

## **Body Building**

Rev. John Allen

Paul is dealing with a problem in his church in Corinth, and so he did what he always would do: he wrote them a letter.

You see, in those early years after Jesus' death and resurrection, after the experience of the Holy Spirit rushing down like tongues of fire on Pentecost. The people were feeling pretty well united. All in it together. Us against the world.

But, like any group of people who spend enough time together, as the years went by each one of them began to notice something quite irritating.

The other people in the group are different than me.

They do things differently.

They have different interests and passions.

Different ways of worshipping God.

Different ways of praying even.

And they did that thing that human hearts seem to so naturally do when confronted with difference.

They wanted to know which one was right. Or, perhaps more accurately, who was better.

Some of them were healing people. Pretty impressive.

Others were teaching wisdom.

Still others sharing their knowledge.

Some worked miracles.

Others had a keen way of discerning the movement of the spirit.

It seems that they had written to Paul with a question, which of these was the right way to be a Christian, which was the most important, which should be given the greatest honor.

And it is to this question that Paul responds with his metaphor of the body.

One body has many parts. And it would not be so good if they were all eyes.

Or all legs. The eye cannot say it does not need the hand. The hand cannot say that it is not part of the body because it is not an ear.

It is possible to be different, and to do different things, and still be part of the same body. Difference does not need to mean disunity.

A few years ago, I went to see my Primary Care doctor because I felt like something was stuck in my left ear, kind of like it was plugged up with water, the way it can feel after you go swimming.

He took a cursory look, but pretty quickly referred me off to an Ear Nose and Throat Doctor.

A few weeks later when I saw her, it was a quick look, about the same treatment I had before, this time she at least dug a little deeper it seemed to me.

Then she referred me to audiologist. Maybe the sensation was simply some hearing loss.

So, off I went, into a little sound proof booth with headphones listening to all sorts of beeps and tones.

Everything still seemed fine.

The audiologist suggested I talk to my dentist about it.

And it was my dentist who finally suggested that such a sensation could perhaps be caused by an ever-so-slight misalignment in the way my jaw closes.

I decided to live with it.

So perhaps a little easier for you and I—who live in this present age of hyper specialization—to understand what Paul was talking about, we need different people, who do different things, to make this all work,

Which is of course to say nothing of the administrators who took the appointments, the janitorial staff who cleaned the exam rooms, my insurance company, the billing people, it could go on, and on, and on.

You get it.

Perhaps the greatest lie that we have ever believed is that we can do things on our own. Too many of our cultural heroes, the archetypes and characters in

our stories, we celebrate them because they go it alone against all odds and prevail.

We have a deep fascination with Lone Rangers.

And I think, somewhere, deep down, each one of us expects that of ourselves.

The very last scene of the movie *My Cousin Vinny*, about a lawyer from Brooklyn who tries his first case in rural Alabama, ends with the victorious attorney driving off into the sunset with his girlfriend, who time and time again had to bail him and rescue him so that he could win the case.

Despite having won, Vinny is looking a little down. His girlfriend asks him:

“So what's your problem?”

“My problem” he replies, “my problem is, I wanted to win my first case without any help from anybody.”

She responds, in the closing lines of the film. “You know, this could be a sign of things to come. You win all your cases, but with somebody else's help, right? you win case after case, and then afterwards you have to go up to somebody and you have to say, "thank you.” Oh my God, what a nightmare!” No matter how much we wish we could go it alone, we cannot.

There are people who know things that I don't know.

There are people who do things that I do not know how to do.

There are people who care about what happens to me, even if it doesn't really effect them.

There are people who love me for no good reason at all.

I didn't earn any of that. I didn't make it happen.

We need each other. We always will.

Who is that for you?

Take a moment to remember with gratitude some of those people who you depend on, people you know, people you don't know.

Who are the people working backstage in your life? The ones you could easily forget about, but who make it all possible.

As you go through this week, maybe take some time to think about all the people who have been a part of making something happen.

If you get on a plane, think about the baggage handlers and air traffic controllers.

If you eat at a restaurant, remember the line cooks and dishwashers.

When you turn on your lights, think of the crews that hung the power lines.

We depend quite deeply on one another.



Here is the other half of that question. Who depends on you?

This is what Paul tells the quarreling Corinthians. You all do different things, and isn't that great, because you need each other doing all these things in order to make you whole.

But Paul doesn't stop there.

He doesn't just say that we are all one body.

He says we are the body of Christ.

So it is not just that we need each other for our own sake.

But the work of God depends on our coming together.

In the person of Jesus' God came and walked this Earth, but when Jesus died, even resurrection did not keep his feet on our ground forever.

This is the image scripture provides. You all, when you come together, each playing the part you were made to play. When you come together and harmonize your function into one being with each other.

You are the form that God takes in the world today.

Yours are the hands God has to touch the ground.

Yours are the feet with which God seeks out the lost.

Yours are the hearts with which God loves.

Yours are the mouths with which God speaks.

We do not just need each other.

The world needs us together.

Contrary to what the comic books and superhero movies might have us believe. The world is not going to be saved by one person who has it all.

It will be saved by us, who have each other.