**One Body – One Spirit**

**Ephesians 4:1-7**

17th Sunday after Trinity

09.26.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today Paul declares to us some incredible truths. There is one body and one spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – One lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Dear friends, Paul is speaking to the unity that we have as one body, the body of Christ, the Church. We are called by God to consider ourselves together in this manner, as one body. If you think about it, there is a certain intimacy that is implied.

Do different parts of your body go off and do different things all by themselves. No! Your body is united. Maybe you can understand it a bit if you have ever had a migraine headache. They are nasty! Not only does your head hurt, a migraine affects your stomach, your eyes, maybe your intestines, and sometimes even your legs.

How does your body respond when something incredibly good happens? Your whole body is happy together. Your heart skips merrily, your feet go right along with it, and the corners of your lips curl up into a smile.

The church is the body of Christ, we are one body because we all have the same Spirit, the Spirit of Christ that dwells within us.

There are some who would say that to be one body, all those who claim the name of Christ are one. Some try to use words in our text in an effort to support their claim, saying, “we must strive for peace and unity at all costs and under all circumstances. We must learn to overlook our differences and be united in what is most important.”

Wonderful! What is most important? Who must I have unity with?

Let me read you a passage of scripture with which you are familiar, but from a translation done by some of those who are screaming the loudest for us to be united. These are the words of Jesus from Matthew as He begins to teach the Lord's Prayer, “Pray then in this way: Our Father-Mother in heaven, hallowed be your name.” (Mt. 6:9)

Another is the words of Jesus at the end of Matthew's gospel, they translated it this way: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father-Mother, and the beloved Child, and the Holy Spirit.” (Mt. 28:19)

Are you of one Spirit with those who believe and teach such? This teaching and this translation of the Bible are blasphemy against God. Because some have pointed such things out, AND, been bold enough to call it blasphemy, they claim we are divisive. They believe that calling their teaching false, is fracturing oneness. They claim those stating God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the ones being divisive.

Dear friends we are not one body with those who teach such things – they have a different spirit. But it is not those who abide by in God’s truth who are breaking the unity. We are reminded by Paul that we, Christ’s Church, are all one body.

Consider your own physical body. If a cancer found in it, you’d have a surgeon remove that cancer before it spread throughout your body, killing other organs, and possibly the whole body.

What broke the unity of your body? Was it the surgeon who removed the cancer? Or was it the cancer which breaks the peace that should be in the body? It is of course the cancer which is trying to kill the body.

In Christ’s body, it is the disease which complains the loudest when it sees that it may be cut out and destroyed. It whines when it realizes that it will no longer be allowed to prey upon the rest of the body and bring corruption to it.

How much false teaching can we tolerate and still claim we are one? Which cancer is allowed to grow in the body of Christ’s Church?

How often have we sided with the disease, or false teachings? How often have we begged for unity by asking the church to look past that which is harmful to the body of Christ?

“Pastor, don’t say anything to Herman Herpolscheimer about what he is doing, you might drive him away from the church.” In this way, pastors are asked to allow that which may have eternally damning results, to continue – all for the sake of keeping the outward appearance of unity and peace. Meanwhile, the cancer is allowed to live and spread and thrive. It may even infect other body parts, possibly killing them as well.

There is one body and one spirit in the church, one Lord, One Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is overall and through all and in all. It isn't just our little church, we are one body with all those in Christ. We who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are one body with all those of the past, present, and who will in the future, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are called together in one hope. This is the unity of one body, Christ's church. We are one with all those bear the name of Christ from every age.

There is only one holy Spirit, He doesn't give different faiths to different people, there's only one faith! There's only one Christian truth! There's only one body and one spirit! It belongs to the faith that is the knowledge of the Son of God that we all might reach the fullness of Christ.

It's been said before but maybe it should be said again. It is the same faith – yesterday, today, tomorrow – a changeless Christ in an ever-changing world.

