

Title: “One Body”

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1 Corinthians 12:12-13

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Service Readings: Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Cor 12:12-31a; Luke 4:16-30

Christ's body broken and sacrificed for our sake was then made available to us through baptism so that we could share in the reward that it earned. Our salvation depends on us being part of Christ's body. And so, the church body is not just another group of people led by people but is the body of Christ, led by Christ. And it is a body that Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by his Spirit. And as head of the body he instructs us to do the same.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

These verses, recorded earlier in our Epistle, were not read today, but I start here because the image of the church as a body is anchored to this event. Here, at the last supper, Jesus modeled for his disciples what it would mean to become one body, led by, and nourished by him. “This is my body,” he said. And that body, *his* body, would be offered for us, willingly. It would be broken and made a curse. It would be sacrificed not to acquire glory for itself but to win salvation for all of us. His blood he would pour out, his life he would give up, in service to his church. And so, when we talk about the church as a body we start here, out of necessity because if we don’t, we end up as just another group of people who gather around a common interest. Paul writes in our Epistle this morning:

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

You see, his body broken and sacrificed for our sake was then made available to us through baptism so that we could share in the reward that it earned. Our salvation *depends* on us being part of Christ’s body – there is no other possible way to eternal life. And so, the church body is not just another group of people led by people but is the body of Christ, led by Christ. And it is a body that Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by his Spirit. And as head of the body he instructs us to do the same. Paul writes of viewing this body as a single organism with many different organs and parts as he impresses upon his readers the importance of vocation and cooperation. But then he writes this:

²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Paul teaches that there is more to a body part than the function it was defined for. True, it was engineered to be an ear or an eye, but it was also engineered to live in harmony with the rest of the body. And furthermore, it was engineered to be so tightly connected to the rest of the body that it can help sustain and nourish the whole, or an injured part, when necessary. And just as a body is built from these interconnected, interdependent parts, so too is Christ's church. We all play a role, not just in the life of the church and her outward mission to the world, but in her inward mission with each other. What good does it do a body if an injured organ keeps to itself, separates from the whole, rejecting support and healing? And to what affect does that have on the organ? So too, Paul teaches, it is with us. We are responsible to each other, not just to cooperate, not just to encourage, but to stay connected to the whole church. For what good will it do us when we find ourselves hurt or in need, to separate ourselves from the church and "go it our own way?" To what end will it lead if we turn in on ourselves – believing that we alone can heal ourselves? "This is my body, given for you." Jesus did not turn in on himself, but he instead turned outward, poured himself out not only *for* the whole church but *to* the whole church. He invited us *into* his death and resurrection so that we could share in his victory. And this is what we are to pattern. We too are to turn towards each other in time of need to receive healing, encouragement, and strength. We are to always pray for each other, to pray for the health of the individual parts and for the whole of the church body. We are to be selfless in our sacrifices to each other, to turn to one another and say, "This is my body and I give it for you."

<pause>

What I really love about today's passage is that Paul, even after offering a detailed illustration of a healthy functioning church, drives it right back to Christ. He reminds us that even in the best of times, when the body seems to be the healthiest, it is not a body separate from Christ.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The church body is not just another group of people led by people but is the body of Christ, led by Christ. And it is a body that Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by his Spirit. It is a body that must receive nourishment from him for without it, it is a body that will cease to exist. For that which we offer each other: the support, encouragement, and even prayers, are diminished in value without the live-giving sustenance of Christ, for it is from him that we find true healing and nourishment. And we find *that* at the same place where I started from this morning:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

We are a body in harmony with each other. We are a body that spans the globe and transcends time. And this body, with many parts gathers in unison to meet the head, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, at his table. We join everyone there, as one coordinated church body, to hear the words from our Lord – the same words he spoke 2000 years ago. These words were spoken for the prophets of old; they were spoken for the disciples on that day; they were spoken for us, today. We come together at his table as one body to receive from our head that which he offers: his body and

his blood. And we partake as one body. And we receive as one body. And we are forgiven as one body.

This is the message of Paul this morning. When you think of the body of the church, think of the many parts and their concerted workings, but remember, always, the head. The church body is not just another group of people led by people but is the body of Christ, led by Christ. And it is a body that Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by his Spirit. It is a body that starts at the Lord's Table and will always return there to find healing and strength.

Let us pray

The gifts Christ freely gives
He gives to you and me
To be His Church, His bride,
His chosen, saved and free!

The gifts are in the feast,
Gifts far more than we see;
Beneath the bread and wine
Is food from Calvary.
The body and the blood
Remove our ev'ry sin;
We leave His presence in
His peace, renewed again.