

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

“The is One Body”

This morning we dive back into the Book of Ephesians and as I have been hinting at for several months now, in chapter four we are going to be speaking a great deal about unity...

Paul will speak of the one body, the one Spirit, the one hope, he will speak of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, along with one God and Father of all...

- **And these considerations come at a very timely point in our nation today!**

Before the shut-down we looked at Psalm 133 as a picture of unity and those following our reading schedule on the church calendars would have come to that Psalm just yesterday!

I pointed out that Psalm 133 ended by saying that God commanded a blessing related to the two images of oil running down Aaron’s beard and dew in the morning?

We saw that both related to God’s care: His care over all of creation & His people!

We thought about a morning where you look out over the country side and everything looks so fresh and new with a morning dew sent by God.

- **All is brought together in unity under that dew!**

Or the time before the coming of Jesus, when the High Priest was the center of God’s salvation for His people and that oil was the sign of God’s blessing upon the man that would lead His people:

- **One man who united all of God’s people under His care.**
- **Thus, in that very short Psalm we are reminded of God’s care over the entire Creation and all of His people!**
- **We are to know and believe that God’s Spirit continues to guard and care for all of Creation and His people, the Body of Christ.**

And I believe that is why the Apostle Paul begins his list of unities with the One Body.

- **The Body of Christ, His beloved Bride.**

We must also remember that the Apostle Paul is going to speak about two types of unity here in chapter four:

- **A unity that we are to keep and a unity that we are to strive for.**

There are things that are given and there are things that must be worked out, just we saw with our own salvation when we considered faith and works in the earlier chapters of this Epistle or our much earlier study of James.

- **We are saved by Grace through faith, and we are called to walk in the good works we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in.**

We are never to doubt our salvation because it is God Who has saved us, but we are to always be striving to walk more faithfully with Christ.

When we consider the state of the Church, the Body of Christ, today it may seem a bridge too far to discuss either given unity or even a hoped for unity...

- But again we must remember that God knows where history is going and has given us information in both His Word and Church history to help us along.

It should not surprise us to see problems in our church or the broader church today because when we look at Epistles like I Corinthians & Galatians or the letters to the Churches in Revelation, we see that right out the gate there were problems with unity in the Church!

So, as we begin, there is a basic question to ask: When Paul speaks of one Body, what body is he referring to? A human body? My car's body? One of the heavenly bodies?

A political body, like the State Assembly?

Of course we know from the context that he is referring to the Body of Christ, but it reminds us that basic questions can be important, especially when teaching younger people!

But first we must understand the Nature & importance of the one body and we see that clearly in the opening chapter of Colossians where we find Paul as he did for the Ephesians praying for these Saints...

Colossians 1: "9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work & increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

- So we are in the light, the Kingdom and yes the one Body...
- We should remember to pray such prayers one for another!

And of course as Paul continues we learn that the story and all of creation is about Jesus! 15 "[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."

- Who is the head of the one Body... It is Jesus and that is what we should always keep in mind!
- We are to be one body united in Christ and His work!
- BUT the Church today is hopelessly divided!

We should all be familiar with the struggles in the Church at Corinth and most of them revolved around divisions rather than unity. And yet it is in this Epistle we see where the Apostle Paul give his broadest instructions about being the one Body:

I Corinthian 12 :12 “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

- **We should note that the one body has many members, just as we learned that the One God is Three Persons.**
- **The fact that there is one Body does not diminish the members, but it also reminds us that we are all in this together [yes there is some truth in Governor Newsome’s statement!]**

The Apostle Paul then uses the actual human body to teach us about how all of this works...

15 “If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And 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 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.”

Paul goes on to compare various parts and then reminds us in verse 26 that, “if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

- **Again, a unity and diversity that is intended to reflect the very Nature of our Triune God that we considered at some length last week!**

So, what are the responsibilities of the members of this body? Paul will give us much to consider as we continue on in Ephesians, but for this morning let me turn to some familiar passages in Romans 12: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”

- **Some might tell us that the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Scriptures and is a manmade doctrine and yet they fail to see how often the Spirit returns us to the important concept of the one and the many!**

The Apostle then digs into the details. At verse 6, the Apostle tells us there are various gifts and to use them! He then gives us all this challenge:

9 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. [we certainly have seen the time for weeping!]

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

-- Obedience in our everyday lives! -- Schaeffer’s revolving door example

Many walls have crumbled in our modern age and are in need of repair!

As we ponder that fact I will commend to you that bit of homework that I mentioned...

My first exegetical series of sermons was from the Books of Ezra & Nehemiah. When we came to chapter 3 of Nehemiah we found a whole lot of details that helped us learn about the one Body of Christ.

- **We found it to be one of the best examples in the Scripture of how being one body works out in regular everyday life!**

The Book of Nehemiah centers around the rebuilding of the walls at Jerusalem: Chapter 3 is the overview of the work and at the time I put together a worksheet with a map of the city wall and the text from Chapter 3. I provided copies again this morning with some notes so you can study this individually and perhaps use it in some family devotions.

When you do, also remember that chapters 4-6 give further details:

Opposition from without

Turmoil from within

More opposition: “Sword & Trowel”

Completion of the work!

Two truths should stand out: Gifts & talents are given by the Spirit, just as we see in the teachings of Paul. Gifts & talents are to be used for the work of the Body, just as we are challenged to do by the Apostle. Most often God’s work is accomplished as each of us does his or her part:

- **For His purposes, God needed a city with walls, character and stability so Jesus could come at His appointed time.**

Today we strive for families, churches and nations that have walls, character and stability.

As each of us consider what our role will be in the coming week, I will leave you with a last bit of encouragement that the Apostle Paul gives those Saints in the city of Colossi, and of course all the rest of us down through Church history...

Colossians 3:14 “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Communion meditation:

I Corinthians 10: 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

The one and the many... Partaking TOGETHER!