

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany  
January 23, 2022

“God’s gift of many in Christ’s one body” (1 Corinthians 12:12)  
By Rev. Ed Weber

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany is from the Epistle reading for today, 1 Corinthians 12:12.

**“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”**

Here ends our text.

I. There is unity in the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit

Last week we heard in the opening verses of this chapter 12 that there are a diversity of gifts and ministries, that is, different ways to serve and wait on the tables of men’s hearts. There are different activities. But it is always the same Triune God who is united in His giving of His gifts. He has the plan, the master plan for His church. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always on the same page, and it is always for the good of His church, for the profit of all.

**“7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:”**

Now, in today’s reading, Paul moves our attention from the variety of gifts to the variety of people who have been given all these gifts. The people, many people, born into sin, but now redeemed by God, make up the body of Christ.

Having drunk from the poisonous well of sin and become sickened unto eternal death, these members have been rescued and drunk from the well of forgiveness by the same Spirit. There was a disunity of lost people. But now there is a unity of God’s forgiven people.

How does this unity happen? Paul explains, **“13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.”**

Jesus said it this way to the Samaritan woman at a well in John 4.

**“13 Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”**

Just as God’s gifts are varied and diverse for the profit of all, so also, God has united a diverse group of people as one.

**“18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”**

Paul repeats this same truth in Galatians 3,

**“26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”**

Baptism by the same Spirit brings all types of nationalities of people together as one. People north of the border in Canada, within the northern parts of our border like Minnesota and Wisconsin and Michigan, on the very southern edge of the border here in the Rio Grande Valley, and people south of our border in Mexico are all gathered here together to worship God. All of these varied people with varied gifts enjoy the unity that the Spirit has created by faith in Jesus!

Being justified by grace through faith by the same Spirit, drinking of the same forgiveness, results in the same blessing – salvation and eternal life.

The same baptism unites all believers so that each individual member can by the Spirit’s power confess together with the other members, “Jesus is Lord”. So we did this just now as we confessed the Apostles Creed together. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints...”

And when we confess the Nicene Creed, we emphasize the oneness even more as we say, “I believe in the one holy Christian and apostolic church”. We are in unity with all believers in all generations who confess the faith as taught by the apostles. In all generations, God has supplied the gifts needed for the church to carry on to our day. And He continues doing the same.

Diversity within the one holy apostolic church is celebrated. Diversity is not an accident, but its very essence. No one member is equated with the body. It takes many members to make up the body. And again, it's by design – God's incredible creative design. He makes it all work.

II. There is disruption of unity in the visible church by discontent and pride

However, Paul is quick to point out that this unity can be disrupted. It can be disrupted by being discontent with who one is in the body of Christ, or prideful that one is not like another member. The Corinthians struggled with this and so do God's people in all generations.

When one is discontent, one grumbles that one is not like another who seemingly has greater gifts. There is envy of another whose gifts are different than mine.

One cannot change God's created order try as one may. Nowadays, a narrative is being pushed by people not content with their gender to change it to what they want. So men call themselves women and are allowed to compete in women's sports if they take testosterone treatments for a certain time period. This is a false and harmful practice that confuses and harms young people.

If God has made you a hand that rocks a baby to sleep singing a hymn, then one should be joyful for this gift of motherhood. If God has made you a foot that walks the hallways of a hospital caring for the sick, then be joyful of this gift. Or if God has made you an ear that hears the sorrows of others to offer consolation of God's word, then again rejoice.

Every member is needed for the body to function.

Using a football analogy, how would a team do well if one of the 11 players decided to just go through the motions and take a play off. Well, if that player is on the line, not exactly the most glorious position of the team, then the running back gets tackled for a loss or the quarterback gets sacked. Yes, every teammate is needed for the team to do well. Much more so in the church.

Again, pride is also a detriment to the good working of the body of Christ. If one thinks that because I'm a head, that I don't need the other parts of the body, well, that's not going to work either. All of God's people whether the very young or the very old are essential members according to God's good plan. God loves each one and has a special purpose for all.

The late Rush Limbaugh used to say tongue and cheek that he uses half of his brain just to be fair.

*“Greetings, conversationalists across the fruited plain, this is Rush Limbaugh, the most dangerous man in America, with the largest hypothalamus in North America, serving humanity simply by opening my mouth, destined for my own wing in the Museum of Broadcasting, executing everything I do flawlessly with zero mistakes, doing this show with half my brain tied behind my back just to make it fair because I have talent on loan from ... God.”*

Of course, Rush, knew that he was part of a movement of conservatism that involved many people and could never have success by him alone. And not speaking tongue and cheek, he recognized that his talents were from God.

In the service of God, each member of the body of Christ, should put away any pride and humbly serve in the capacity that God has given you for the good of all. As Paul said in Romans 12, speaking again on this same teaching of the body of Christ,

**“3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”**

Diversity and unity are both gifts from God.

### III. Christ's forgiveness restores the unity of the body

Thanks be to God that Jesus was anointed by the Spirit to give complete forgiveness and wholeness to the body. As we heard in our Gospel reading, Jesus quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2, said,

**““The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”**

In complete humility and love, Jesus set at liberty all who are oppressed and held captive by sin, by His death on the cross. Jesus heals our discontent, prideful and brokenhearts with the Gospel of His forgiveness of our sins. He gives us liberty from our sin and liberty to serve Him in His body of believers with rejoicing and care for one another.

**“that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” (1 Corinthians 12:25)**

And of course, there is no need to tie any talent behind one’s back that God has given you on loan, but to use it fully to His glory.

As Paul said earlier in chapter 10,

**“31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Amen.**

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**