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**Life in the Body of Christ**  
**1 Corinthians 12:12-27, John 15:1-11**

*<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.*

*<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot would 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. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear would 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. <sup>17</sup> 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? <sup>18</sup> But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup> If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup> 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.” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup> whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. <sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it*

What does church mean to you?

I want you to turn to a neighbor and *share what church means to you.*

It can just be a word or a phrase.

Do this at home if you're watching with someone,

if not, say it out loud, or write it down for later to think and pray about.

Church is powerful, isn't it?

And there's a great reason that Paul uses the *human body as the primary metaphor* for the body of Christ, the church.

The *human body has* 206 bones, 639 muscles, 6 pounds of skin, veins, arteries, blood, ligaments, cartilage, fat, and more.

It is one of the most complex systems on earth,  
because each time we move or take a breath  
there are hundreds of parts working together to make it happen!

Of course Paul used the body to talk about the church—  
because *each one of us have an important part to play for* the common good.  
Jesus is the head of this body, and each one of us has a vital role to keep the church  
body healthy!

The church is so much more than a religious organization—it is a *living organism*.  
It is literally the way that Jesus is known in the world today.

*Church is so alive, so powerful, and yet—*  
most people are not church-goers, or not involved.  
Surveys have shown over the years that people are more likely to be shopping than  
in church. In fact, Pew Research says that only 47% of Christians in our country  
attend weekly services. That’s a lot of people who are not in church.  
And millions profess a relationship with Christ, but never get involved in a church.  
<https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>

But being a part of a church is *essential to our Christian faith*—it’s not optional.  
If we look at Paul’s words about the church,  
and Jesus’ model to us with his disciples,  
we see that there is no such thing as *belonging to church without participating*  
(we’ve invented that!).

When we belong to the body of Christ,  
we have a *responsibility to be an active part* of it.  
Just like the human body doesn’t work well when one part stops,  
so the body of Christ doesn’t function well when some parts are not working!  
In Paul’s words, *we can’t say “Oh, I have no need of you”*.

And because of all the different parts, there is *amazing diversity!*  
And all of the different gifts?  
They are all *gifts of the Holy Spirit*.

*Different members have different ways they contribute to the body,*  
different ways of sharing their faith, of following Christ—

there are people who are better at listening, or speaking, or singing, or serving, or seeking out the lost, or standing up for the marginalized. some serve best behind the scenes, others out front.

***All are needed, all are essential.***

There's ***another good metaphor*** for the church.

It's in Joan Gray's book "Sailboat Church".

In Chapter 4 she compares the church to a ***SAILBOAT***, with Jesus' cross as the mast, Christ as the captain, and the Holy Spirit as the wind in the sails.

In other words,

***we are sailors in the body of Christ, and our job is to sail together!***

She says that much like Jesus, the ***church is both human and divine***, because we are Holy Spirit-powered!

We don't do ministry on our own.

In fact, we are not our own.

As Paul says, we belong to one another, and together we belong to Jesus Christ.

Joan Gray, *Sailboat Church*, Westminster John Knox: Louisville, 2014, Pg. 24

***All our different gifts come from the Holy Spirit.***

She says church is a ***"divine, even supernatural community gathered by God to do God's work"***.

She reminds us that when Jesus called his disciples, he called them to be ***partners*** to do God's work in this world.

The same is true for the church today.

***We are partners, we are sailors***, as members of the body, we work ***with Christ***, by the power of the Spirit!

Gray goes on to say that we are a ***community of sinners***, seeking forgiveness and new life.

In other words, ***we're not perfect***, we're not superior in any way.

Anything divine and holy in our midst is only made possible by Christ.

***So when the church does good things, it comes from God,***

because on our own we really can't do much!

We can try—we can be rowboats, following our agenda, doing what we think are good things for God.

But without Christ leading us, without the power of the Spirit filling us,

We really can't do much fruitful ministry!

Joan Gray, *Sailboat Church*, Westminster John Knox: Louisville, 2014, Pg. 25

Isn't this what Jesus means in John 15  
 When he says *stay close to him, and abide in him?*  
*That's the way to ministry—*  
 that is our path to life, and joy!

Isn't that the *difference between rowing and sailing?*  
 Rowing is all about us and our power and our way...and it doesn't lead to life.  
 Sailing is about God's power and God's way,  
 And it is the path to new life and joy!

*Ever been sailing? It can be exhilarating, right?*  
*Because it requires risk—*getting out there on the waves and water.  
 You can't sail tied up to the dock, sitting in a marina.  
 And yet, that's what we often do.  
 We act like a cruise ship that's docked.  
*We stay within the walls of the church,*  
 Doing what makes us happy,  
 Doing what we've always done.  
 And those are words that can lead to *death* for the church—  
 When we say, '*that's the way we've always done it*'.

