1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.

Last weekend we had the installation of our Church Council officers. We are always grateful for the men who step up to serve the Lord and of course our prayers are with them as they will spend the next year performing their various duties. But if you would, let me share with you a portion of what it was that the members of our Church Council promised to do. The fourth paragraph read this way: *“You are to assist the pastor in the care of the sick and the needy, in the cultivation of peace, harmony, and love among the members, in the promotion of the general welfare of the congregation, and in the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom at home and abroad.”* I think those are striking words, important words for all of us to contemplate and hear. I think those words ring out for me all the more as we look at and contemplate the words of the text that is before us.

When you look at all the words of the Lord that are before us today it is rather clear that one of the things going on is that the Lord is very concerned with the harmony and unity of the Church. So the Lord has given the Apostle Paul a rather unique way of getting that lesson across to us. The Lord has Paul use a rather interesting and very pointed illustration for this lesson. The Lord has Paul reference the human body and how it operates. The premise is rather simple as our opening words tell us: **“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all it parts are many, they form one body.”** I think there are great lessons here for us not only in the church but even in society at large. Let’s contemplate these words under the theme: **COME TOGETHER.**

So let’s just start with the basic premise that is laid out in that opening verse we just heard. But what is the lesson you heard? Did you hear the idea that we are many parts or did you hear the idea that we are one unit? Seriously, you have to know the answer to that because your answer is going to determine your bent and understanding. If you simply focus on the many parts, the idea of parts, individual parts and with that thus focus on a part, clamoring for the part’s rights, honor and equal share then that is going to have an impact on your life. If you focus on the unity and only that, then you might be inclined to ignore and forget the many parts because as far as you are concerned the unity, the whole, is the only thing that counts. Well, I want to tell you that if you think either way, then you would be wrong.

You are wrong because it is clear that the lesson here is that both are equal and both are important. The body is a unit, but it is many parts. And you can’t have a body unless the many parts form that body. In other words, you can’t focus on one or the other. You need to grasp that the parts and the unit must work together at all times for the greater good.

Now bear with me for a moment because I want to tell you that I think this idea and teaching of God’s Word has an impact not only on the church but also on society. God is concerned with unity, with the parts having unity, with the unity understanding that the many parts are important. The importance of this is felt in every aspect of our lives. It is felt in the church. It is felt in our homes. It is felt in our society.

Consider then verses 14-21, really the verses that make us consider and weigh the application of this truth that God wants us “parts” to have unity. **“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’’**

Wow, those words give us lots to think about. Consider your body. What if you were just an eyeball, what good would that be? How would you get around? How would you eat? How would you even learn anything because you are an eyeball not a brain! All you could ever do is see and I might add see in one direction the very same thing all the time because you are an eyeball, you have no feet or hands or anything to move you about. So, you realize then that you need the other parts, you need each other to be a functioning body, a body working as a unit…my, oh my, the things we can do and accomplish!

Because of the way our bodies work think of the wonders we do. Think of the parts of the body used to make a basketball shot and then think of what some of the professional players today can do as they make their shots, driving to the basket, a flip behind the back, a few twirls around the body, all while jumping in the air, then banking that ball off the backboard and into the net. Seriously I have seen some moves and you just have to watch it again because you can’t figure out how it could be done!

Or think of playing an instrument. Any instrument really. The coordination between eyes, hands, fingers, mouth and tongue depending on which instrument you play. There is not a single one of us here who does not appreciate and feel awed when we get to see and hear someone playing on a professional level no matter what instrument it is. Our bodies, the many parts working together, can accomplish great things and at times it is an absolutely beautiful thing.

And just to make you think all the more, think of the people you know who have a handicap or so and yet that person has accomplished great and wonderful things. For me, I remember being absolutely awed by Stevie Wonder and how that blind man learned to sing and play like nobody’s business. Or have you seen the ad for Shaquem Griffin, the first one handed player in the NFL. He was drafted by the Seattle Seahawks in 2018 and this season played in 16 games making 11 tackles. He will tell you his motto in life, given to him by his dad is: “Nothing comes easy.” A young man to be admired. I am pretty sure you know someone who achieved something great or has been able to overcome the obstacles of life.

