

One Body, Many Members

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Date: 25 October 2020

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 0 0] If you remember adding Nicoli Heavy Elizabeth No ...

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. We will be doing our call to worship. This is the day that the Lord has made. And with all of our singing and all of our music, we use it as a way to worship, but we're asking that there not be congregational singing, but you can worship through music, even without singing.

[3 : 0 5] You can hum. You can speak the words. You can move your body. You can just meditate on the words. So let's worship together. Our call to worship. This is the day that the Lord has made.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made.

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

[4 : 1 0] It is a joy to be gathered together in church, is it not? Amen. Amen. As we come today, the joy flows from each of us out to our Lord, and our Lord continues to pour out his soul, his heart, his joy on all of us.

As we come together in this time of worship, let us open our hearts as we engage our Holy Spirit, as he leads us together. Almighty and gracious God, we are grateful for this time. We are grateful for this moment.

Fall fresh on us, Lord. Fall fresh on us and inspire us as our praises rise to you. Let them bring joy to your very heart. In the name of Jesus Christ, the one who makes all things possible, we pray.

Amen. Amen. Pratt Mega Denim On the daily In unbroken life Move the faithful spirits At the call divine Gifts in differing measures Hearts in one accord Manifold the service What a sure reward Forward through the ages In unbroken life

Move the faithful spirits At the call divine Not alone we conquer Not alone we fall In each loss or triumph Lose or triumph all Bound by God's far purpose In one living hope Move we on together To the shining globe To the shining globe Forward through the ages In unbroken life Move the faithful spirits At the call divine Don't you seem theS there who are very much with us even though they can't be here in person and we are just so grateful for everyone. This has been a week to give thanks. A week of a baptism, a wedding, prayer, a week of me standing out by the door just coming over to the church from the parsonage and having a car drive into the parking lot and a man roll down the window on facing me and say,

[7 : 44] I just was driving around actually trying to find my way. He wasn't lost. And yet he said, by coming into this parking lot and connecting with a person, even though I don't live in this neck of Buffalo, I feel good. I feel welcomed. And thank you for even just seeing me. And I walked away and said, wow, you know, God does amazing things when we do so little. And speaking of amazing and how we do things, I want to invite DJ up to talk about something near and dear to my heart, and I hope yours as well. So it's okay if I use her microphone. As you know, my name is DJ Mahar.

And once again, I am doing Operation Christmas Child. That's our shoebox ministry here that we've been doing for probably 21 years here at our church. We are still going to try to get this underway and do this. I wanted to offer both for the folks online as well as the people here that we have boxes for your taking home and filling up. We have brochures to make sure you grab those on your way out. And for all the folks online, I wanted to let you know that I will be here at the main doors between 10 a.m. and noon if you want to drive up and get your boxes and get your brochures and begin the process. We will be here each Sunday morning between 10 and noon to accept your boxes if you wanted to bring them back. And we will have a special time that we're open between November 16th and 23rd. Each evening, the church will be open to accept your boxes at that time too. So I hope you all want to participate and God bless you.

At least one so far. I invite us to come together at this time for a time of at least in mind and heart receiving our offering and there are so many ways to do it, which you can see on the screens here and you can see on the screen if you're watching from home. We are so grateful and so dependent on your faithfulness. And so we give thanks for your hearts, your gifts, your service, and your witness. Amen.

Amen. ist on Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 17] Thank you.

Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[13 : 55] who had surgery this past week, as well as Mary Ellen Schutz. Sam and Diana Fritz's daughter, Sarah, in the hospital recovering, and Chet Dombrowski as well.

And Nancy Himes had to go in for additional surgery with her pacemaker. So I ask you to lift up all these people and reach out to them and reach out to others so that we can stay connected and prayer filled in this time as the body of Christ.

And I invite all of us to a prayer together. Let us pray. Holy God, we come before you today, filled with joy and anticipation for you moving in our midst.

We know that you are here with us, that you have showered us with your presence, showered us with your blessings. And we pray, Lord, that in this time, you will open up our hearts, our eyes, our minds to be able to receive you even more, to be filled with your grace even more, that we will know your power, know your strength, know your will.

Lord, we lift up to you the people on our hearts, the people who are struggling in so many ways. We pray for healing upon people who are struggling physically, that you will have your healing hand upon them.

[15 : 14] Our great physician, Lord, that they will be healed in complete wellness in your name. We pray that you will continue to heal people in their mind, that you will cast away anxiety and depression and fear, and instead fill us all with your peace, that we would have your mind, the mind of Christ.

