

1 Corinthians 12:12-31
The Body of Christ
Sunday June 26th, 2022

Last week I talked about several metaphors for the Church. I spoke about how the Church was a creation of the Holy Spirit made up of people who confessed “Jesus is Lord”. I would like to hear us say that together again today. **Jesus is Lord!!**

Oldest Confession of the Christian faith and the foundation of our gathering here today.

Last week being Father’s Day I spoke mainly about the Church being the Family of God. Today I will be talking about the Church as the Body of Christ and we as members of it.

In the Bible there are two very different ways of describing “belonging” to the church. There are also two different ways of experiencing and feeling belonging to the church. One describes it in relational terms that of a family, the Family of God. And one in terms of the gifts of its members, that of a body, the Body of Christ. The concept of “Membership” in the English language in fact comes from these verses.

An Upper Room devotional a few years ago contained the following true story. *“A woman with her legs twisted from two gruesome auto accidents was walking unsteadily to the altar for Communion. She held tightly to each pew along her way. She wore an expression that said, “don’t help me”. “Yes,” her eyes seemed to say, “it is a struggle. But I intend to make it on my own.”*

Suddenly, someone bumped her from behind. Her face flashed with resentment, but only for the instant it took her to regain her balance. The person who bumped her was someone else struggling to make it to the altar. This someone did not see the expression that discouraged others from helping; this person was blind.

She allowed the blind person to take her arm.

As the two struggled to the altar, something happened. The unsteady one became the eyes for the blind one who supported her.



They reached the altar together, and they shared the sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ who healed the lame and made the blind to see.

In some way or the other; we are all struggling along this journey toward God. In love, God brings us together as the church to help us through that struggle.”

As a member of the Body, each of you has been gifted by God to help others. Remember my favorite verse last week? **“To each has been given a manifestation of the Spirit for the good of all”**. Each of you has gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit that are vitally important to others within the church. Some will tell you differently, but don’t ever listen to them. Listen to God instead. Listen to the Word of God.

Verse 21 reads, **“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.’”** Within the Body of Christ, you may have just a small part to do, and yet you are critical for the life of the whole body.

In the Church all belong; all are important and if any members are missing the whole body suffers. Yes, if you ditch, or sleep in the whole body suffers. Or if you leave because you get mad. We all may be prone to wander as the verse in “Come Thou Font of Every Blessing”, bt we must resist this test of our faith.

Verse 26 puts it explicitly, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

All are important all belong. But no one is all important! Paul wrote this passage to a deeply disturbed and divided church. There were some members who were thinking that they and their gifts were totally inconsequential, and others were actually telling them that. The reason being, they did not have the gift of speaking in tongues, and so those with the gift of speaking in tongues were telling those without that gift they were unimportant.

Happened to me when I was young. I hung with a group of people who told me unless I had the gift of tongues, I did not have the Holy Spirit and thus wasn't saved. Verse 3 of this chapter destroyed that argument. I confessed Jesus as Lord, which the Bible says you only can do, if you have the Spirit.

In the Corinthian church some were excluding themselves and others were helping them out the door as being lesser gifted. Some were saying they were all important and others were thinking they and their gifts weren't important at all.

Both types of thinking are detrimental to us individually and to the Body of Christ.

Now God has built into us a need to belong to be a member of some human pack. If we don't have a family, we seek to become a member of one. We make a family or adopt one. If we feel alone and lonely, which is a condition we as humans all share, we seek those with whom we can belong. We are social animals. We are herd animals. If we were dogs, we would be beagles, not lone wolves.



The God-given desire to belong is illustrated from a story from Mike Breen's book, "Building a Discipling Culture." Mike tells the story of Danny Wallace who lived in England. Being inspired by an uncle who in his lifetime had tried to create a community to belong to, Danny put a simple ad in a London newspaper that read: "Join me. Send a passport-sized photo to... and he gave his address." One person did so he set up a website.

In a short time, he had over 101 joiners!! "They had signed up for a group for no other reason than to belong." In short order his joinees expected him to give meaning to this community, but it had no meaning or purpose....until Danny came up with one.



He sent out a message to all his joinees that they would now be known as the Karma Army, and their purpose was to undertake one random act of kindness every Friday, now to be known as, "Good Fridays."

The Karma Army has grown world-wide now. And Mike Breen notes: "People are starving for community; so hungry, in fact, that they will join others simply because they are asked to. Where is the church with this hunger going on around us?" P. 79 Are we asking and learning to ask?

5 years ago, I dropped starting Huddle Groups to concentrate on building the Education and Administration Building. I was about to get back into huddles when Covid hit so it's been 5 years. But later on, this Summer, I am bringing back Huddles as places to belong in order to grow as Disciples of Jesus Christ and learn to invite others.

Starbuck's CEO mission for the coffee shop chain fascinates me. It almost sounds like a church mission statement. He said, to the effect, that what they were trying to do in each and every Starbucks was to

create a club where people could join, be a member. He speaks of this as “the third place”. The exact wording of their mission says, “the third place is a warm and welcoming environment where customers can gather and connect. The third-place environment (is) in alignment with our mission “to inspire and nurture the human spirit - one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.”

