



PRODIGAL

CHURCH

SERMON SERIES: PRODIGAL CHURCH

DATE: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST, 2020

SPEAKER: CRAIG VERNALL

SERMON TITLE: ONE BODY – ONE PURPOSE

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31

The Church is not a building. The Church is God's people gathered and diffused amongst the community who serve as salt and light for Jesus. However, we need each other. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Those who have carved out a pathway of understanding, influence and culture upon which each of us will build our own Christian experience and witness.

Q1. Can you identify those who have gone before you who have given you inspiration? They may have lived many years ago or may still be alive.

In the early church the Holy Spirit was always leading the way by breaking into new mission fields often at the surprise of the apostles and other church leaders. Think of Pentecost in Acts 2. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8. Peter at Cornelius' house in Acts 10.

So, when Paul speaks about unity within the body, he begins by reminding us that it's the Holy Spirit that has brought us together and from the Holy Spirit we must continue to be filled. See how the Holy Spirit is highlighted in this passage about unity. Read 1 Corinthians 12:2-13.

"¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

Paul is describing the church as a spiritual community that's empowered to witness and serve. It's the Holy Spirit within us and operating through us that makes the difference from any other group of people.

Q.2. What are some ways to ensure that you're drinking from the one Spirit and maintaining your spiritual vitality? It appears that this drinking is for the sake of the body as much as it is for ourselves.

Within this passage Paul highlights that we all belong to the body of Christ. Each one of us is valuable and serves to strengthen the overall experience of being church as well as our shared witness. However, Paul cleverly describes below a body that seems to be divisive and cutting or separating itself from each other. The image of a human body not wanting to be connected to its other parts is ridiculous. Yet this appears to be the way the Corinthian church was functioning.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-26.

¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it."

The passage above is all about rejection. Paul is rebuking the community for its preferences and exclusions of those who were different.

Q3. We all draw a line somewhere regarding those whom we see as our Christian brothers and sisters. Where have you drawn this line? Is it a line of doctrine, practice, denominations, sexuality, political allegiances?

Q4. If we answer the question above in a theoretical way, we can qualify our separations and distinctions. So, ask yourself or others to reflect upon the company that you do keep within the church. Maybe you have some unexplained bias or preferences? Maybe you're nervous or fearful around those who are different to you?

Paul readily identifies that within the human body there are parts of the body that serve very different purposes from each other.

Q5. What other parts of the Christian body do you celebrate? Maybe they perform a function that you're not good at or don't like doing. What parts of the body do you appreciate because they have different gifts to you?

In verses below we read again where Paul highlights parts of the body that we need to be modest about. Bible commentators are varied in their opinion of what parts of the body these may be. Read the verses below and see if you can reach any conclusions.

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²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."

Q6. Regardless of our conclusions of what the above parts could be, there are those amongst the church body who need special protection and honour. Can you identify who these people may be in our own church setting?

Paul summarizes his thoughts by highlighting what have become known as the ministry gifts. Read Paul's thoughts on what gifts he sets apart in this instance.

"²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts."

Q7. We could do what others do with this passage and start debating whether Paul's list of gifts is set in a matter of importance. But let's ask the better question from verse 31 being how do we and why should we "eagerly desire the greater gifts"?

Finally, in our Life Group settings let's be bold enough to expect God to bless us with His power and presence. According to what we've just been studying the Holy Spirit is always wanting to bless us with His empowerment. Pray for each other with expectation that God will create new opportunities to bless you with gifts and talents to extend His kingdom.