A.M.D.G. 3rd Sunday After Epiphany – C Text: 1 Corinthians 12

January 27th, 2019

**1 Corinthians 12:4-27**  Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.  For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 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.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.  Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

**We Need Each Other**

Well – yesterday’s visioning session went very well. All sorts of interesting and inspiring ideas and ways we can build on the strengths the congregation already has! As a church, I feel like we are standing at the threshold of something very exciting.

But – and there is a big BUT – if we want to live into our dreams and hopes for this church (not just the building – but the people) – if we want to be open to where God may be leading us into the future – its going to take everyone working together, using the many gifts and talents we already have in our midst, and supporting each other to bring it to reality.

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That’s what Paul is describing for us in our scripture reading this morning from his first letter to the church at Corinth. The church, or the body, he says, only functions when all of the various parts are working together. And he was speaking from experience. If you read the rest of his letter, it becomes obvious that there was a certain amount of dysfunction happening in their midst. You don’t have to read very deeply between the lines to see that there were power struggles going on between different factions in the church.

Chapter 1 talks about how some of the people identify with a leader called Cephas, and others with someone by the name of Apollos. And some even said they were followers of Paul. Now you’d think that this would make Paul happy. But he is clear that he doesn’t want people loyal to *him.* He wants people loyal to **God**. He wants something for the church that they themselves seem to have lost sight of. This and other matters were splintering the community. There is resentment. There is jealousy. There are factions. And somewhere, somehow, something important was getting lost. So Paul writes this letter. And like a good doctor, Paul diagnoses the situation and recommends not just a quick fix, but an entire change of heart. He asks and answers the question: “Why is God giving us spiritual gifts anyway?” A few sentences into our passage we hear these words: *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who gives to each person for the common good.”*

We are so blessed in this community of faith with leadership abilities, talents and gifts, and deep faith. Each one in this church is important and each has something to offer. Not everyone can do everything – but we can all offer *something* – whether it is specific gifts, or finances, or time. And we need to remember that we can’t do it alone. We really do need each other. In working together, following the Spirit, God is opening up a wonderful future for this congregation. In the next months, let us each prayerfully discern what gifts we have, and how we can offer them so that working together we may give glory to God.