

Friday, October 2, 2020

September 28 - October 3, 2020

Suffer and rejoice

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice.

1 Corinthians 12:26

Please read or listen to 1 Corinthians 12:1-27 again today. There is a deeper thing that happens as we begin to fully embrace what it means to be part of the body of Christ. We begin to rejoice and suffer along with others in a healthy way. It is interesting to consider which of these is harder to do. I find that if I am not broken before the Lord, it becomes much harder to rejoice with someone who may receive the honor I would like to have. As well, if my heart is not right with God, I can look down on those who are suffering and can think of reasons they are suffering instead of coming alongside them in grace. Being part of this amazing body of Christ brings a solidarity that is supernatural. There is a way in which we can understand this from our own bodies. I remember one time I smashed my thumb really, really hard with a hammer. My thumb was suffering but my whole body joined in! It seemed like every cell in my body was feeling the pain that my thumb experienced. In fact, for many days afterward, as the thumb continued to heal from that trauma, the rest of my body would be impacted by that suffering. When we are truly connected in the oneness of the body of Christ, we will be tuned in to the suffering of others, whether that be from trauma or from everyday life, and we will come along with a sense of commonality in that suffering. As well, we will be cheerleaders for everyone in the body, looking for ways to rejoice with those who are experiencing victories in their ministry and walk. Stop and ponder today this idea of rejoicing and suffering. Have you been able to be aware of the situations of others around you? How have you been able to encourage others in their journey? How have others impacted you? What steps can you take to be more aware?



Saturday, October 3, 2020

One another

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Romans 12:4-5

We have seen this week that followers of Jesus are members of the body of Christ. As such, we belong to him. But Paul reveals that we belong to each other also! This is amazingly wonderful and allows us to understand another dimension of the beauty of the illustration of the Church as the body. We are individually members one of another. Through Jesus, God takes us from isolation and brings us into community. We are no longer autonomous. In the body of Christ, we are accountable to each other. We are responsible for each other. We belong to each other. Consider all the "one another" statements that are found in the Epistles of the New Testament. Paul will go on in Romans 12 to list three: Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Live in harmony with one another. When we truly grasp the beauty of the uniqueness of each member of the body of Christ and the unity that comes from being one body, we will begin to function as one, in the way that God has designed. We will embrace the "one anothers" of Scripture as second nature. The world looking on will know that we have been with Jesus. They will know we are his disciples because we love one another (John 13:34-35). As we close out this week, and as you prepare to worship tomorrow in whatever context the COVID response is allowing you to worship, consider what it means to belong to one another in the body of Christ. I belong to you—whoever you may be! You belong to me. We are members one of another—God's beautiful design that we will see lived out for all eternity.


Pastor Chuck Cervenka

Celebrating Unity in Diversity!

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Romans 12:4-5

Each week we will look a little more deeply into the message that was preached so that you can dive in and learn how to study the Bible for yourself. Consider using this as a small group or family study guide.

Monday, September 28, 2020

One body

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5

There are several times when Paul likens the church to a body (1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-30; Ephesians 1:23; 4:4-16; 5:23-30; Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15). It is a powerful metaphor. In several of these passages, the emphasis is on Jesus, as the head of the body. In others the focus is the unity that comes as one body. It is in this way that the likeness is used in Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. These passages complement one another, so we will look at them together this week. But first, read Acts 9:1-18. This passage describes the moment when Jesus met Saul and revealed that he truly was the Messiah and that Saul was not persecuting heretics, but was persecuting Jesus. I believe that it may have been at this moment of revelation that Saul, or Paul, as he would come to be known, grasped the meaning of what the body of Christ is. He had not known that he was persecuting Jesus when he went after the followers of The Way. He thought he was defending truth. Jesus revealed truth—Jesus is the truth! Followers of The Way—followers of Jesus—are the body of Jesus. When they are persecuted, he is persecuted. When they are persecuted, the whole body is persecuted. Paul understood the body of Christ from having persecuted the body of Christ. Jesus had revealed this truth to him. Stop and consider the followers of Jesus that you know. Have you ever persecuted them? Have you ever spoken unkind words about another follower of Jesus? Have you ever thought that another follower of Jesus was not worthy of your love or grace? It could be someone very close to you—a family member or co-worker—or it could be a member of another church. Do you see that you have persecuted Jesus in so doing? Have you been ambivalent towards the suffering of other followers of Jesus—whether in your backyard or in nations where persecution is severe? If so, you have been ambivalent towards the suffering of Christ. That is what it means that we who are followers of Jesus are one body. Spend some time today allowing God to search your heart for any place that you are persecuting the body of Christ. Have some conversation with Jesus about that.

