

1 Corinthians 12:12-27
Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam
October, 2023

What does it mean to be a member of a Christian church? Many people believe that if you just have your name on a church membership list, that you are automatically safe and are heaven bound.. But church membership means more than that.

Christians are encouraged to hear God's Word faithfully, to hear about our Savior, Jesus. Our Lord wants the church to use the Law to guide its members and correct them when they sin. Our Lord wants us to use the Gospel to comfort sinners and encourage them in their lives. God's Word and the use of the Sacraments are important for a healthy church. In a world full of the disease called sin, we want to be spiritually healthy.

Healthy Christians believe that Jesus Christ, God's Son, became a human being, lived a holy life for us, and died a terrible death to pay for sins. Because of Jesus we are going to heaven. Because of Jesus, we look forward to a fantastic future!

But we have to be careful; Satan works hard to lead us away from our Savior. So make God's Word a priority and the use of Baptism and the Lord's Supper a priority as well.

The congregation in Corinth, was not a spiritually strong group of people. That church had major problems! Those believers were struggling to keep the faith and practice what they believed. Paul wrote to those believers to strengthen and encourage them. Paul's advice was: Let's Build a Strong body!

Good Shepherd is a body of believers. This church is made up of many different individuals who place their faith in Jesus as their Savior. We commit ourselves to our Lord and we use our talents [*gifts abilities*] to serve each other and to build up God's Church. To emphasize the idea that we, as a church are one in faith but many in talents, Paul uses the picture of a human body.

The human body has many different parts and they function amazingly well. Every part of the body is useful. For a long time medical science thought that you didn't need your appendix. But research has found that the appendix helps the body fight infection. Science now recognizes what God's Word has known all along, every body part has a purpose.

Just as the human body is united, so is Christ's body, the Church. We have one purpose as members, to build up the church.

Jesus was not the Savior for just some people; He is the Savior of all people; young or old, rich or poor, white or black or red, female or male. Believers receive the same gift of eternal life. But every believer does not have the same gifts or abilities. We are united in faith but have different talents. Different abilities does not mean inferior abilities.

Paul wrote, Suppose a foot says, "I'm not a hand, and so I'm not a part of the body" it is still a part of the body. Or suppose an ear says, "I'm not an eye, and so I'm not a part of the body" it is still a part of the body. Are your feet jealous of your hands? Are your ears jealous of your eyes? No, the body doesn't work that way. Little children might argue on the playground and take their ball and go home if things don't go their way, but body parts won't do that.

Sometimes things happen in a congregation because people didn't get their way on some issue. Those members might stop coming, stop giving, and leave the congregation. This does not happen among the parts of the body. They won't quit!

What if you saw a six-foot eyeball rolling down the street? That would be scary! What could that eyeball say? How could it eat? How could it think? It couldn't! How useless parts of the body are - by themselves! A giant eye would see everything, but could do nothing! Good Shepherd needs its members to carry out God's will using the blessings God gave them. God made us all different so we could complement one another!

It would not be good to be member of a church of one. It is better for us to be part of a family of believers who love the Lord Jesus and serve Him and others willingly. We are all different and we all have different talents! We are important and the gift(s) we have are important. We might think that an eye is more important than a toe, but in the church everyone is important; after all, Jesus died for each of us, we are very important!.

In a congregation leaders are necessary, but followers are necessary, too. The church needs both generals and privates.

God has arranged the parts of the body in the best possible way. The eyes, ears, arms, legs, lungs and brain are where they are for greatest efficiency. The body was put together according to God's plan. It works well. The body of Christ (Church) was put together with a plan. God has gathered people together here at Good Shepherd with special talents to build up the Church.

The eyes and head do not despise lower body parts like hands and feet. Members at Good Shepherd don't despise others either. The parts of the body work together when there is a need!. When my head has a sinus problem, it needs the feet to take my head to the doctor.

Remember the time you bumped your little toe on your bed at night? Your toe hurts; it is difficult to walk. Even though an insignificant body part is hurt, the whole body suffers. Did you know that without your service here, Good Shepherd suffers in some way.

If one body part is honored, the body is happy. If you say to your daughter, "You have pretty eyes", you honor her and she is pleased. If a husband said to his wife, "Honey, you look beautiful today!" she will be very happy. The human body works that way naturally. Every part honors another. The body of Christ should work that way spiritually. When one Christian suffers, other Christians suffer. When one Christian is happy, other Christians are happy.

Remember: we are all in this together! We have a common Savior, a common faith, and a common goal. We are winners because of Jesus; there are no losers!

I really like our first reading today from Exodus. It takes us back to the time of the building of the Tabernacle, the tent-church of Old Testament Israel. The people were asked to bring their gifts so that the Tabernacle could be built. You heard what happened. The people gave and gave more. Then skilled people like Bezalel and Oholiab trained others to help build the Tabernacle. The response was overwhelming! Moses had to say, "We have enough! Don't bring anymore!"

Friends, we are different. That's not bad. We all have at least one gift that God gave us. Use your talent. Good Shepherd needs you! Serving Jesus is one way we can thank Him for all He did for us! How can you serve? With your time, talents, and treasures. You can pray for others, encourage others, or visit the home-bound.

Jesus died for you; He died for me. That's makes us brothers and sisters in the faith. We care for each other. We pray for each other. We cry tears of joy or tears of sorrow for one another. You are important to me. I hope I am important to you. We are members of God's family and we look forward to a wonderful life together with our Savior.

Good Shepherd is much like this puzzle. Each puzzle piece is different in shape and often different in color. Each piece is needed in order to finish the puzzle. Each piece fits in only one place.

Let's say that each piece of this puzzle represents a member of Good Shepherd. When God is finished working with us, we will be a beautiful sight.