And Lord, we pray for people who are experiencing struggles and difficulties in relationships, that you will send your healing in the power of forgiveness, the grace and love that will help to bind people together and heal any unbrokenness.

Give us again open hearts to one another as we have open hearts to you. And Lord, we pray for our church and our church family, the many burdens that people are carrying, Lord, you know what they are, the things that we carry on our heart that are spoken and unspoken, that you will hear them and respond in ways that we will be able to proclaim powerfully, you are there and we know that you love us.

Help us to see you moving and to trust in that. Take away anything that is discouraging, anything that is fear-filled, and set us on your path in your direction, faithfully walking, trusting in you in every moment.

And Lord, we pray that you'll continue to lead this church in her ministries, that we will be able to bring ourselves to you, to be disciples of you, growing deeper and stronger and yet share also the gospel message with the world, with the people we meet day by day, with the people we work with, with the people online.

[17 : 01] Lord, we pray that you will continue to lead us, lead us into deeper discipleship, lead us in your evangelistic heart to reach people for your son's name, Jesus Christ.

For it's in his name that we pray. Amen. Now let's hear from the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Today's scripture reading is from Romans chapter 12, verses 3 through 8. For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith. If it is serving, then serve.

[18 : 38] If it is teaching, then teach. If it is to encourage, then give encouragement. If it is giving, then give generously.

If it is to lead, do it diligently. If it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

As we bring this particular series to an end, outside my own little world, we will see the globe and the lantern will be replaced for next Sunday's celebration of all saints.

And so I just want to remind you, if you have names to give us, please do. People who have passed away who are important to you in the past year, whether they are from this community or just from your life.

They are important to us. So please, get us those names so that we, slightly differently, can still light candles in remembrance of the cloud of witnesses and saints who have helped to get us to this place.

[20 : 13] spiritual gifts. So I'm going to put you to the test. I want to tell you two stories.

And I want you to think about which one of them best fits with the scripture that we heard. The first is, in a family that might resemble my in-laws, but might not, every year, Christmas gifts were given and this person, okay, my mother-in-law, she would give gifts that were boxed and wrapped and when you would open them, you might find a part of a scarf with the knitting needle still in it.

You might find a scarf or a sweater or a quilt or a wall hanging and it would maybe be between 50 and 75 percent.

But you still got a package and you still got to open it on Christmas morning. So that's one. And maybe eventually you would receive that gift and maybe you just loved what she had already done.

She was one of the most wonderful, wonderful saints in our lives. The other is a story that's not my family, but a story of a man who was a part of a family and every year he would receive gifts from the other people in the family and then promptly give them away.

[21 : 55] He might not even leave the Christmas gift gathering without having already given them away. Open it, look at the shirt. Oh, I love it.

And really he did. And then he would say, you want this shirt to somebody else in the family? All the gifts. You could always count on, maybe you should give him something you really want because then maybe he'll give it back to you.

So those are two different ways of looking at how it is that we handle gifts. Now, this passage in Romans and last week, and we think about the times and the ways that Paul talks about spiritual gifts.

You'd think it was an important thing, this message of using and having these gifts and keeping the body of Christ united with those gifts.

Why would Paul think that that was an important message to share? Why might he say these things, not just once, not just twice, but several times about we're all given different gifts, we're all given gifts, we're all part of one body.

[23 : 15] You know, the hand can't say to the ear, I don't need you. The foot can't say to the knee, I don't need you. That's not how the human body works.

Well, we can know and we do know that Paul suffered physically many times in the life of his ministry. We don't know about his physical sufferings before he comes so clearly into this Christian faith on the Damascus road and goes from Saul to Paul.

But he boasts about his suffering, not in a, oh yeah, well you want to talk about suffering, but just the real deal, that he did suffer. Prison, hunger, beatings, persecution, a variety of things.

So Paul knew what it meant to have a frail body. Some of us know at certain times in our lives what it feels like to have a frail body.

It doesn't matter whether it's age related or activity related or whatever it might be. You know, our knees don't hold out to some of the hard athletic work that some of us do.

[24 : 39] Not me, but I did actually. Only time I ever hurt my knee was skiing and thinking I was all that on slopes. But Paul needed a positive metaphor to offer to the people of Rome and the people of Corinth to try to get them to understand.

You know what? We're in this together. We're in this together. And he goes on to say these things in a way.

And I'm going to invite you to see if you can draw a parallel between the churches that Paul was talking to and our times today.

The body can be a fragile thing. We are called to be thankful for the body. We are instructed to take better care of the body.

We hear and realize all its parts need one another and need to work together to survive and thrive in a sometimes hostile and chaotic environment.

