

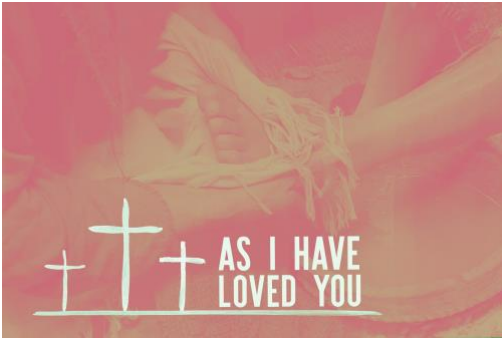
Sermon #3: Different Yet One

May 7, 2023

Text: **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

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Sermon Open

We continue to lay a foundation to build on in the weeks ahead when we will look at various Biblical instructions on how to live in the Family of God. We have previously learned about the **Fellowship** – *Koinonia* – that we are welcomed into by the Father, Son, and the Spirit when we believe & confess Jesus as our LORD. Last week we learned more about this Fellowship with an illustration of Jesus as the Vine, His Father as the Vinedresser, and the Spirit grafting each believer into the vine as a branch. Now we have another illustration of Fellowship; this time using what we know of a physical body.

Scripture Exposition

In **1 Corinthians 12**, Paul compares the **Fellowship** to a Human body. Your body is made up of many, many parts that have different names, appearances, and functions, yet are joined together into a whole unit. Paul says that it is the same with the church, the body of Christ (**v12, 27**), that is composed of people who are very different, yet by the work of God’s Spirit become one Fellowship. Even common distinctions that divide people - such as nationality, race, or societal standing – have limited influence in how we live together in the church (**v13**). Those in the Fellowship can celebrate the diversity of each part, but must never favor or disapprove of someone because of these differences.

Challenges to Fellowship

What makes believers different from each other besides the obvious distinctions of race or societal class? First, we each have different personalities and talents. Second, we each have different experiences that have shaped us. Finally, we each have different gifts allocated to us by God’s Spirit (**1 Cor 12:7**). Paul knows that living together as one with all of these differences can be challenging. First, he warns that some Christians will compare themselves to others and they will reach the conclusion that they are useless or unimportant to the church (**v15-17**). Paul refutes this idea and teaches that every believer is a necessary part of the body of Christ. He further reminds the church that it is God who has designed and placed each believer in a local body and that it is only when each part functions as it should that the body will be healthy and growing (**v18-20, Ephesians 4:16**). Next, Paul warns that some Christians will overlook parts of the body that seem weaker or unnecessary or unpleasant to them. He counters that every believer has a need for the other parts of the body of Christ (**v21-22**) and that often the parts we consider the least honorable are the ones God will honor the most (**v23-24**). Just like in a human body, if a part of the church is separated and sick it impacts the health of the entire church. If we tear down someone or overlook them, it weakens us because we need the portion of the Spirit that God has placed in them.

Application

If we compare ourselves to other parts of the body of Christ and conclude we are not needed, we will likely shrink back & fail to use our gifts & the whole body will suffer. We need the courage to act on our giftedness & calling. If you are “a nose” it is critical that you are engaged with the church & will speak up if you smell smoke. No one else in the church may be a nose, so your warning is needful. At the same time, if we fail to see how much we depend on every part of the body, we will overlook people or overlook gatherings of the church. We all make time for what we think is important. Many Christians do not make time for fellowship & partnership with the church because they fail to see how critical it is to their own spiritual wellness. The health of the entire body depends on each each believer functioning together as God designed.