

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 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. 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. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

Sermon Theme: The Holy Christian Church - The Body of Christ

- 1. United together through faith in Christ**
- 2. Made up of many members for the common good of the body**
- 3. Each member has different gift to use and roles to perform for the body**

In the name of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the spiritual body of believers, dear fellow redeemed;

The human body is truly a great marvel of God's creation. We don't have to be a doctor or biologist to recognize the body as an extraordinary living unit. It is clearly observable that the human body in itself is a complete unit made up of many different parts. Each of these parts have their own particular function to perform. And all these many parts or members work together for the common good of the entire body. Among these many body parts are the senses that enable us to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. There are the limbs and appendages which enable us to move and perform various activities. And there are also the internal systems, each playing a vital role for our body. All these and much more are joined together into one complete unit, all jointly working together for the benefit of our entire body.

The apostle Paul uses this complete living unit as a comparison to yet another very special creation of God, namely, His Church of believers. As a group of believers, we are not made up of people who are completely separate from or independent of each other. Rather, we are a group of individuals who have been drawn closely together to make up one complete body - the body of Christ, also known as the Holy Christian Church.

Even as the human body consists of many parts with each part having its own particular function to perform for the good of the body, so also the Church of believers is made up of many members, each of us have varying abilities and roles to perform for the common good of the Church.

One of the problems in the Christian church in Corinth in Paul's day was that members were not acting or functioning as a single body jointly fit together. Instead of displaying a kindred spirit of unity, there was an air of disunity. There were some who were discontent with the role they were called upon to perform. And there were those who looked down upon others with a spirit of superiority and aloofness. The members in Corinth were not showing a spirit of loving concern for one another. Acting as a disjointed body, they weren't working together for the common good of one another. Therefore it became necessary for Paul to remind the brethren in Corinth, as well as Christians today, saying to all of us who are the members united together into one body, the body of Christ, that we are to use our gifts and abilities for the benefit of the whole body.

The Christian Church or the body of Christ is the most important group of people we can be joined together with. It is not like the many social clubs or business organizations in which individuals attend meetings, pay dues, and take part in temporal activities. The importance of the church is not based upon any social, economic, political or patriotic consideration. Rather, its importance is based upon a common faith - faith in the precious knowledge of the Triune God. In and through our Savior Jesus Christ we are bonded together into one very special spiritual body. Paul writes of the special oneness of this body of which we are a part, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4-6)

Paul tells us in our text that it is through that one baptism people of every race and nation are drawn together into this very close and intimate group. Working through the precious means of grace in baptism, the Holy Spirit penetrated our hearts and minds, and brought about a marvelous change in us by imparting saving faith in us. Possessing a new spirit of heart we look to the one God and Father of us all in faith, trusting in Him to take care of all our needs, and we show our love for Him by willingly obeying His commandments. We regard Jesus as our elder spiritual Brother who laid down His life for our forgiveness and eternal salvation. And we rejoice in that one Spirit's work of uniting us together with God and with one another in a blessed fellowship.

Having been joined together in this one family of God, we then look upon each other with a kindred spirit of love and concern as brothers and sisters in the Lord. And in order that this mutual love and concern continues to grow and flourish we regularly come

together around God's Word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion, for in this way we drink in that life-giving, life-sustaining, life-refreshing Spirit of God.

Having been made a part of the body of Christ, we are not to look upon ourselves as separate entities who are only concerned about ourselves. No. Being a part of the whole body, we are sensitive to and concerned about the welfare of each and every member of this body. Paul writes in Galatians, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (6:9,10)

So closely does Christian love join us together that that which affects one member also affects the rest of us. Using the example of the human body again, when we stub our toe, the pain that is felt not only affects the toe, but also our entire being. And when one part of the body is injured, the other parts get into action and do whatever they can to help out with the problem. So also with the body of Christ. When one of our fellow believers suffers, out of Christian love we are affected by this and we in turn see what we can do to alleviate the suffering.

In the New Testament church, we read of a number of instances where Christian brethren, who were separated by many miles and did not personally know each other, prayed for one another and supplied needed help to each other. One of those cases is when the Christians in Judea were suffering severe trials and personal hardships. The brethren from all over responded by providing whatever kind of help was needed. In ways like this, each member of the body seeks to be of service to all the other members of the body.

Where Christian love and unity exists there is no room for a spirit of only looking out for oneself nor is there place for factions in which members will only associate with some and not others within the Christian fellowship. This is to be the case whether it be in our congregation or our sister congregations in the C.L.C. at large. With the human body there is no group of parts which separate themselves from the rest of the body. They are all equally joined together, making up one united body; each working for the common good of the other parts. This is also to be the way in the body of Christ - the Church of believers.

Earlier we spoke of the great marvel of the human body in that it has many different parts each having a specific function to perform for the body as a whole. God has similarly equipped His Church of believers by giving each of us various gifts and abilities which we are to use for the good of Christ's Church. In his letter to the Romans, Paul mentions some of those gifts, as he declares, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." (12:6-8)

All of us as children of God have received different and varying resources, gifts and abilities which God wants us to use in service of His Church. In our congregation

some are called on to use their abilities in leadership roles as officers and councilmen. Now while these members have different roles to perform, this does not mean they are going to do all the work in the church or that they will not need any help or assistance, or that there aren't other areas of service for members to be involved in. There is certainly much work to be done in the Lord's kingdom. And there is a role for each and everyone of us to serve in.

In Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, we read of how a person might serve by giving an encouraging word to those in need; by visiting the shut-ins, lonely or sick; by doing common ordinary tasks for those in need; by giving financial offerings toward the general or special work of the church; and finally by showing mercy to others. As we grow older there still remains various ways we can serve, if not by sharing the wisdom we have acquired over the years, then by praying for the pastor and fellow Christians. We should never say there is nothing we can contribute for the benefit of the Church. If there still remains a question in any of us as to what we can do, simply look on Christ and His Word, and learn how He would have us give of our time, talents, and energy in service of others.

As we recognize the gifts and abilities God has blessed us with for the service of His Church, we should never look upon our role as being insignificant or of no consequence, and then for that reason wish we could have another role to perform. Paul answers this by using once again the comparison of the human body, saying, "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing! If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be! But now indeed there are many members, yet one body."

On the other hand, none should look down upon others and what they do as if we can get along without their help in the church. Paul responds to this saying, "And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary." We are all part of the body of Christ, each having been given our respective roles to perform for the common good of the whole body.

May the Lord enable us to recognize those gifts and abilities He has granted us and then to make faithful use of them for the benefit of our fellow Christians. And may the Holy Spirit continue to work in our hearts so that we have a concern for and a willing spirit to serve one another in the spirit of Christian love and devotion. Amen.