

First Baptist Church - Smiths Falls

January 28, 2018

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

12 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. 13 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. 14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 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. 16 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. 17 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? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 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." 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work

miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts.

Congregational Prayer: LORD'S PRAYER: "Our Father" Our Father, Which Art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever. AMEN

Message: "One In The body"

Introduction:

- The chase was on. The hospital staff obviously did not know what they were up against. The little boy was wheeled into the operating room. The tonsillectomy was to be a short operation. But the little 3 year old boy, after a tearful departure from his mother, was to be no match for the hospital staff that day. Hopping off the table, he ran for cover. Taking flight became a great game, and the staff struggled to collect, calm, drug and operate on him, but they did so: and the tonsillectomy was a success, as I am demonstrating right now - for that little boy who tried to escape surgery was none other than me.
- As a child, I spent so much time in hospital waiting rooms that I

felt that needed to have my own chair. I had to have stitches on my knee at 5; I have fallen from a tree, backwards, until I mercifully stopped, scraped head to foot, just short of the ground; I removed the skin off parts of my right foot, knee, and leg on a bike when I was 8; I jumped from a tree directly onto a root which broke the arch of my foot; I was on crutches for cracking my big toe teaching my little sister how to properly fall down the stairs; I twisted an ankle or two with great regularity; I smashed my brother's bike barrelling down a steep hill; I received five stitches and ruined the ligaments and tendons in my right elbow from playing winter snow-football. AND then I grew up. Since then I have had stitches by my left eye twice: once from a friend throwing a heavy object at me to catch; once because I was lucky enough to catch a puck at a hockey game - with my face. I have bow-sawed my finger; severely sprained my ankle fighting a run-away rider lawnmower and recently lost a fight with an uneven Halifax sidewalk; A car crashed head-on into a stretch limousine I was driving destroying my back; I was hit by a car as a pedestrian,

AND of course, my bicycle riding skills are still a source of local legend. All I have to do is fight my way home, and Linda simply says: "What have you done this time," as she gets the car keys, the spare crutches, and first aid kit as we head to the emerg.

- Although I have not learned how to avoid all the injuries, the scrapes, cuts, and bruises, have shown me one thing - you don't know how much you use and need a part of your body, until you find that you cannot.
- Paul was trying to explain the importance of every part of your body and every part of us together in the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Scripture makes it clear that we are to: (1) celebrate that diversity that we have in Christ (2) we must have unity in the body of Christ

Part (1) The diversity

- We are a walking testimony to what has been tried and liked. Think about it. How radical the first pair of pants must have been. Instead of togas and wraps, now each leg had it's own cloth, and the result was comfort and fit. And men's ties: The ties suffocating

the necks of people across the world started as a device to keep cold necks warm, a scarf, and now here it is. Who would have thought about strapping leather on your feet for warmth? Did you know that buttons were considered a rich person's device, but their fad became common. And our language is a mix of words which we have used and created and found functional or amusing.

Beaver Cleaver did not say "awesome" in a way that we do today.

Cultural customs come together. Now we eat Pizza, Fajitas, and

Won Ton Soup. Christmas is a mix of traditions which each

culture has added that enriches its meaning. More customs blend

at home, at work, and in our neighbourhoods.

- All these different parts blend together, and suddenly we are who we are.
- And it is the diversity of skills and people which makes the Church of Jesus Christ great. All of us can come together, bringing our gifts and experiences, and apply them, using them for God's glory.
- How many of you do jigsaw puzzles as a hobby? Each piece is unique. But each piece not only fits in one place, it adds to the

overall picture, and brings into focus what piece is needed next.