[25 : 55] Can you see any correlations between the teaching that Paul was giving and the teaching that we all hope so desperately will make a difference in this life we live in?

That if we might not be united in anything else, let us be united in faith in Jesus Christ. That one thing that connects, that keeps us inside that one body.

Now, this whole idea of what do we do with these gifts that we're given? And Paul is very clear that one is not more important than the other because he talks about the hidden parts, the visible parts, the parts that we show, the parts that we don't show, and how we can't do without any of them.

We are dependent on them. And if we ever want to wonder about that, just ask someone who has lost some part of their body that you can't even see.

And ask them gently, how does that feel? How does that work to be without that part? Now, I don't have an appendix.

[27 : 18] Okay, that might be one of those parts that's expendable. At least that's what the doctor said after it was removed. But the truth is, not only are all the parts important, they are equally important.

And I want to tell you a story about a famous preacher. A famous preacher flew to Texas and was invited to preach at a large church.

I can't remember whether it was Austin or Dallas. I'm not sure. But it was a big church. And so this famous preacher was, you know, up in the sometimes what we call the throne chair.

You know, that it has all the decor on the top. It's not shaped like a regular chair. It's actually shaped and looks a little bit like some place that someone royal would sit in.

There was another one just like it next to her, this famous preacher. And the liturgist sat in that chair.

[28 : 34] Evidently, that was not the way it usually went. So on this particular Sunday, this pastor went up and sat in this chair that was kind of in a row of several chairs that looked pretty much the same.

And then the acolytes came. And the way this famous preacher describes these acolytes is that one of them was in charge. Not only was this one acolyte in charge, she was making sure that the other acolyte was well taken care of.

You can almost imagine her walking next to the other acolyte. Now stay with me. Keep your candle lit. Hold it down. Don't hold it up too high. Don't walk too fast or it's going to blow out.

And I can almost imagine the coaching that went on back in the back. So the two acolytes come down. They light the candles. They put their acolyte sticks down.

And they turn to be seated up front. Well, this acolyte in particular walks over to where this famous preacher was sitting and said, You're in my seat.

[29 : 49] Can you imagine how this acolyte's mother might have felt? Oh my gosh. Or how her father or whoever was there with her going, Oh, I wish she wouldn't have done that.

And so this famous preacher who looked at this bold little girl stood up, went down into the congregation, picked up a chair, and carried it up to where the other chairs were.

And she let that acolyte sit in the preacher chair. And she sat in the chair that she brought up from the congregation. And she said, The preacher proclaimed that never, ever, ever should anybody go without a seat.

Never, ever, ever should anybody come and someone not make way for them. I served for seven years as United Methodist District Superintendent, which meant that I was either at my husband's church in Rochester on Sundays, or I was going among the churches in the district, which I loved.

But in the first year, people didn't know who I was. And even some, after they did know who I was, I would arrive at church. I'm always early, and I would go in, and I would find a seat, and I would be seated.

[31 : 47] And I would smile and say hello to people with no thought that they should know who I was. I can tell you that more than once, not only did no one sit in the pew with me, that was before physical distancing, but sometimes people came and stood at the end of the row and looked at me like, I'm like, what?

Inside my mind, like what? And then I was, oh, is this your seat? And so maybe I'd move, or maybe they would say, oh, no, no. We'll sit over here, whatever.

Whatever. It's hard to always be reminded to make room for all the parts of the body.

It's hard sometimes to make sense of how do we make room for all the parts of the body. And thus the beginning of this passage.

Let us not think more highly of ourselves than we should. It's not about bad boasting or pride.

[33 : 04] It's about awareness. It's about do our eyes and our hearts see all the people. One of the pieces of feedback that we received after last Sunday's worship was the acknowledgement of the people who cannot be here, who are watching, and how important it felt that they were named as a part of the body of Christ.

So, Paul is not speaking. Let us not think.

Guilt. How are we going to do this? What a big responsibility to make sure everybody's included and everybody has a place and we recognize everybody's gifts. Because Paul used the body to represent this body here and far, watching, in person, listening, in a car, knowing that our bodies are not perfect.

That makes it an even better analogy to talk about the body. What he means is that the church is a body.

This is sometimes the hard part. The church is a body that gives a face to the world. That not just gives a face to the world, but gives Jesus' face to the world.

[34 : 42] Oh my goodness. During this time when churches could not have in-person worship, and even in limited worship, I wish that we could broadcast from everywhere around this property.

The church is not closed. The building isn't open, but the church is not closed. Because the church, the body of Christ, is the face of Christ in this world.

