

All Members Included and Needed!

The Bible says, *“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body”* (I Corinthians 12: 14-20). The Bible also says, *“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...”* (Romans 12:5, 6a).

Today, on this first Sunday of the year, I want to talk about the need we have of one another and how we ought to act on this realized need. I am privileged to pastor some of the most caring, giving and thoughtful people in the world. There is not one person in Christchurch that I know who would, for a moment, slight, take advantage of, or ignore the needs of someone else. Yet we still have the ability to allow needs that go unmet and ministry neglected because we are not appreciating our spiritual giftings. I love how my dad “covered” for me years ago in the midst of my busy ministry. My mom complained to him that I had not written in awhile. He compassionately said to Mom, “Honey, it’s not that Johnny is not thoughtful...he’s just thoughtless.” Of course, I could also say that humorously speaking, Dad was telling her I didn’t use the brain in my head. However, when Dad told me what he had told Mom that registered a truth that I’ll never forget. In one felled swoop Dad was showing me the operation of the family of God in our family. He was saying to Mom, have the gift of mercy on our son; he’s working for God, after all. But for me, he was telling me to organize and administrate and don’t let the demanding urgent things of life take the place of the important things of life.

One of our fine deacons, Otis Young annually gets into the candy making mode to get out his peanut brittle to his constituency. Last week, while making his brittle, he burned and blistered his fingers. Although only a small portion of his body was burned, he was influenced to prepare an entire lesson on eternity, due to the discomfort. Then this morning, while cleaning an oatmeal mess I created at our house, I burned six fingers, however nothing requiring even a doctor’s visit; I’ll be fine. It has made doing exactly what I am doing now a little inconvenient. I am using this computer keyboard with burned fingers, one being bandaged. Much of my work requires penmanship and keyboarding so today I am noticing these very minor injuries. I am not bothered by pain as much as by the inconvenience. When these fingers are not operating in normality, my work is hampered. Sometimes we don’t know how important the smaller members of our body are until they become incapacitated. Our Lord used the comparison of our body to His Body, the Church. Therefore, when even the smallest of our members are out service, there is a corporate effect. Let’s look into the comparison:

1. All are important, no matter who we are.

“And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked” (I Corinthians 12:21-24). The Word of God is telling us we are all needed! Imagine a person who is only an eye or only a foot. To even imagine this absurdity would be a monstrosity. If we saw an eyeball all by itself rolling down the sidewalk, we would call it a monster. It is not absurd to say that a local Church becomes monstrous if it does not operate as a body. If we make celebrities out of certain gifted people to the neglect of others, we have done them and us a

disservice. A church full of prophets would be small and cantankerous. A church full of mercy-givers would be too easy-going and have a tendency to look away from sinning members. A church full of helpers would be critical of those who are not as helpful. A church full of administrators would be bossy and hard to get along with. A church full of teachers would be arguing about the correct interpretations of everything. But these gifted people together form a working church: *“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”* (Ephesians 4:8, 11-14). When we are working together we have ministry, edification, faith that moves mountains, a greater knowledge of Christ and fullness of the Holy Spirit. We should never underestimate the power of even the smallest members, because God said He has, *“...given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.”* God “tempered” (I Corinthians 12:24) the members of the Body of Christ together. This is from the Greek word “sugkerannumi,” which means to co-mingle, to combine or assimilate, mix with, temper together, and unite one thing to another. The Lord takes the apparent and not so apparent parts of the body to compliment the whole. We often hear people compliment the height of a young man (made possible by his long legs) or the pretty eyes of a young girl. I don’t ever remember people saying, what a beautiful set of lungs a young man has or doesn’t that young lady have a gorgeous liver. Although these unseen vital organs don’t get compliments, we cannot live without them.

2. When one hurts, we all hurt.

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (I Corinthians 12: 25-27). God says we are not to be divided! He said in Psalm 133:1, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* If a runner has a sore toe, no matter how strong his lungs, he will not be operating at full capacity. When a church has all the gifts of the Body of Christ operating, it runs better than any machine that man can make. A fully functioning church is Christ’s Body on earth, doing what she is supposed to be doing.

One of my prayers for Christchurch in this New Year is to be filled with the Spirit and operating in full usage of every part of the Body. Happy New Year! I love you!

- Pastor Pope

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