So it is clear that the body working as a unit, all the parts doing their thing, is a blessing and benefit to all of us. But we are not really talking about the body, the human body. Our text is just an illustration of what the church is, verse 27 says **“Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.”**

Clearly the greatest application of this text is for the church. The Church is made up of many parts, that’s you and me. We are like a body, composed of parts and each part has a job to do. Not every part is visible or big. Not every part seems important or influential. But when we work together, when we function in the way that God gave us, then we serve the Lord and his glory.

Initially I had a whole section here speaking of what your role may be, but I dumped that for these words. I did that because I think God’s Word a better thing to think of. While we recognize that the words of our OT text were about Jesus, we can still grasp that these words can also be what we are about. As I share with you those words, think of how they so clearly fit this text. “**The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.”** The thing is we all have a part to do. We all are to help and be the light of Christ to our world.

The warning of the Lord is that we need to be careful not to forget our role or to forget our need for each other. That’s why we find the words here that say, **“The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"…If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”**

What does all of this mean for us as a church? Well, we work together in Christ. First, we remember that we are gathered here because of the wonder and marvel of what Jesus is and has done. We grasp He is God’s Son sent to be our Savior. We grasp that Jesus went to the cross to suffer and die for our sins…and we recognize that we do sin and sometimes that sin is against each other or affects those around us. We grasp that forgiveness of sins that Jesus has given us and simply because of his awesome love and gift to us we become different. We are a people who serve him. We follow His Word not yielding a jot or tittle of His truth in any way. We share his love and concern for the all the parts of this body, whether the head, ear, eye, foot, big toe, mouth or underarm!

We are united in the wonder of Jesus and thus we work to share this awesome message of Jesus. To tell everyone the joy of His salvation and the wonder of his love. To tell everyone that our faith is not about being and doing the right thing but our faith is about the fact that Jesus has done and is the right thing for us. That is what underlies all that we are and do. We are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.

But please, recognize that the principle of parts and unity also apply to our homes. What good is it for husband and wife to have the attitude, “I don’t need you?” Or even for parents and children to be fighting against each other and making life miserable. Don’t you see, to recognize our diversity and yet our unity is so important. A family is a unit of love with many members and to practice love, compassion, kindness and service with each other is absolutely important.

And in our society? Don’t you realize that the political climate today is that we be divided? And what a mess it is making of our society. As if the rich are not needed or as if the poor should not be acknowledged or helped. Instead of one nation functioning together, we are allowing ourselves to be divided by our “special need” or our important cause. Yet, in truth everyone is hurt when we don’t work together. The country suffers when we forget that we need each other and should help and support each other. The problem is that our country, unlike our homes and our church are not united in Christ our Savior. So the only thing to unite us as a nation is the fact that we are Americans, united under our laws concerned for our people.

Now, just a bit more of a lesson for us. Do you remember that Jesus himself taught…**:If your hand offends you, cut it off…if your eyes offends you pluck it out.”** I think we also need to consider the lesson of Jesus there for us too. When a part of the body begins to become destructive to the body it needs to be removed. When a foreign object or a germ enters our body we need to remove and eliminate that thing before great damage is done. It is the way the body works. In other words, sometimes surgery or sometime the right medication needs to be applied to keep the body going, especially if the bodies natural systems are not working right.

So what is the great lesson for us? I wanted to mention the division being caused in our society because I do believe it is important to think about, but in truth, my main concern is for our homes and our Church. The plea here is that we stick with Jesus. The key here is that we realize our individual selves can and are to help and work with each other for a common good. Loving homes serve us better. A loving congregation, set on the foundations and wonder of Jesus serve us better. God so loved us that He sent Jesus to atone for us and make us a part of his family or as today’s text tells us, makes us a part of his body. Let’s then serve the Lord. Let’s consider how we may spur one another on in love. Let’s consider how to encourage and lift each other up in every way possible so that our Savior shine forth. Let’s all have the before us the role that our Council members took on: *“You are to assist the pastor in the care of the sick and the needy, in the cultivation of peace, harmony, and love among the members, in the promotion of the general welfare of the congregation, and in the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom at home and abroad.”* Here is the lesson before us. The lesson of our united love and salvation in Jesus. Amen.