

"Your Role in the Body"

by Pastor Jeffrey Miskus

Preached on the

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

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IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, OUR CRUCIFIED, RISEN AND ASCENDED LORD, WHO IS NOT DEAD BUT ALIVE, WHO IS NOT IN THE TOMB, BUT IS WITH US HERE, NOW WITH HIS LOVE AND HIS POWER AS HE LIVES AND REIGNS AT THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND OF GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. DEARLY BELOVED CHILDREN OF GOD...

Last week we learned from Scripture that God has given each of us spiritual gifts and that these gifts are to be used by us to serve the church. Although there are many kinds of spiritual gifts – they all come from one Spirit – God’s Holy Spirit. We also learned that God’s Holy Spirit decides who gets certain gifts and who gets others. It’s about God’s plan and God’s purposes. Spiritual gifts are gifts of grace – that is we don’t earn them, nor are they given to the ‘good Christians’, rather God graciously gives to each one of us as he sees fit. Today we continue talking about spiritual gifts with the verses that directly follow last week’s passage... 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” Paul builds on last weeks points by comparing the church to a human body. The human body is one unit – but it has many different parts and those parts have different gifts. If a part of the body is missing the body is not complete. You immediately notice if someone is missing a body part.

So even though each part has it’s special job – and there are many special jobs – the many parts make up one body. They are designed by God to work as one. They are designed by God to work as one. That’s where Paul then makes the comparison stating, “So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” Paul calls the church the ‘body of Christ’. And so he says – as the many parts of the human body make up one body that works as one – so it is with Christ. Through our baptism the Holy Spirit has

made us one body – it doesn't matter what our ethnic background is, nor does our socio-economic status matter. Every baptized believer in Jesus has been given the Holy Spirit and also made part of the body of Christ by the same Spirit. We are one.

Now Paul teaches us using this comparison... 1 Corinthians 12:14-16, "Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body."

Paul says – think about your body parts – your foot for instance... Imagine that your foot considered its role useless and felt it would not be part of your body unless it had a role such as the hand. Paul then states the obvious – just because the foot thinks this way does not mean it will cease to be a part of your body. Imagine your ear felt the same way – that its role was useless and that it wasn't really part of your body unless it had a role like your eye. Paul again states the obvious – it might not like its role, it may not see the importance of its role, but it still remains part of your body.

Then Paul draws some important conclusions for us in verses 17-19, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body."

Remember Paul is using this illustration to teach us about the church and Spiritual gifts. Each part of the human body has its role and that role is critical to the working of the body. If the whole body were an eye – we would not have any of our other 4 senses – touch, taste, hearing, smelling. This is common sense to all of us – we want the parts of our body to embrace their different roles because without them the body is challenged in some way. The other body parts must compensate for the missing one. And while they may be enhanced, they don't do nearly as good a job as the part that is missing. Paul states the obvious – "But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body."

The same goes with the church.

Each one of us has spiritual gifts given to us by God that God has arranged to serve the common good of the church. Each one of us must embrace the gift God has given to us and use it to serve the church. We are not to spend our time and energy wishing we had someone else's gift. God has arranged his church to function in a certain manner and just like the human body – you are a part that has an important function God designed just for you. You need to put that gift into action. If you don't then the body of St. Marks will be missing something. If you don't then the other parts of this body will have to make up for what you are not doing and they won't do it as well as you because God has designed and gifted you to do that role in service to His Church. Just as every body part is critical to the proper functioning of the body – every believer, young and old, is critical to the proper functioning of the church. Thank God for the gifts he has assigned you and joyfully perform your part. Take satisfaction in your role because without you the body cannot function as one but with you the body can do amazing things.

Paul continues the teaching in verses 21-26, "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Every part of the body needs the other parts. The brain may be important, but with the nerves connecting it to the other body parts – and without those other body parts themselves the brain can only make commands to itself. Without the other parts the brain is useless. We need each other. Paul says, 'Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.'

It is complete foolishness to look at any part of our body and think that it is dispensable or dishonourable.

God has combined the members of this church, given each of us our gifts so that there should be no division – so that we work as one and so that we can care for each other.

Your gifts are needed for this body to work.

God has put you here for a reason – he has gifted you for a reason – this body cannot do without you. And so Paul writes, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” If you stub your toe your whole body shares in the pain. Your leg recoils your foot, your hands reach for your foot, your eyes tear up, you give out a cry with your mouth, you might even break out into a sweat. Although only one member is affected your body acts as one. If something joyful happens to one part of your body the whole body rejoices. So it is to be with the church. If one of us suffers – we are to suffer with that one. If one of us rejoices – we are to rejoice with that one.

So Paul completes the comparison in the next verse and then lists some more gifts...(vs27-31) “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”

Jesus has cleansed you through his redeeming work on the cross. Yes we are sinners but Jesus has made you a saint and He has made you fit for service in his Kingdom.

He gave you the special gifts he needed you to have so that this church can care for each other and reach out to the world.

He placed you here in this congregation – made you part of this body to use your gifts. Are you the foot that wishes you were a hand? Are you the body part that feels it is not worthy or useless? Are you of the mind that your service doesn't matter to this body?

If these passages of Scripture tell us anything – they tell us that every single one of us is important for the work God has given us as a congregation. Each one of us here must use their gifts so this body can operate properly. Ask yourself this week – what is my roll at St. Marks? How am I using my gifts to serve this body?