When we look at the things that are present in the world around us, some are extremely divisive to this one spirit and one body. Do we speak out for those of the body who are yet unborn? Do we welcome back into the body, with arms of forgiveness and peace, those who are grieving their past sinfulness, and how they've hurt the body? And the answer to both of those questions is, yes!

It is not the Holy Spirit who casts aside God’s Word so sin is made acceptable. There is no unity when falsehood is accepted as truth. Christ Himself is the Word of God, and His inerrant and inspired Scriptures dictate to us what is truth and what is not. When teachers, preachers, and others depart from that Word - they are the ones who break unity in the church. They break unity with those of the past who have preceded us to heaven, and they break unity with those in the present and future who will abide no other truth than that which God has revealed in Jesus Christ His Son through sacred Scripture.

Dearly beloved of God, there is one body, for there is one spirit. It is the spirit of Christ. Our life is bound together when we gather as participants in Christ. We may call it the gift of baptism, but it is so much more.

If we think of it only as a gift, what was the cost? There are no free gifts! It is true that I may not have bought the gift I was given for my birthday, but someone did! Someone paid the price necessary to purchase it. The price was the innocent suffering in death of Christ.

In baptism we are gathered into Christ himself. His death becomes our death, and his resurrection seals ours for the last day, even as his Spirit lives within us to live each day here faith.

Unity can be broken in the church by such translations of the Bible which tries to teach falsehood to the masses. We need to watch for such falsehood.

What happens when the body starts fighting with itself? The Body of Christ is fractured by simple arguments between believers in Christ over some of the most petty things. But, fracturing of the Body doesn’t happen just in these four walls. Arguments like: toilet paper coming over the top of the roll or over the bottom; squeeze from the middle of the tube or roll the end; toilet seat up or down; fill up the gas tank if it is less than an 1/8 of a tank; and other petty arguments bring disunity to the Body of Christ in families and homes. Holding grudges against someone for decades fosters cancer. Dear friends, these things ought not to be so.

Those who create such translation abominations need to repent of their false teaching and their attempts to breed cancer in the body.

So also, you and I need to repent that we have brought illness into the body. We tried to dispel the Spirit and the bond of peace that God would have exist in His Church when we have let petty squabbles make us angry with the fellow redeemed who are also members of the Body of Christ, maybe even members with us in this congregation.

You and I, and all believers in Christ, were called to one hope. When the truth of that hope is spoken in love, then there is growth in Christ. What is the truth spoken in love? You and I are sinners who are so insistent of our own desires that we are sometimes a cancer to the body.

What is the truth spoken in love? Your sins are forgiven!

When there is division between people caused by petty squabbles and anger, forgiveness is the only thing that can grow unity and build up the body of believers in love. I have been called into your midst to speak precious words from Christ to you – your sins against the unity of the body of Christ are forgiven.

I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

How do you do that? Well, what does that one body look like? One body, filled with God's spirit, looks godly! What does godliness look like?

I know… when we look at the commandments, when we try and consider the law, too often we think of it negative terms. “Don't do this! Don't do that!” Indeed, there are things that we should not do!

But we need to remember that God’s Law is good! It is eternal! Remember exactly the words of our head, Christ, when he declared that the fulfilling of the first table of the law is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength; and to love your neighbors yourself. God’s law will be our eternal life, but without the negatives. We WILL be doing these things – we will love perfectly.

You are one body with Christ as your head. The body always desires to be where the head is, I mean, would your body like to be separated from your head? If the body is separated from the head, what happens to the rest of the body? Yeah! What does that say about gathering where Christ is? In love, we desire to be participants with the head at his meal. We desire to feast with the head. At His table, we are getting a foretaste of the feast of heaven which shall never end.

We are one body, what does that suggest about how we treat our family members? We are one body, how do we treat our fellow members of the body gathered here? We love one another, care for one another, pray for one another, laugh with one another, rejoice with one another. It really doesn’t sound to hard, does it?

We are one Body and one Spirit! We have one hope – Christ! Christ in us, and we in Him. So walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called – be one body and one Spirit – in Christ. Amen.