He has keyed in on this deep and universal need to belong and has made billions on it.

Urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term “Third Place” to distinguish a location where people gather outside the familiar confines of the first and second places, home, and workplace. Businesses that have embraced the value of becoming a known Third Place have expanded their appeal far beyond lattes and free Wi-Fi; they have become modern age community- and social-hubs and as a result have prospered.

In America the local church functioned as “the third place” for centuries and is now competing with these secular church experiences.

What fascinates me about the Karma Army story is that the guy, who started it, just made it up, and made up its purpose, one random act of kindness every Friday. He even stole the names he used: Karma & Good Fridays. Starbucks’ purpose is to make money through coffee by using the human desire to belong.

The Church on the other hand was created by God and given to us as a gift. It’s a place to belong that has as its membership requirement, not sending in a passport sized photo, our passport into the Church is belief in Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord. And our purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

And I think about the difference between these other places to belong versus what the Body of Christ has to offer. You can get an expensive cup of coffee in Starbucks and be a member of the

community of the caffeinated. Or do one random act of kindness a week and belong to the Karma Army.

But we have a purpose that goes far beyond just random acts of kindness and buying coffee. And though we share coffee regularly on Sundays, we deliberately organize to go out together and do great things for God. We believe with the gift of membership comes the responsibility to serve, to practice the Spirit gifts given to us.

We as Christians are the Body of Christ here on earth and you are a member of it. We are Christ's arms, and legs, and hands, and voices. And we are far from random here at Vista Church. We are Methodists!

We at Vista Church have an extensive mission program. You have heard recently of our work in Agua Prieta. We feed scores of people through the Community Food Bank, which we collect for next Sunday. We support the Snak Pack program for Coronado Elementary School. Helping Hands creates 100s of pieces of clothing every year for children in our community. We shelter homeless women through Sister Jose's women's shelter and these are just 5 of 19 mission outreach programs of our church.

You feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and even take care of the homeless, and here's how you can minister to the lonely, those who desire to belong and find meaning through service.

The body of Christ here at Vista Church needs to be refreshed and re-membered. We need new members. The Pandemic took a terrible toll on us. We lost 28 members to death during that time and many friends of the church. Many moved to be with children. Some just disappeared. Early rapture, I guess.

The bottom line is we need to reach out and invite in the people that have gifts and graces to make Vista Church thrive. We need to find people of peace who want to belong.

We need people to step up and sing in our choir and ring in our bell choir. We need new elementary **Sunday school teachers** as you heard Barbara Johnson is moving.

We need **receptionists** Monday thru Thursday 9am to noon and 1pm to 4pm. We need them even more now that Peggy Jo managed to break both wrists and is going on vacation, but we need people year around.

We need help with the **setting up cold drinks** on the tables on Sunday morning during the summer and coffee in the winter.

We need help in our **AV booth**. Becca is going to college at the end of July, and we need to replace her **creating the worship slide shows and running them on Sunday morning**. It is the only paid position in the AV area. And we also need people to learn how to run the sound and cameras.

We also need to replace Becca as one of our **church photographers**. We have about 60 of photos we need taken for our directory.

I want to close with this. **It's time to be back in church in person if you can!** Is it totally safe? God only knows. Where is it totally safe? But if you are going to restaurants and grocery stores and more, I believe you will be just as safe here as you would be in Walmart.

We make vows when we join the church to support it with our Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service and Witness. Right here at God's altar!

It's time to fulfill those vows we made to God in front of his altar and his people. We entered this year with \$48,000 less in pledges than last year and made some painful cuts. We need everyone who can in these difficult times to focus their giving on the church.

We also need to witness by being present here. Many are turning from God and God's church in this time. The world needs the witness of your presence.

The greatest gift God has given you is you!!! (Say this with me, "The greatest gift God has given me is me!")

Where you are at any given moment in life, you have your greatest gift with you. Wherever you go you present your greatest gift. When you come to worship you present the greatest gift God has given you back to God.

So, when we gather together on Sunday, we actually bring the best we have to God. We bring what is better than what we wear, how we sing, or what we give financially. We bring God's greatest gift back to him to present at his altar.

So reup the commitment you promised God when you took your vows at this altar to be present in the worship of God. Recommend that to others by your presence and when necessary, use words.

Here's your evangelism thought for the day. How many of you have recommended a movie to someone else? A restaurant? A trip? A book? Maybe instead of getting scared of "witnessing" to someone else, think of it in terms of giving a recommendation of where to worship.

My friends the world is in a terrible place now. Make a statement of your faith and belief in the power of God to overcome by being here and recommending that to another.

Will you do that? Raise your hand.

Indeed, what is God saying to you and what are you going to do?

Prayer, Lord hold us to the promises we have made here. In Jesus' name amen.