

### Epiphany 3 – Text Luke 4:14-21, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you O Lord.

So here we are again in a **place of worship** centuries after Jesus, hearing the words of scripture. To give you some **context** prior to the story of Jesus in the **temple**, you might recall Jesus had just been **baptized** by John, empowered by the **Spirit**, faced **temptation** in the desert. Now he has returned to his hometown of **Nazareth**. (Remember the proverb, “Prophets are not welcome in their hometown?”) On the Sabbath he went to the **synagogue** and was given the chance to read from Isaiah.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18).

The **people of the synagogue** were stunned because in the year of the Lord’s favour, the year of the **jubilee**, all property and money were to be returned to their proper owners. The **oppressed and captive** were to be set free. The rich peoples’ wealth and benefits (collected at the cost of others) was going to **change**. To add to their surprise Jesus says after sitting down, “**Today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing**.” He said that he is the Son of God.

These words may've been spoken **many centuries** ago, but the prophet Isaiah still has **relevance** for us today. Let's face it. When we look at the categories of people Jesus proclaimed shall be set free, **we do not fit into any of those categories**. If you're sitting in these pews or at home you have **shelter, warmth, food of some sort, you're free from oppression**. We have a pretty good life. So how can we **identify? How should we react?** The passage demands a response from us. We're being called to reach out to the **marginalized**. We are being called to do so **together**. Together as the Body of Christ.

**The human body** has 206 bones, 639 muscles, and about 6 pounds of skin, along with ligaments, cartilage, veins, arteries, blood, fat and more. Every time we hear a **sound**; every time we take a **step**; every time we take a **breath**, hundreds of different parts **work together** so that what we experience is a **single movement**, our minds and bodies working as one unit. The human body represents one of the most **complex systems** in existence.<sup>1</sup>

If you have ever had any **major injury** you will notice not just one part of your body is affected by the injury. Some people when they have a **bad hip** try to compensate by leaning more on the other hip. Then the other hip becomes injured. Once a number of years back I developed a **severely swollen left foot and a migraine accompanied it**. It was a long weekend, so they told me at the hospital to go

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<sup>1</sup>Raewynne J. Whitely, *Feasting on the Word: Year C: Volume 4*, (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 2009), 279.

home and come back the next day. I went home from the hospital and developed another migraine. I went back the next day with black toes and ankles, to find out I was dealing **with necrotizing cellulitis** (also known as a form of flesh eating disease) and was hospitalized for two weeks and on bedrest at home for two more weeks. Without the migraine I'm sure I would not have gone to the hospital. I just would have iced it. (Pause)

There are other common examples of how ailments develop because of the situation elsewhere in the body. **Rotten teeth** can lead to other illnesses, or even something as simple as a **blister** can cause us to walk differently. Everything is connected.

Just like our own bodies, **the body of Christ desires for us to all work together.** We come to the waters of baptism as **individuals, independent** and relatively **self-contained**. We come out of that water changed. After our baptism we are part of **one family**. We all have a need to belong and what better way than to be part of one body: the Body of Christ.

**Zion is part of the body of Christ. Where do you see yourself in this body?** Are you the **hands** that help in the work of God? Are you the **arms or the knees** that help with lifting Christmas trees or garage sale items. Are you the **vocal chords** that sing loud to beautify our worship? Are you the **heart** helping keep us on track and circulating the precious lifeblood? Are you part of the **brain** that

supports the ministry at the church? No matter where you see yourself, even if it is simply sitting in the pews **you are part of the body of Christ**.

The people who make up the body of Christ are **n't perfect** and Zion is no exception. When parts of the **congregation or ministries or deaths develop** the rest of the body feels it. We are all people of the body of Christ so when there is **conflict in the church it impacts everyone**. The bottom line is we need to **PRAY** for one another. We need to pray for our different ministries.

**Prayer is powerful!** As the body of Christ we need to **speak the truth in a peaceful and loving way**. Prayer and meditation can help us to do that. When that happens **any conflict** that we experience can become a **learning and growth** opportunity. Conflict is a fact of life and God has given us the tools – **or gifts of the spirit** – to deal with and learn from conflict.

**Patience** to work with one another is vitally important especially when things don't always go the way you want. **Things aren't always black or white. There is a lot of grey in the Body of Christ!**

I like to think of it this way: Its like trying to make a **meal replacing meat with tofu**. I don't know about you but I don't even like the sound of the word TOFU. So switching meat out for TOFU? It just doesn't work. But for that one meal **! compromise. I am willing to adjust the old to try something new because you never know what the outcome may be. You may find by doing so you might**

**actually like it.** So far it hasn't happened with TOFU, but on the otherhand I wasn't a fish lover until my wife started cooking fish I learned how much I loved it! (Pause)

There are times when we **need to help one another to work through compromise together.** That can be a difficult task! As part of the Body of Christ we are still individuals that can allow the Spirit to guide us on our journey. Every week is a new week. **When you come to worship it is my prayer that the Spirit helps you to arrive with open hearts so we can experience the gospel anew.** As important as the traditional is we need to keep progressing and embrace change. Covid has changed the church forever. Look at how far you've come. Did you ever think you would experience worship in a **virtual platform?** And yet here we are!

At one time everything was out of the hymn book, the pastor did everything, and now, we use **data projectors, distribute online media** and hymnals are used minimally. We have become a physical AND a digital church.

Let the Spirit move you. **Open your hearts and let a new day in.** Pray that the Spirit move us and the Christian community everywhere. Be a **faithful loving part of the Body of Christ** as much as possible. As Jesus instructs us today I encourage you to assist the **outreach programs of our Zion and Pembroke communities.** And if you aren't sure how to do so, reach out to our social ministry committee or to me or church council to see where and how you can practise being one

or more parts of Christ's body. And by all means remember, **that as the Body of**

**Christ we're in this together.** Amen.