

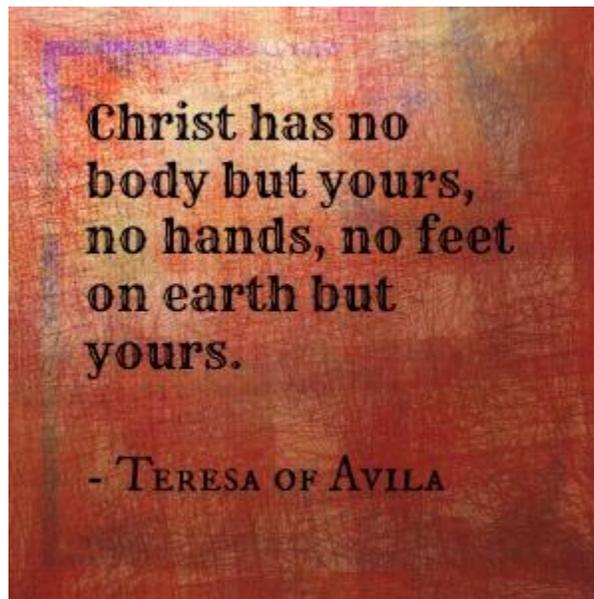
Aldersgate UMC of Butte, MT
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Sunday, January 23, 2022

Message

Spiritual Gifts, Part II

Pastor Matthias



Several decades ago, I had a shift in my way of being with this one single quote: Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.” Say that with me: “Christ Has No Body But Yours, no feet on earth but yours.” In others words, we are his body! If you remember nothing else from this message, please remember these words.

When we decided to follow Jesus and to become a part of the body of Christ, for some of us anyway, it was a leap of faith, was it not?



When we make a decision to become a follower of Jesus, we are committing to exercising our spiritual gifts in our community. Furthermore, the relationship we develop with God through Christ propels us into ministry. The deeper our relationship with God, the more natural it is to simply serve by exercising our spiritual gifts in the community.

Paul's analogy of the human body working together is a pretty apt illustration of what it means for the body of Christ to live in *harmony* with one another. Any church who claims they are just one big happy family is in denial. All families have issues to work through. Like a family, we must work through our issues, our miscommunications, our frustrations, our pet peeves, our disappointments, our conflicts and at times even our anger. Unless we work through them and have the courage to talk with one another, these issues will fester like an infection. And when the body is infected, it infects our way of being with each other. Therefore, the body is in need of healing. I pray that each and everyone of you will have the courage to confront one another in love when issues and conflicts arise.

Just as Paul's analogy of the human body ought to work in harmony with one another, we too, as the body of Christ need to live and work in harmony with one another. Said another way in verse 26:



So the 64,000 dollar question is how are we doing in caring for one another as the body of Christ? Which members are suffering?

My perception is that when members are suffering due to illness or death in the family, this church reaches out to them in a variety of ways.

However, when conflict arises, it seems that many folks are allergic to dealing with conflict. In other words, by and large, people do not like conflict. I don't like conflict either, but working through conflict can bring us closer. Yes, it is true, conflict can drive us apart, but where there is honor and respect, conflict can bring us closer together.

Something mystical can happen when we share with each other what is troubling us or what is hurting us. Listen to what the gospel of Matthew has to say about this:

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
Matthew 5:23-24 ESV



If a congregation is to fully live out its calling as well as its vision, it is essential that we resolve internal conflicts. Otherwise, the congregation remains infected with internal strife and unable to fully live out its mission. For the most part, this congregation is fairly healthy. However, just as there are issues within families, there are issues that need to be addressed here at Aldersgate. One of them being that voices are being stifled and not being heard. On several occasions I have heard as well as witnessed voices being stifled and not being heard. Each of you has a voice and I am asking each of you to do something very simple when your voice is not being heard. And just what is this very simple gesture?

Remember, when attending school, in order to talk in class what did we have to do? That's right! We had to raise our hand and be recognized. I am asking you that if you want to be a healthy congregation where every one's voice is being heard, sometimes, you may need to raise your hand and be recognized. This means that in ministry team meetings, in committee meetings in men's group, in choir, in Ad Council, in SPRC, in Trustees, in Finance meetings, if you do not feel your voice is being heard, raise your hand and I am going to trust that each leader will listen respectfully to your concern.

When a church truly listens to one another respectfully, then the church can move from discipleship to apostleship because in part they are living by the both the Golden Rule as well as the Platinum Rule:

Golden Rule versus Platinum Rule	
Golden Rule	Platinum Rule
Treat people the way YOU want to be treated	Treat people the way THEY want to be treated

There is a slight difference comparing the Golden Rule to the Platinum Rule as illustrated here. Pause here for a moment and feel the difference.

Now, as we live into a new way of being as the body of Christ where all parts of the body are living in harmony with one another, the church can move beyond discipleship into Apostleship! As you may or may not remember the disciples who were students of the Master became apostles for Christ. As apostles of Christ, they became ambassadors of Christ:

From discipleship to apostleship

Ambassador

Anointed

Appointed

Authorized

Accountable

As ambassadors of Christ, they were anointed and they were appointed to go beyond discipleship into apostleship. They were authorized to be representatives of this renewal movement within Judaism. Not only were they authorized, they were going to be held accountable in this movement of sharing the good news of the kingdom. This is where God's sanctifying grace comes into play as we are striving to live and love in harmony as the body of Christ.

In verse 3 of our hymn of preparation says:

As Christ Breaks Bread And Bids Us Share,
Each Proud Division Ends;
The Love That Made Us, Makes Us One,
And Strangers Now Are Friends.

Let us pray: Oh gracious and everlasting God, who empowers us with spiritual gifts for the building of the body of Christ. May we live each day with open hearts and open minds how the Spirit will indeed empower us to be who we are called to be and to do what we are called to do. May we have the courage to face conflict head on, assertively and respectfully, so that the body of Christ will live in harmony with one another in bringing the kingdom of God to earth.

In your name we pray, Amen and so be it!