

“HOW TO HAVE A HEALTHY BODY” (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

January 25, 2004 Epiphany 3C [EC]

Epistle lesson - 1 Corinthians 12:12-21,26-27

Note to the preacher: You need to be ready to adapt parts of this sermon to your church and your community. For example: On page 3, the part that talks about "No second-class Christians," you will want to name a rich area (or suburb) and a poor area in your community. Use names of community areas that people in your church will recognize as rich and poor area.

One-week-ago, this week, and next week,
our Epistle lesson studies 1st Corinthians, chapter 12.

This chapter teaches us three important points:

- 1) God has no "SECOND CLASS" Christians
 - 2) God has no "UNEMPLOYED" Christians
 - 3) God has no "LONE RANGER" Christians
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FIRST: God has NO SECOND CLASS CHRISTIANS.

Paul wrote the letters 1st & 2nd Corinthians because the church in Corinth, Greece, really-was mixed-up about many things. This chapter begins Paul's explanation about gifts from the Holy Spirit, because Christians in Corinth misunderstood about spiritual gifts.

Some people feel proud because they have some special spiritual gift, and they look-down on other people who don't have their gifts.

While some people felt proud about their gift,
some other people feel they are
 not good enough,
 not smart enough,
 not skilled enough,

they felt they are not full Christians, because they don't have some specific gift from the Holy Spirit, or they not-yet have some special emotional experience.

God's answer to that wrong idea is in our Epistle lesson one-week-ago:

1 Corinthians 12:

"Now brothers and sisters, I want you to understand about spiritual gifts...

We see different gifts, but the same Spirit.

We see different services, but the same Lord.

We see different works, but the same God does all these things in everyone.

But HE gives the Spirit to each one for the good of all...

One and the same Spirit works in all these things. HE gives to each one as HE wants."

The Lord makes the point here:

No Christian has a better gift from God
than has another Christian.

No Christian has a better service for God
than has another Christian.

No Christian is more important than any other Christian
in our Church.

We are all equal!

Now, our Epistle lesson today continues explaining:

"Jesus' Church is the same-as a body.

We have many different parts all in our one body.

Same with us in Christ's Church.

*Some of us are Jews, some not Jews,
some of us slaves, some of us free people,..."*

Now today we can also say:

Some of us are Hispanic [Spanish].

Some of us are Black.

Some of us are Asian.

Some of us are European.

Some of us are Deaf.

Some of us are Hearing.

Some of us live in _____[rich community].

Some of us live in _____[poor community].

Some of us young, and some old.

Some of us healthy, and some handicapped.

"... all of us baptized into Jesus' Church by the Holy Spirit."

We people like to discriminate. We are naturally suspicious against people different than ourselves... for no good reason.

[story]

On day Pastor Friedrich visited a Deaf school(*institute*). It was a nice day; the weather was warm. The pastor stopped to watch a few young boys play outdoor basketball.

During their play, one boy
suddenly stopped.

He dropped the ball,
ran-off from the basketball court,
and pushed-hard another boy that only was walking past.

The second-boy was shocked, and asked "Why? I didn't do anything!"

The pastor also was shocked. When the first-boy came-back to his basketball game, the pastor asked him, "You pushed him, why?"

The first-boy, very angry, pointed-at the second-boy and said, "He's hearing!" (The second-boy was the son of the school cook.)

We all see people talk critically about people who are
 more rich than us
 more poor than us
 people with different education levels than us
 people with different skin colors than us.

But Jesus doesn't evaluate people that way.
 Jesus died on the cross to save all people.
 And everyone that trusts Christ for forgiveness,
 that person is our brother or sister,
 and we love them same-as Christ loves them.

[story]

One pastor [last name Campbell] tried to bring the good news about Jesus to members in the KKK. The pastor did not preach about RACISM. He first taught them about Jesus, and then he began Bible study with them. Jesus touched their hearts. One KKK member came to the pastor privately and said, "Pastor, I have a bad problem. I don't-know what-to-do."

Pastor asked, "What is your problem?"

