

The Body of Christ

by Kris Goorsky

Prayer of Illumination

God source of all light, by your word
give light to our lives and light our path.
Guide us on this path that we are travelling
together. May your words bring us clarity.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NRSV)

For 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. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 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." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

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

SERMON – The Body of Christ

Greetings. Grace and Peace to you.

My Dad was an avid hunter. He hunted ducks, geese and occasionally pheasants. I am the youngest in my family and by the age of 10 it was pretty much my parents and I doing things together. So I went hunting with my Dad and grocery shopping and sometimes lunch with the ladies with my Mom.

I loved hearing my Dad's hunting stories and learning about the birds. He even tried to teach me how to use a duck call a few times, ear splitting sounds. But of all the birds my dad taught me about geese are my favorite birds. To watch them fly overhead in a V formation is one of the most beautiful things.

My Dad explained to me that geese fly in V formation, also called a skein, to lessen the load for the rest of the birds. The formation acts aerodynamically like a single wing, wind drag is distributed equally across all the birds. This reduces the effort needed by each bird. 25 geese flying together in a V can travel seventy percent further than one goose flying alone.

The lead goose actually situates itself slightly behind the perfect point position of the V. And the geese that follow are helping the lead bird. The air flow pattern goes both ways again as if one wing.

Every so often the lead goose will rotate back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.

Geese in formation honk from behind as if to encourage those up front.

AND when one goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it can fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation or catch up with their skein.

Through geese we can learn a powerful way to live together. Knowing we are each needed in the formation, sometimes to fly point, sometimes to fly with a wounded friend. But all are needed.

This is what Paul was addressing in our scripture reading for today. He is writing to the church in Corinth...a church he started and pastored for 18 months. After he left, things in the church started coming apart at the seams. People were not respecting one another, some thinking themselves better than others, others refusing to work with some. And this was a big deal since in Corinth there were people of all ranks of life – from city officials to slaves. And so there was this mix in the church as well. Respect for each other, working with each other was vital to the church's success.

Paul was trying desperately to get Corinth to be a true community. To trust one another, depend on one another and welcome new people that had different gifts with open arms and care for their well-being.

Aren't those some of the same things we're hearing on radio, TV and social media these days? ... "come together", "get through this together", "we're here for you", "taking care of people."

I think this is the perfect time for Paul's note to us. A little reminder and nudge from God: You are not alone.

As Devon Franklin, inspirational and motivational speaker, said just this week:

"Our shared experience with this virus actually brings us together because it's shared. We're not alone in this experience."

Some of our individual circumstances might be different. The church is made up of many different kinds of people, many different backgrounds. Some living alone right now, some living amongst their whole family, some can't even see their family right now.

- Some people are working, some are furloughed with no income in sight.
- Some are feeling cooped up and stuck at home, having to work from home, and others are working on hospital floors, trying to help people heal.

As members of God's family, we have a common goal and interest: loving and caring for all people. The holy spirit breaks down walls to bring us together as Christ's body, reaching out to a broken and hungry world.

And we all bring our very different gifts. In discussing this scripture with the youth, we discovered together that all of our gifts and parts work together.

- We need the eyes that see things differently and bring us a bigger vision of what things could be.
- We need the hands to play music, to help people to do work for and with one another.
- We need the brain to think things through completely and give us wisdom.
- We need the pinkie toe to walk upright and have good balance.
- We need the ears to listen, even though we may never make a sound.
- We need the elbow to take the extreme pressure when lifting.
- We need feet to keep us active and get us around.
- We need our funny bone to keep things light and for laughter because it helps us to heal.
- We need the heart to keep it all running, to love each other.

The parts of the Immanuel body of Christ could be listed for thousands of pages as I've seen in these last 6 months. Immanuel is truly a gifted and sure-footed congregation walking in the Tucson community of our mission: "Discovering and displaying Christ in here and out there."

I'm reminded of a book "*Jesus Centered Life*" in which Rick Lawrence reminds the reader:

"Real impact in the world isn't ultimately tied to our gifts and abilities: it's tied to HIS gifts and abilities empowering us to move mountains because we are intimately attached to Him."

So what's your gift? Which part of the body are you? This week consider taking some paper and pen to a calming, more quiet spot. If for only 5 minutes, slow down, talk with your Lord, ask Him where He can use you. Then close your eyes and LISTEN.

It may only be a word, a phrase, an image. But if you were to ask God: Where is my gift, what can I give? He will answer. One way to take some quiet time is through meditation.

I was able to take part in a study with the University of Arizona in which we explored meditation and its effects on our mood, daily life and outlook. One meditation in particular lead you to consider each part of the body, sense it, evaluate how that particular part feels, stretch it. Essentially checking in with your ring finger fingertip, your ankles or nose, to see how it feels, to acknowledge all parts, even the lesser ones, which might be ones we don't even consider or even laugh at.

When I was a child, I loved to play the game "Operation." For those who have never played this game, there's a form of a person, fun fact: his name is really Cavity Sam, he's a red nosed guy with a really bad bowl haircut and his nose really lit up with a small lightbulb in it. Players try to "cure" Cavity Sam's ailments by carefully removing game pieces from an electrified board. You used a pair of long thin tweezers to remove the pieces. If you hit a part of the game board it would buzz or zap you. It was really difficult separating the parts from the whole...when we try to do that...we often get zapped! Cavity Sam's parts had funny names, it made me think of who we all really are, with our funny bones, butterflies in the stomach, or pain in the...all needed, as one. One whole body.

Our fine feathered friends the geese can teach us much about being the body of Christ, and especially during this time. In our Pandemic Survival Kit this week is "each other."

Let's remember this week to stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.

- Our interdependence is what brings us closer together. Offer help but also accept help.
- So give someone who sat next to you in a church a HONK of encouragement this week.
- Use social media to encourage others.
- Write a note to someone.

Stay in formation together so it's easier on all of us. Not only offer up to help if you're able but accept help from those who offer.

And don't forget, the silly goose among us, keeping things light and fun, because we all need a reason to laugh these days.

Amen.

Sermon Art: "*Living Branches*" by Luke D. Tittle, 2020

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