- Have you ever marvelled over the reality that while we are all created in God's image, we are all unique?
- And think about your body: Did you know that nobody has a left hand which is an exact mirror of their right. Your left hand is similar to your right, but each part of your body is unique. We've all known someone who seems to have two left feet, but could you imagine really having two left feet, or two right hands. Each of your body parts, whether or not we think they are working properly, has been tested and approved by God. Each body part was created for a specific purpose, even that pesky tonsil, and that intriguing appendix. We can function without certain parts, or with a surgical replacement, but we work best when all the parts of our body are functioning at their peak.
- And it's no different in the Church. Every Christian, every believer, all those who have given their heart to Jesus Christ is given gifts and talents, each made distinct and powerful by the infusing of the Holy Spirit as we surrender ourselves to Jesus at

our second birth, at conversion. Each of the talents in you is to be added to those of other believers, and together what emerges is something great and powerful: it's the Church, the body of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Part 2: Unity in The Body of Christ

- Within the Body of Christ, the Church, there should be no distinction as to the importance any one person, or of any single gift or talent over another. All people and all gifts are important, and are a gift from God. All have been tested and approved by the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth. And boy, if that doesn't make you feel great, nothing will. Imagine: You have one of those stamps that you see when you have purchased a new item: you know the stickers: "Approved by number 173." More importantly than 173's approval, you are approved by God. Forget the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, you have God's Seal of Approval!
- Since we are all given gifts from God., and since no gift is more important, or less important than any other, let's use the gifts that God has lavished upon us to serve Him, the Master, well.

Part 3: THE UNITY:

- In 1 Corinthians 12:31 it says that we are to strive for the "*greater gifts.*" Paul is driving home a point: it is not enough to acknowledge the diversity, but we have to work for unity. Paul makes it clear that unity in Christ is the greatest gift (verse 31).
- Look at the Church of Jesus Christ. We must take delight in personally building up God's Church as we use our acts of love, our deeds of peace, our services of joy, our gatherings of unity. It is up to all of us, once we have acknowledged God and become a Christian, to find a Church to which God has sent us, and then we are to use our gifts and talents in service to God as we work with other believers in the journey of faith.
- The greatest gift that God tells Paul to write about in 1 Corinthians 12:31 is unity in the body of Jesus, the Church. The gifts of prophecy, teaching, of speaking in tongues, and the other gifts as listed in verses 8-10, are not great until they are unified for Christ. This is where too many Christians are walking away from the Church today, unwilling to put their efforts into Christ's Church

and use their talents for God. We are called to strive for unity

despite of, and in the midst of, our diversity.

- A pastor described a visit to Bethlehem in Israel. It was right after Christmas when the group met in the Church of the Nativity. There they paused to sing Christmas carols. Within a short time, Korean & German voices mixed with the voices of the Christians from all denominations and backgrounds. The music was in different tongues, and sung with different accents, from people from around the world and with different pasts, but the sound was a truly joyful noise as all sought the greater gift: unity in the glory of God.
- We can have different ways of expressing out belief; we can come from different backgrounds; we can look at the world with different eyes; we can worship God in various ways, and we can serve God in many different means, and still be united in service to our God who loves us, died for all, and gave us the gift of life as He called us to live for Him in the world He created.
- Being a follower in the Church of Jesus Christ is being in a collection of believers who work WITH God to achieve the greater

gift in His kingdom.

CONCLUSION:

- The canoe was sinking. Of that there was no doubt. The storm was driving it into more and more trouble, and the waves threatened to swamp it at every turn. The three canoeists each bailed, then grabbed their paddles, furiously plunging their paddle into the water, and pushing with all their might before returning to bail. Unfortunately, each was paddling in a slightly different direction, and in the amount of time it took put down their paddle and to pick up the bucket to bail, more water came in than they could remove. But when they finally coordinated their effort, paddled in unison, with one person constantly bailing, they reached safety.
- All life is a fine balance. God has created us all, and approved us for His work: fully equipping us with talent and ability to serve Him in His kingdom. And He has created us to come together as a Church with a variety of skills, talents and ability .
- And it is our duty in Christ to work together for the greatest gift:

unity in Jesus. We all have talents, unify them in Christ. We all
have gifts: unify them in Christ Jesus our Lord. We all have
abilities: unify them in the Kingdom of the Living Christ.