The man answered, "I am beginning to love black people!" (*But the man didn't really say "black people." He used the "n" word.*)

Yes! That man learned the first lesson in 1 Corinthians 12:
God has no SECOND CLASS Christians.

2nd: God has no UNEMPLOYED Christians.

Notice, that I said God has no unemployed Christians. True, the world has a many Christians who are laid-off. But in God's business, you are never out of work. He always has something for you to do!

See what 1 Corinthians chapter 12 says about that:

"The body doesn't have only one part, but the body has many parts.

*Imagine your foot saying, 'I'm not a hand,
therefore, I don't belong to the body.'
No, the foot truly still belongs to the body.*

*Imagine the ear saying, 'I'm not an eye,
therefore, I don't belong to the body.'
No, the ear truly still belongs to the body.*

*If the whole body were one big eye,
how can the body hear?*

*If the whole body were one big ear,
how can the body smell?*

*...If all the parts were the same, then we don't have a body!
But now we have many parts all in our one body."*

And every part in the body has a job to do, for serving the body. Our Lutheran song book has one line that says:

"Don't let people see you saying, 'Nothing I can do...' "
[TLH 496, LW 318; LBW 381; v.4]

[story]

One pastor had a church member who loved Jesus much, and she wanted to share her faith in Christ. But this woman couldn't walk well. And she couldn't talk well. But she really wanted to serve her Lord, and she didn't know how.

Pastor had an idea: The pastor brought to the woman's home a big box of Bibles. The pastor showed the woman one Bible that had verses clearly marked,

verses that explained who Jesus is,
verses that explained that we are all sinners,
verses that explained Jesus died for us,
verses that explained how we can trust in Jesus
for forgiveness and salvation.

The pastor asked that handicapped woman, "Can you please mark all these other Bibles the same-as this one? Then other members in our church can bring these Bibles to lost people who not-yet know Jesus."

That woman became excited about
her new service to Christ,
her service to her church,
and her service to touch lost people for Jesus.

God has no unemployed Christians.

[story]

One Lutheran church near Chicago started deaf ministry because their pastor also had the philosophy: "God has no unemployed Christians."

Any time that church got a new member, the pastor learned about any special skills that person has. Then the pastor finds a way that person can use their skills to serve the Lord.

One day the church got a new member. That person was a professional interpreter. Before that day, pastor never had a plan for deaf ministry in his church. But now he wanted that interpreter to serve the Lord. So they invited deaf people to church. They started a Sign Language class for other hearing members in the church. And the pastor himself learned Sign. Later, that pastor moved to another church (and started deaf ministry there), and also that first interpreter moved away. But today Hope Lutheran Church in Aurora, Illinois, still serves the Deaf...

...all because God has no unemployed Christians.

3rd: God has no LONE RANGER Christians.

Many, many people say, "I don't need to go to church. I read my Bible and I pray every day."

I am curious: What Bible do they read!?

See what 1 Corinthians says:

*"The eye can't tell the hand, 'I don't need you,'
and the hand can't tell the feet, 'I don't need you.'"*

But HE gives the Spirit to each one for the good of all."

Today our culture teaches: "Religion is private."

Many Christians think, "I have Jesus... that is all I need. I don't need Church. I don't need fellowship with other believers."

The Bible says:

If one brother or sister rejoices,
we all rejoice together.

When another member in Christ's body has grief,
we all grieve together.

If you hit your foot, so you hurt your BIG TOE, can the rest of your body ignore that pain?

If you have a bad headache, how does the rest-of-your-body feel?
Sick!

Is the body of Christ any different?

Can we really say to another Christian, "We don't need you" ?

Medical science teaches us: What controls our physical bodies?
The brain.

And how does the brain control the rest-of-the-body?
Through NERVES.

The Body of Christ is no different.

Christ is the brain. He is the one who controls His body - the Church.

And the "nerves" in His body is the Holy Spirit.

We are each members in His body. We are under control from Christ the head. And when one member of His body hurts, Christ sends other members of the body to help.

Jesus already ascended to heaven. But here on earth Jesus still has hands and feet -- our hands, and our feet -- for Him to continue His service to the world.

Amen.

