

“Why You Make the Difference”

***Introduction***

Last week we read an important passage of Scripture from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. In it Paul reminded us that we are called by our Lord to form one body, with one purpose – because we are bound together under “one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and father of all.” The theme of the body of Christ is found in numerous places in Paul’s writings. We just heard another of those passages from his letter to the Romans.

***God Has Designed the Church to Be One Body***

Jesus spoke, at his last meal with his closest disciples, said spoke of the bread as His body broken for them. Earlier he spoke of himself as the bread of life (John 6), “For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

The church must be the body of Christ to be genuine. In a fractured environment, a unified body of Christ becomes a beacon of hope. Together in Christ we have much to do for God. Alone we can each do something. Together we can do quite a bit more. Together in Christ what we can accomplish is boundless. Being in the body of Christ is essential for our Christian faith. The church is one of the few genuinely cooperative, shared wealth societies. That is one of the reasons the church can often do great things, beyond the measure of individual members, and beyond the capabilities of other human organizations.

[During challenging times it is critical that we walk in the fellowship of other Christians. Tough times can be overwhelming when faced alone. But if we have cultivated supportive relationships with fellow believers, we will find strength in the comfort and encouragement of those who care about us. Fellowship in God’s family is also a safeguard for us when we are lured into temptation. The consistent report of those who have fallen into temptation is that they isolated themselves from other believers and were not held accountable by their Christian companions. An ember removed from the fire soon grows cold. Again, you make the difference. Your presence here is important to encouraging others who may be flagging in their faith, or struggling through a tough time. Your involvement in a class, or Bible study, or prayer group, or some ministry is important to others who need support and hope. And you will need that also.]

***God Has Designed the Church To Be Made of Many Parts***

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

We are called to support each other. “As each one does its part, the body grows in love.” The church is one of the few places left in our society that invites people to work together for someone and something greater than the individual, without devaluing each individual. The body of Christ is one of the few places where people *freely* give of their time, money, and their energy to common goals.

Why do you make a difference? Because God has planned it that way and made us that way. Each person in the body of Christ makes a difference.

***God Designed Us So That We Each Have An Important Place in the Body of Christ***

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”

Discovering Membership class – we are all “ministers” at FUMC

Stewardship emphasis – pick up last week’s them of each part of the body is significant. Each person in the church makes a difference.

Spiritual gifts are given to members for service to the body of Christ; “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Paul uses “build up” in way that says mutual love should govern relationships among members of the church. Mother Theresa said this: “God does not ask us to do great things; but to do little things with great love.” Although the particular offices refer to those who lead the church, Ephesians assumes that all Christians are part of the building process... each person doing his or her part builds up the body of Christ.

God chooses ordinary people for ministry so they will depend on His power, not their own. God equips you and me to carry out His mission. God does not call the equipped but equips the called. What’s the number one requirement for being in God’s service? Availability! That means saying “yes” I’ll answer God’s call to be one of His workers.

so that “we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Maturity involves the whole church, not just individuals. Of course all the individuals raise the average maturity of the body – so each member is very important to the health of the whole body. That is one reason we have our four core classes – to foster Christian maturity among our members and to build up the body of Christ at First Church.

God has designed the church so that what each person does makes a difference  
The give and grow principle: practicing stewardship produces growth.

Some say, “Dedicate the heart and the money will follow.” But Our Lord put it the other way around. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” If your treasure is dedicated, your heart will be dedicated. If it is not, it simply won’t. It is as simple as that.” (*Stewardship*, G. Timothy Johnson)

Practicing stewardship enables people to . . .

- Find their spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12)
- Increase their faith (Malachi 3:10)
- Become spiritually sensitive (Malachi 3:8-10)
- Be fruitful in God’s kingdom (Matt. 25:14-30)
- Receive blessings from God (Malachi 3:10-12)
- Be a blessing to others (Acts 6:30; Gal. 6:10)
- Make a lasting contribution to God (Matt. 6:20)

The same principle applies to our faith and our attitudes. That is why the Bible teaches us about the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control

The longer I study the Bible the clearer it becomes to me that Jesus invited, and still invites us to surrender our lives and living to Him; surrender it all. Walking together with God into the future let us recall the blessings we have received. Throughout the generations God has given us, Strength, Faith, Love, His Power, His Church (see Ephesians 3:16-21). God asks in return that we make all our days count by giving of our treasure and our time. There's our treasure: not all have been given the same but all can give generously from what they have. There are some in the church who have the gift of giving – that's one of the spiritual gifts. They just want and need to find a way to give more. Now I know someone (or maybe more) with the gift of giving is in this congregation. He or she, or they, might be in this room right now. You might even be one of those with the gift of giving and you don't know it yet. The point is God supplies the needs of His church through us - through those with the gift of giving *and* through the combined generosity of us all. We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.

The theme of one body, many parts is found throughout Paul's writing:

1 Cor 12:20-24 12:20 So now there are many members, but one body. 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor in turn can the head say to the foot, "I do not need you." 12:22 On the contrary, those members that seem to be weaker are essential, 12:23 and those members we consider less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our unrepresentable members are clothed with dignity, 5 12:24 but our presentable members do not need this. Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, 12:25 so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another.

b. Romans 12:5, 6, 10 12:5 so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another. 12:6 And we have different gifts <sup>8</sup> according to the grace given to us. 12:10 Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another.