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

One body (part 2)

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6

Yesterday we considered what it means to be the body of Christ. Today we will focus on what it means to be one body. Paul is speaking to the church in Rome and calling them to live in a new way. He is calling them to remember that they are to sacrifice their self-interests and to have a renewal of the mind—an ongoing renewal that will help them to move away from conformity to the defiled world that is around them. They will do that as they have a healthy view of themselves and others in the body of Christ. As followers of Jesus, we need to see that we are one in Christ. Ephesians 4:4-6 help us understand this unity and this oneness. This is a rich verse that declares a sevenfold oneness and the oneness that is in each of the Persons of the Trinity. In Ephesians, Paul is celebrating the oneness of Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ—the Church. No longer does a Gentile need to become a Jew and a Jew does not need to become a Gentile. Rather, in Christ they are one. There is one body—the Church. There is one Spirit—the Holy Spirit. There is one hope—the certainty of eternal reconciliation with God. There is one Lord—Jesus. There is one faith—the faith that saves. There is one baptism—this is the baptism (immersion) into the body of Christ, of which water baptism is an outward expression (see Romans 6:1-10). There is one God and Father—this is the One True God and Father. We are one as followers of Jesus. These things are all true of each genuine follower of Jesus. These truths, individually and combined, are what unite us into that one body. God the Father is over all and through all in the body. Consider John 14:23. God has made his home in the life of every believer (see also Isaiah 57:15) and we move ahead as one body into the world that needs desperately to know the truth of Jesus. As we embrace this oneness, we can keep the body united in its efforts and its mission. Consider these truths that unite the body of Jesus. What are some things that bring division? How can these truths help us stand against those attacks?

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Members

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5

The analogy of the body is so powerful as we consider how we can best serve the Lord together amid great diversity. We can celebrate the diversity because we see the uniqueness of each person God has created. There are many members in the body of Christ. I think about passages like Revelation 19. There, a great multitude joins as one in worship of Almighty God. Consider all the members that are part of the body of Christ! Every person who has ever come to a saving knowledge of Jesus is a member. There are many—it is a vast number. Each member is unique, and each member has a unique function. This plays out in the local church, even as it plays out in the global Church—even as it plays out over time. Each member that has been, is, or will be a part of the body of Christ is unique and has a special function. Pause and consider that truth. Think of the implications of that truth over time. Paul tells Timothy to pass on to others what he learned from Paul and to instruct them to pass it on to someone else who will do the same (2 Timothy 2:2). Parents are told to instruct their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). As a member of the body of Christ, you have a unique function. So also does each person in the body. It is a function that no other person has. Oh, some may have a similar one, but yours is unique to you. That is the design of God for the Church. Are you a member of the body of Christ? Have you placed your trust in Christ alone for your eternal security? Have you exchanged your life of sin for Christ's life of righteousness by asking for forgiveness and repenting of the sin in your life that has earned the wrath of God and separated you from his lovingkindness? Have you been reborn? If so, you have been reborn and immersed, as a member with a function, into the body of Christ! How are you living that out in your life? How much energy and effort do you put into your role?

Thursday, October 1, 2020

Content

... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25

It is exciting to think of what it means to be a member of the body of Christ, but it comes with some potential problems as well! The members are people. People who have been rescued, ransomed, and set free. People who have come from all walks of life into one body. People who are still struggling with areas of sin in their lives. This can bring conflict and competition. It is so sad when this begins to happen. Today, please read 1 Corinthians 12:1-27. Paul speaks to this amazing church in Corinth and addresses that very thing: division that has come because of comparison. Some have spiritual gifts that others want. Paul helps them, using the body illustration, see that there is to be a difference in each member. As you read this passage, imagine what a body would look like if each member were an eye! This is a powerful illustration to help us be content with the function God has entrusted to us. Each function is equally important. Sin gets in and strife comes when we desire to be doing what someone else is doing or when we believe that what we have been given to do is less significant than what another has been given. This can tear the body apart or cause it to wither. Think of situations where you have seen this happen, where someone who thought what they could do was not important, so they just stopped doing it, or when someone wanted to do something more important than what was entrusted to them and, since they did not get a chance, they just walked away? When have you seen others start to talk badly about someone in one of those situations? Has this ever happened to you? Is it happening now? Contentment is so powerful. Learning to be content with your role and content with others' roles is a gift of grace from God. It is interesting that Paul points out that the most important and vital parts of the body are covered and protected in a special way. While we may want the more outward roles, those inward roles are very important. They work behind the scenes in ways we will never know this side of Heaven. Ponder your contentment with your role and the roles of others in the body. Ask God to show you whether an attitude adjustment needs to be made, and perhaps repentance.