It is *human nature to have something good happen,*  
 and then want to freeze-frame it, right?  
 To stay in that moment, doing things that way, again and again.  
 That's comfortable, isn't it?

We standardize, codify, write it in stone.  
 Perhaps the *biggest obstacle to future success in ministry is past success.*  
 Because we pine for the 'good old days' of church,  
 Instead of constantly asking God—*where do you want us to go, NOW?*

We are called to be continually filled with the power of the Holy Spirit—  
*Going wherever God leads us!*  
 And it's not backwards!

Remember the transfiguration of Jesus?  
 He took three disciples up that mountain and was transformed--  
*And Peter wanted to build tents and stay there.*  
 Jesus made it clear that they were to go back down the mountain and do ministry.

Past success and good ministry is meant to give us power to go ***forward***,  
***not to stay in place, or stagnate.***

Remember Pentecost? When Holy spirit appeared as wind and fire  
giving people the ability to preach in all different languages?  
God used that ***to help them leave and share the good news.***  
***They didn't stay in that room and talk about what a good experience it was.***

The devotional *Streams in the Desert*, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, says:  
*When the apostles were 'filled with the Holy Spirit' in Acts 2:4,*  
***they did not lease the Upper Room and stay there to hold holiness meetings.***  
*They went everywhere, preaching the gospel (Will Huff)*

***Wow. Think about that.***

We are ***not designed as Christians to pine for the good old days.***  
To keep repeating the way we've always done it,  
Or to do everything the way we want it done.

We are called to be ***filled with that incredible, unpredictable,***  
***Power of the Spirit to fill our sails.***

There's a reason the ***word for Holy Spirit in Hebrew and Greek, is wind.***  
Because it's so out of our control,  
So beyond what we can do ourselves.

In 1983 Australia was tied with the United States for the America's Cup.  
The United States had retained the coveted cup of yacht racing for years,  
but that year Australia mounted a challenge. The day came for the final race.  
News stations from all over the world, and hundreds of people were gathered,  
the boats were ready. The yachts pulled into place at the starting line.  
But-- There was no wind.

***And no wind means no race.***

[https://day1.org/weekly-broadcast/5d9b820ef71918cdf2003931/controlling\\_the\\_wind/](https://day1.org/weekly-broadcast/5d9b820ef71918cdf2003931/controlling_the_wind/)

***We cannot go forward without the Spirit! And we can't control the Spirit!***

It's why Jesus said,

You don't see the wind, yet you know when it comes and when it goes."

***We need the Holy Spirit to power our faith, and our ministry in the church!***

Without it, we can literally die on the vine.

Without it, we are just cruise ships in the port,  
Or rowboats doing our own thing.

And Jesus reminds us in John 15:5 of a truth we often forget,  
***“Without me, you can do nothing”.***

Sounds harsh, but it’s so true.

If we are not connected to Christ, to the Spirit of God,  
We are not doing much at all when it comes to faith or ministry,  
Except just going round and round, doing what we’ve always done.

***That’s not church.***

***That’s not life with Christ.***

As ***human bodies we can’t exist that way—***

we all know what happens to our bodies,

if we do the same motion over and over and over again.

We all know what happens if we use only a part of our bodies.

It’s not healthy.

It’s not life-giving.

***The same is true for sailing.***

***We can’t just stay in the marina.***

We need to put up the sails and let the wind guide us where it will.

It’s not the easy road—but it’s the road to life!

Listen to Dr. Charles Reeb:

*... it's much easier running the church on our own, without being bothered by the Spirit, isn't it? I mean, a church can survive quite a while keeping the Spirit at bay. All you have to do is be organized, be nice, be civilized, be careful, find a good speaker to tell nice stories, play good music and you are on your way with being pleased with yourself with all you can do with your church. Sure, there is only so much you can accomplish without the aid of the Spirit, but at least you look good. At least, you're in control.*

[https://day1.org/weekly-broadcast/5d9b820ef71918cdf2003931/controlling\\_the\\_wind](https://day1.org/weekly-broadcast/5d9b820ef71918cdf2003931/controlling_the_wind)

***The truth is, we are not meant to be in control.***

Sailing is scary, because the Holy Spirit is in control!

But sailing is where we find ***life, and meaning, purpose, and joy!***

Thomas Merton has a beautiful prayer in his book, *Thoughts in Solitude*:  
*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

As we leave today,  
***Let us think about our place in this body of Christ.***  
What has the Holy Spirit enabled you to do?  
And are you doing it?  
What are the gifts of this church?  
Are we using them?

How will we ***allow the Spirit to lead and guide us?***  
Will we stay tied to the dock?  
Or will we set sail?

Friends, may we let go, and let God be the wind in our sails!  
And may all God's people say together, Amen.