

Sermon 24 January 2016

Luke 4:14-21 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a 'The Body at Work'

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord.

*1' The readings this week offer a range of options for themes. There is the word of God, revealed in creation and through the book of the law. There is the mission of Christ proclaimed in his reading of the scroll from Isaiah. And there is the call for us to be the body of Christ, working together with each part taking his or her place. All of these ideas come together in the theme of purpose and call. We are all recipients of God's calling word, and we are all called to participate in Christ's mission. To do this work, we need to collaborate and each take our place in the body.' Cv

Chaos theory of mathematics says that when a butterfly has just one flap of its wings in ... say Canada, our life – even right here – in this church is forever changed. Chaos theory is hard to 'see' in reality – but those who work in that field say it is a truth of our world. The invisible is true, even when we can't see or touch it. So it is with our faith, **and what** Paul was writing about to the people of Corinth about belonging to one another in Christ.

We belong to each other – **with** each other **and in** this community **for** each other because God has brought us together to be here and now. We are blessed for we have no slaves among us, but certainly do have people of different ethnicities, cultures, customs, upbringing, churches, schooling, we are so different - but we belong to each other, for **God has brought** us together.

We belong: as people who know what it is to be shattered into a thousand pieces; as a people who **know** betrayal, hunger, distortions, love, acceptance, success, redundancy, pain, triumph, tears of hurt and joy... **God has brought us together because** we are needed to firstly minister to one another with the gifts of compassion, love, service, education, business skill, And so liberate one another into our 'best'. A *lifelong task*... **BUT also** we have been brought together because we are needed to minister to our community – to those outside our fellowship, and our faith community. To achieve both we have been given one another because together we can do it.

If you are sitting there thinking: '*her/ him but not me*' wrong! Sitting on your hands means the whole body misses out. That's one of the *kind of things* Paul was trying to say to his original listeners. The diversity of people and gifts in this room **God means to exist, here and now**. But not for us to do nothing with! **All of us are important**; loud and quiet, scared and happy / successful business people and great parents / good at English and good at Mandarin / cooking / tweets / Philipino / mechanics / Afrikaans / management / dos / Australian ☺... Cv

Another thing Paul was trying to tell the people of Corinth was that the differences are not to be used to rank people in importance. He was teaching this in a context of teaching about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Like last week, this list is specific to the issue he was writing about; so we have the gifts of apostleship, prophecy, teaching, miracles, healing, helping / servers, administrators, tongues and interpretation. The diversity of gifts is very important, but ranking them in significance is a no-no / is bad!

Paul used what was one of the models of his day to take an 'idea', something invisible and make it real in front of us. We all know about 'bodies', we use our every day! Mostly we ignore them – our hands know what to do – our lungs move in and out and we breathe – and stay alive!!!! One thing we also know – *without any doubt* – and that is when our body stops working properly. Pain is the first message it sends into our conscious mind to communicate... Again something invisible but very real!

And so Paul teaches the community of faith is an invisible belonging – but very real – and actually even in the Body of faith – when it is not working properly pain is the usual result! Pain of heart, soul, mind... As a minister, one of the hardest pains I have to witness is when a member of the Body of faith is in pain

*1 Sacradise

because the Body of faith has not worked properly – and a soul is hurt, feels neglected, not appreciated, not accepted, treated as if they are inferior, excluded... Ouch. No matter the cause, self-inflicted or not.

What we are not good at is speaking out, identifying the pain cause **and dealing** openly / honestly / with love and compassion. All too often we allow it / excuse it / ignore it... And sometimes this allows an individual to control the belief / faith / outward expression of our 'Bodies' faith. I am not convinced this is the best action to take and suspect Paul would growl. You see, we do not belong to an individual member's body – eg, mine- Lorraine's. **We are Christ's Body** – it is only in "Him" – in our baptism into HIM that we belong together. NO one else will do. Christ makes the rules of what is good and the best for us, of what it means to belong – not any one individual (s) with a gift (gifts) for....

Paul was really struggling with this for the 'Body of Christ at Corinth'. They were claiming because they were gifted with 'XX' gift they were better... or naturally should be the ones to... or – we don't *actually* know the 'what'; **we do** know they were making some of the 'Body' second class / poorer / not important... And Paul said – that's not the way **Christ's Body** works – for itself or for the world.

We belong to this invisible 'Body' of **Christ** – therefore our greatest model is Christ himself. How did he work for himself- and in the world? I believe there are clues are in the Luke readings for us. In Luke's story Jesus is fresh from his time in the wilderness – had you ever wondered the words of Luke? **Vs 14** 'Jesus returned to Galilee **in the power of the Spirit**', but – where was he returning from?

Vs 13: "When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time." **As tough** as it is to experience a 'wilderness' of faith and life, Jesus returned full of the Spirit of God! When all else is stripped away, like we sang in the verses from Job last week, we can praise, because God is left alone with us and being empty of all else, we are ready to be filled with God's spirit/ praise/ gifts *like Jesus*.

The best thing we can do for ourselves is keep ourselves in faith in Christ – deep in him by faith, with faith, trust, and others around holding us up when we stumble; because when in Christ we are in the **best** place to remain full of the Spirit, the power and presence of God, *like Jesus*.

Luke tells us that Jesus **vs 16** , **Jesus** went to the Synagogue "*as was his custom*". **Jesus went to Church** – even when he didn't agree, disputed their interpretations, the way they exercised their faith, ... because the Synagogue / church is not God, just one place we can meet up with God **and meet** with the visible parts of the Body of faith – with all it's fantastic gifts and **not-working pain**.

In the Synagogue Jesus was recognised as a preacher / teacher / gifted in this area and in the countryside they had all been praising him. But on this day of days, in the Synagogue he was allowed to stand and take the teaching scroll of the day (not his choice of 'book, *just text within it*), select and read out his text, **sit down** and teach so well that their eyes were fastened on him. Can you see it? This home boy from Nazareth – made good? The silence of their expectation's in the air? What would he do? Say?

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

'**The Spirit of the Lord**' – not in his own power, strength, self but in the Lord's. **Jesus** starts not with his own self – but in the Lord, his God and Father. And it is not for his own self-glory or power or protection... but to preach Good News to the quiet, painful, shy, & voiceless... to be the glue for those shattered by life, to set free those bound and made prisoners etc.

The Spirit is to be used for others 'good', healing, freedom... The invisible of God was visible in Jesus body – for the good of others. Paul says we **are in Christ** – **in his body** for the good of others. Let's make the body work! Amen.