

It is amazing how two cells can come together within the womb of a mother. The cells grow and multiply into a heart that pumps blood, legs that kick the sidewalls of the womb, lungs that will breath air, a digestive system that will process food, and a complex brain and neurological system that makes even the fastest computer appear to operating at a snail's pace. After nine months the baby comes into the world with eyes that see, ears that hear and a digestive system that works, vocal cords that let the whole world know, "I am here and I need help." How true are the words of the psalmist David, "For you create my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

As amazing as the human body is in all its functions including the complexity of each individual cell, the human body cannot compare to the complexity that exists in the body of Christ, his church, his people, who have him as their head. We are told in the words just read to you that "God has arranged the parts in the body, everyone one of them, just as he wanted them to be." Yes, dear Christian, you are the body of Christ and Jesus is your head. He has put us into different positions and given us different gifts to build each other up and strengthen each other. It truly amazes us and causes us to say, Wow!" Jesus manages, even micro manages, our lives individually, and helps us work together as a team. You Are The Body of Christ!

The Apostle Paul could've written to the Corinthians some really flattering words. "Corinthians, you are marvelous. You are talented people!" But Paul didn't because there was some discord going on in the Corinthian Church. You see there were members in the church who wanted power and control. They wanted things to go according to their way of thinking, and if they didn't, they caused a stink. The members in Corinth were jockeying for glory and they were using their Holy Spirit given gifts as leverage against other believers. "You only hand out food to the poor widows, but I host the worship services in my house." "You only open up the scrolls of scripture to the correct place, but I lead the congregation in prayer and Bible study." Paul warns against this sinful self-glorification by explaining that all gifts, all jobs within the church are needed for the church to function properly just as all the parts of the body are needed for the body to function properly.

That's why Paul came up with this analogy for the Corinthians, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, and though its parts are many, they form one body. Think of how your body works as a unit. You are walking down a dark alley at night. Your ears pick up a rattling sound like the sound of keys. Your brain tells you this is probably not the sound of keys, but a dog with collar and nametag. Your eyes peer into the darkness. You see a dog coming down the alley, a very large dog. Adrenalin pumps in your body and you must make a choice. Run and jump the fence or find a piece of board to defend yourself. Because you are young you decide to run and jump the fence. Your legs start running, you leap up, grab the top of the fence with your hands and pull yourself over to safety on the other side as the dog is ready to bite the back of you leg. This was all possibly because your body is one unit made up of individual parts. In the Christian church there are no solo Christians. We are all connected together as part of Christ's body with Jesus as our head. We are united in our daily struggle against the devil. Scripture describes him not as a mean dog, but a roaring lion looking for people to devour.

How amazing it is that we are a body attached to Jesus as our head. "So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and were all given the one Spirit to drink." You were not born into this world attached to Christ.

Ephesians 2 says, “At one time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world.” Without Jesus we are without a head, we are dead and without life, lost forever. But God the Father didn’t hold back. He did send his one and only Son that whoever believes in him (that’s you) shall not perish but have eternal life! God the Father saw you as a very important person—important enough to send his Son to die for your sins.

Have good cheer! God the Son did not hold back. He knew he had the ability to die for the sins of the world, and although it was a big commitment, he did it. God the Son saw you as a very important person—important enough to go through hell on the cross so you’d never go there yourself. And God’s not done yet! God the Holy Spirit did not hold back either. He saw you as a very important person—important enough to work faith into your heart making you a dear child of God. And he wasn’t done yet. The Holy Spirit has given you (just as we heard at the beginning of this sermon) wonderfully unique gifts to use for God’s glory. We are now called by God to use our gifts of time, talents and treasure to advance the gospel ministry here at Open Bible Lutheran Church.

Because Jesus is our head, and we are his body, we enjoy an equality with each other. “Whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free.” We were baptized by the one Spirit into one body. There are no second rate or second class citizens in the kingdom of God. We all ride first class with Jesus as our head.

Because you are part of the body of Christ you can never claim that you have no importance and no value to other members of the body of Christ. “If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for the same 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 be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear where would the sense of smell be.” Do you get the point Paul is making here? You cannot say because I do not have the gifts that other Christians have I have no value to the body of Christ. The strength of the body is the individual parts that make up a whole. It is great to have good eyes, but what value would there be in having a body with one big eye.

A youth pastor was trying to teach his youth group about the body of Christ and how it works together from these words of 1 Corinthians 12. He took a football, painted it to look like a large eye, and wrapped it into a baby blanket. During the class, he paused and said, “Would you like to see my baby?” Then he opened up the blanket and from the blanket this large eye was looking out at the group. One girl said, “Gross. That’s terrible.” Then he said, “What if you had a girl friend and took her out to lunch and she was just this big eye, sitting on the table, staring at you?”

Gross. That’s terrible. How ugly the body of Christ would be if it were not made up of carefully created parts, people like you and mine, with a variety of different spiritual gifts, different backgrounds of life, different circumstances of life, all coming together and creating one beautiful body. Martin Luther wrote in his Small Catechism: “Christ has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and innocent sufferings and death, that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting

righteousness, innocence and blessedness.” Jesus bought you, ransomed you. You are his body, his new creation, to serve him with the gifts the Lord give you, and to be there for each other in the body of Christ. It is truly amazing what Jesus has made us considering where we would be without him, and how he makes us different so that we can be there for each other.

The Lord calls us into his kingdom and makes us part of his body. Then he gives us individual gifts and arranges us in ways that we can serve and build each other up. “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 you pound a nail with a hammer you need to have your hand and your eye working together. I can remember first learning to pound nails as a kid. There were times you missed the nail and hit your finger, until your eyes and your hands learned to work together. A basketball player learns to use his eyes to spot the open man and pass the ball accurately. It is called teamwork. The Lord arranges us to serve each other in the body of Christ, and we need each other.

When one part of the body of Christ suffers, the whole body suffers. If one part of the body receives honor and glory, the rest of the body joins in rejoicing to see how one member is blessed. “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” Did you ever notice that one part of your body suffers, the rest of your body suffers along with it? Other parts of the body nurture and care for the body that is hurting. The same is true in the Christian church. When one part of the body suffers pain or sorrow or even false teaching and confusion, the other parts of the body rush to the rescue and rush to give support.

One thing I love about Open Bible is the Kneemail that you have started here, where our members are notified by email as to who is sick and needs prayer. And if you read your kneemail, doesn’t your heart go out to the member of our congregation who is suffering. You hurt for them, when they hurt. You want to help them. So you pray for them, you may send them a card, you may call them on the phone, you may visit them in the hospital, or sit with a loved one in the waiting room., and when you see them you try to give an encouraging word. Likewise, when you see the name and picture of a member of Open Bible in the Village Sun Paper, you feel so good. Look at so and so. They were on the Lifestyles page of the Village Sun Paper. They are members of Open Bible. Way to go. We all were honored, because we are part of one body.

A famous football Gene Stallings from Alabama was asked what he thought was the greatest moment in sports. He told about a time he attended a Special Olympics sports meet. The gun went off, the runners took off. Half way down the track one of the boys fell down. One by one the other runners stopped running, turned around, and helped the boy who had fallen. They held him up and all together they crossed the finish line. Dear Christians, you are the body of Christ. Every one of you is important. You are all unique parts, no matter what part you may be. May we all be moving parts. Moving to help this body function at full capacity to bring the message of a Savior to a dying world.