

Refuge City Church — May 30, 2021
“Unity through Diversity” [1 Corinthians 12:12-31]

Introduction

- We've all been gifted to give of ourselves and serve.
 - **1 Peter 4:10-11**, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”
 - **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
- **E Pluribus Unum, “Out of many, One”**
 - I can’t help but apply a little American History to our discussion this morning.
 - The unofficial motto of the United States from about 1782 to 1956, until “In God We Trust” was signed in to law.
 - A quick look at American History and no one can deny the diversity that has existed and continues to exist in this country. From every corner of the planet, every race, creed, color, & religion, people have come to the United States seeking one thing...freedom.
 - Some would say that this makes us a “Melting Pot”. Are we truly a homogenous nation with one cultural identity?
 - Legal v. Illegal, Black v. White, Straight v. Homosexual, Pro-Life v. Pro-Choice, Republican v. Democrat, and on and on it goes...
 - Yes, we are bound by common law and national borders, but are we truly “One”?
 - Salad Bowl, Mosaic, or Kaleidoscope fits much better I think.
- **QUOTE:** “In democratic peoples...all citizens are independent and weak; they can do almost nothing by themselves, and none of them can oblige those like themselves to lend them their cooperation. They therefore all fall into impotence [*inability/incapability*] if they do not learn to aid each other freely.” [Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835)]

“Connected Community” [Verses 12-14]

12 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. **13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. **14** For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

- Christ is the “head” of the church.
 - **Colossians 1:18**, “And he [*Jesus*] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything *he* might be preeminent.”

- Individualism [isolation/flesh] vs. Community [Spirit-driven]
 - **Your earthly identifiers** [age, race, income, etc.] **no longer has relevant status in the body of Christ. We are now on equal footing in the sense that we are all members of the body of Christ.**
 - **John 15:5**, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”
 - At what point do we bestow the greater honor to a branch on a tree simply because of its location on the tree??
 - It doesn't matter where it is, as long as it remains connected.
- **QUESTION: So what's our purpose, as a living member in the body of Christ?**
 - **John 17:21**, “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
 - **1 Corinthians 1:10**, “...that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction.”
 - What did Jesus mean by “that they may all be one”?... “so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
 - Wow! One of the greatest indicators of who Jesus is...UNITY!
 - Uniformity [the same] or Unification [purpose]? There is a difference!
 - **[Jesus' Prayer] QUOTE:** “He was praying that ‘all’ true believers would ‘be one’ in their love for one another, their submission to the authority of Scripture, and their commitment to their mission.” [Dr. Thomas Constable]

“The Multiplicity of the Human Body” [Verses 15-20]

15 If the foot should 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. **16** And if the ear should 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. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

- The Multiplicity of the Human Body

- 206 bones, 600 muscles...Up to 7,500 distinct parts that function together.
 - Some more important than others. That's why they are referred to as “vital” organs.
 - Remove this part from the body, and the body dies.
 - Other members important, but are not vital.
 - Remove them from the body, and the body will operate differently, but live on.
 - Others...we question why they're a part of the body at all!
 - Like the extrinsic ear muscles. Who can wiggle their ears???
 - **IMPORTANT:** Is it up to us to judge each other's value to the body?

- **God created each part for a purpose. Its existence indicates meaning.**
- Separated from the body, any part ceases to have a purpose.
 - What always seems to be our tendency as humans?
 - To observe what everyone else has, what we don't have, what we want or think we need.
 - We have this innate desire for uniformity. But is that what we're made for?
 - How much time are we spending evaluating who *we* are in Christ?!
- **THE WHOLE POINT: It is precisely because of our diversity that we find unity in the church!**

“Imagio Deo” [Verses 21-26]

21 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** On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, **24** which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, **25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26** If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

- Just because you don't see them, doesn't mean they are inferior in what they do.
 - Examples: Pinky toes & Pancreas [digestion & regulating blood sugar]
 - If you have a tendency to think in terms of superior and inferior, may I suggest you to check your heart.
 - None of us have the right to look down on others because of who God made them to be.
 - None of us have the right to resort to envy, because we feel we're owed a greater gift.
 - **Romans 9:20**, “But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”
- **We are all made in the image of God!**
- **QUOTE:** “The diversity of the church is a God-ordained means of bringing the fellowship to oneness, but unless each diverse member recognizes and accepts his part in the whole body, diversity will divide rather than unite, destroy rather than build up, bring discord rather than harmony, and result in self-serving rather than self-giving.” [John MacArthur]
- **Colossians 3:23-24**, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

“Our Purpose” [Verses 27-31; Conclusion]

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. **28** And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? **31** But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

- **We are to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.**
 - **Romans 12:1**, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship [reasonable service].”
 - It is vital that as we mutually and collaboratively serve with and for each other, we are doing so for the building up of the church, all for the glory of God!
- One Purpose
 - **Ephesians 4:4-6**, “There is **one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call— **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
 - **The grace that God bestows upon us is for the purpose of serving and giving to those around us, to provide a unified heart to the revelation of who God is.**
 - **Ephesians 4:15,16**, “we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ... when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”