarly, in our gospel reading, Luke tells us that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, ready to transcend the attitude of individualism and any error of apostasy and embrace unity.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'" - Luke 4:18-19*

Similar to Paul's invitation, Jesus' declaration of purpose was a call to his hearers to join a new spirit-filled community. And just as Isaiah, of old, had been speaking to people in need of new hope and promise, so was Jesus. The work of God's kingdom was not simply about the Messiah; it was an invitation to all to stand together and get involved by using their gifts:

*"to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed about by the waves and carried around by every wind of teaching and by the clever cunning of men in their deceitful scheming..."* - Ephesians 4:12-14

### **So what can we take away?**

Jesus is challenging us to embrace the idea that those parts of the body that seem weaker or less honourable should be seen as indispensable or given greater respect. A preacher or a minister is no greater than a steward or a projectionist. A senior steward is no greater than a Sunday school teacher. We are all equal in the body of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I am submitting that the reason why many young people such as myself are not coming to church or do not want to submit to mentorship is not because they're not interested in the body of Christ or are rebellious. It is because they have seen errors in our doctrine and divisions. If we do not present Christ in a very balanced and loving way, we will experience more and more decline. We must remain faithful to our fundamental doctrines.

Brothers and sisters, God is not interested in our personal agenda. Rather, God is interested in anyone who is prepared to be a role model for others to follow. It takes sincerity, humility, and determination to see Jesus glorified in our life. Hebrews 6:1 says:

*"Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God."*

There has to be a sacrifice on the altar. We must love the whole body of Christ more than our individual fellowships or local church because that is what will reveal Christ and our common experience. We must sacrifice our life, ambition, and exalt Christ above everything else like titles, status, money, etc., because none of that really matters.

Friends, we have been given true eternal life through an encounter with the Son of God, an encounter with the word of God, an encounter with the Spirit of truth, and lastly an encounter with the body of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, that means exercising patience and love/impartiality towards one another by creating space for the limitation of one another. That means delivering the truth according to scripture in love and with wisdom. We must love the body of Christ more than our own ego or agenda. You see God has shown us mercy; in return, all he asks is for us to offer it back to others.

Conference, through the words of hymn writer Richard Gillard, we're being urged to hold these words in mind:

*"Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
Pray that I may have the grace  
To let you be my servant too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey,  
And companions on the road;  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christ-light for you  
In the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
Speak the peace you long to hear. **Amen.**"*