

## A place for everyone Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2014

***“ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. <sup>7</sup> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)***

Beloved in the Lord,

God calls each one of us to serve Him. Every person has been given gifts and talents and God calls us to use those to glorify Him. As long as we are alive it is our solemn duty to serve God.

After His Resurrection, shortly before His Ascension, at which time Jesus returned to the Father in Heaven, He gave the following command to His disciples:

***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)***

Jesus said: “Go and make disciples.” This command to be active for His Kingdom was not limited to the disciples only, but is a general command to all who call themselves “Christians”. We are all required to be in active service for God.

Out of His tremendous love and grace, God has saved us from the clutches of death and hell; the consequence of sin, and He has saved us through the blood of Jesus. He did it because He loves us.

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)***

Once we are saved; then it is our duty to spread this Gospel to all people. To proclaim God’s salvation; His love to all people. Having received His gracious gift (if we have) we should be compelled to spread it around to others. Jesus said that a lamp that is lit is not placed under the bed, but put in the lampstand so that it shines out to others.

Ok that is the foundation. May we be clear that our mission both individually, and corporately is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the primary function of the Church, of our congregation.

In order to effectively fulfill the Great Commission; to be effective in our work, we need every member to be working together, hand in hand, heading in the same direction, with the same motivation, the same understanding, the same love. We need to understand that we are all important and each one has his or her place, his or her function.

To help us understand this, Paul uses the body as an illustration. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:12-22:

***“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.***

***<sup>14</sup> For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; “***

Paul tells us a great deal in these verses. I would like to emphasise two things that this passage brings to us: Firstly that God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired; and secondly that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

The first point, that God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired underlines the point I have been making over the last few weeks, that everything is subject to God's will, and that it is His will that determines things.

We did not choose to be born. We did not choose our gifts and our talents and our personalities. God did. We should not try to determine our place outside of God's will. We need to ask Him what our role is in His work, and what our place is, and having received an answer we need to faithfully serve Him. When our service to God is in this vein, then we are not only blessed ourselves, but we are a blessing to others. If every member humbly serves in God's ordained and chosen role, using the gifts that God has given, fully surrendered to Him, then a congregation functions like a well oiled machine.

Problems arise, when people do not seek God's will, and when their motivation is not love for God, not to glorify God, but to serve themselves, to feed their ego. This was a serious problem in Jesus time. The Scribes and the Pharisees – the religious elite, were not serving God, but themselves. They were not humbly seeking to glorify God, but were basking in the glory and praises of man. That is why Jesus was so harsh towards them.

Whatever we do, if our motivation is not love, if it is not to glorify God, then we will encounter problems and strife. The root of all sin is Pride. As soon as man seeks glory for

himself, he distances himself from God. The Bible tells us over and over again that God hates pride.

We need to understand that the very foundation of all we do must be God. He has placed the members in positions as He desired. When we are jealous of someone, or crave to have their position, or want their work, because we feel it is more honourable, then we sin. We need to understand that every job is important and every person is important. God does not view things the way we do.

It is of vital importance that we seek God's will, and then obey it. We need to serve God with thanksgiving in all things. Be faithful in what He has given you to do and be thankful. Do it with love and joy and thanksgiving.

Easier said than done – believe me – I know. But it helps when we keep our focus fairly and squarely on Jesus. Paul teaches us:

***“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Colossians 3:17)***

and

***“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” (Colossians 3:23-24)***

Whatever you do – whatever – do it giving thanks. The word whatever means whatever! Understand that your whole life is service to Him. Whatever you do...

Be it serving coffee after the service; decorating the altar; folding the service sheets; pushing out the garbage bins; opening the windows; writing the minutes at a meeting; washing the kitchen floor; ironing the table cloths; counting the collection; writing receipts; banking the monies; paying the bills; cleaning the gutters; preparing food for a wake; putting together a raffle; selling tickets; chairing a meeting; gardening; do it with thanksgiving.

If all would just simply do all with thanksgiving, then congregational life would be so much better and easier. Our witness would always be good.

We need to put our ego aside and do all for Christ our Lord.

God has placed each one of us where He wants us. Let us be thankful.

The second point is: that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

Isn't it interesting that in our body, the very parts that we don't think about very often, are the most important. How often do you ponder your thumb? When was the last time you

thanked God you have thumbs? Cut it off and then try and do the things you do from day to day. You will have a lot of problems.

In a congregation the thumbs, are just as important as the pastor, the organist, the chairman etc.

Every member is important. You are important and needed. Each one of us has a place and God needs us all to work together in love, so that we would be effective for Him. We need everyone to know their place and then function in love.

May we open our hearts today and may we ask the Lord to show us His will, and to show us what He desires for us to do.

I thank God for each one of you. I thank God for everyone who puts their hand to the task of doing God's work.

May God help us to increase and bear more fruit for Him.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.