We are the voice, the hands, the feet. And that's why Jesus challenged Saul on the Damascus Road.

Why are you persecuting us? Why are you persecuting us when we are all part, and we are imperfect members, but all part of the body of Christ?

We all belong to Christ. There is nothing in this description of the body of Christ that lends itself to independence.

[36 : 02] Yeah, we're individuals. We live in a culture and a society that thrives on independence. And yet, as the body of Christ, we have these gifts to serve the mission of Jesus Christ.

We are given these gifts not because we earned them, but because we are people of faith. We are given these gifts not to hold in a spiritual bank account, but to use.

We are given these gifts not to hold in a spiritual bank account, but to help us. I think about sometimes there are places, even churches, where someone wants to share a gift, wants to play their trumpet or the piano or some do something, and there's some worry.

Are they good enough? Have you heard them play? Have you heard them speak? Can they read scripture? Are they okay up front? Are they qualified to do a little piece of special music?

I remember a young man diagnosed with being on the autism spectrum, who came not to the front of the church, because that would be too challenging, but came like over there and dared not look at everybody as he put his violin up and took his bow and began to play.

[37 : 56] Was it performance perfect? No, but oh my goodness. It was a demonstration of the fact that the church is all the gifts, and that if someone feels gifted and called, then let's figure it out how we use those gifts.

Let's get a chair for the little one. Let's get a chair for the older one, the different looking one, the differently abled one, the different colored one, the different culture one, the ordinary everyday one.

The chair. It may not be physical in this time, but I assure you that you, as a body of Christ, as a part of this body of Christ, have been gifted, have been called, and are welcome to bring those gifts, to use those gifts, from afar, from near, from up here, in ways that we trust that God has gifted you.

This story, this proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to all the world, invites us to create households of faith.

Did you know that the original meaning of the church, Ecclesia, was to gather? It wasn't this.

[39 : 44] It was to gather. And almost all the churches, if not all of them, in the time of Paul, were in people's homes. They didn't need a big building.

They just needed a safe place. I pray that we will continue to find safe places in home, at home, through the internet, here in person, for people to have the safe space to recognize.

I have been gifted. My gift isn't bigger than your gift, but my gift is my gift. And I don't know what all of yours are.

And the truth is that a spiritual gift inventory will only tell you something that's on paper. You know who knows your spiritual gifts better than anybody? The people who know you.

The people who would say to you, you're an encourager. You're a prophet. You're a preacher, teacher, a variety of gifts.

[40 : 55] They're the ones who see. Maybe we can dare to tell each other what we see. Maybe then we can dare to say, how can I use that?

How can I use the gift of praying? The gift of planning, the gift of sewing, the gift of construction, the gift of destruction.

It is a gift. I give thanks for all of your gifts. And I pray and hope that we will continue to claim them as we recognize there is a whole world of giftedness that we can't even see.

You're a part of it and I'm a part of it. And thank you, Jesus. And thank you, Paul, for showing us just how important this is. Let's pray.

Lord, hold and keep our gifts. Show us how as we name them and claim them, please send your Holy Spirit and show us how do we use them.

[42 : 09] How do we find a way to be the people that you called us to be? Because you know and we are grateful for every step that you show us.

And in this time of chaos, O God of love and mercy, who calls us to be one body, let us remember. let us remember and know.

We hold to our faith in one God, creator, sustainer, builder, maker, healer, and God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Redeemer, our love, who holds a place for us in eternity.

And even here in this space, in the Holy Spirit, who heals and surrounds and guides us with wind, with a small voice, with a chair, with love.

Amen. It is indeed a gift of our Savior that we are part of the body of Christ.

[43 : 54] And as we come to this gift of our Savior, we get to experience the body of Christ in a different way. And as we ready our hearts, as we ready our souls to experience the sacrament as we lead, let us be mindful of what it means to know and be the body of Christ.

The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. And lift up the Lord. It is right. Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right. We are thanks for the name. It is right and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere, to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets, who looked for that day when justice shall roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, when nations shall not lift up sword against nation.

[45 : 17] Neither shall they learn war anymore. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy, holy, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ. Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit.

At his ascension, you exalted him to sit and reign with you at your right hand. And on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread.

[46 : 42] He gave thanks to you. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said, take and eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance remembrance of me.

When the supper was over, he took the cup. He gave thanks to you and he gave it to his disciples and said, drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this as often as you drink in remembrance of me. And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

[48 : 17] through your Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church all honor and glory is yours. Almighty God now and forever.

Amen. And now let us give honor to God let us give honor to Jesus Christ and honor the Spirit by offering the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

