

**We Are The Body Of Christ**  
**I Corinthians 12:12-27**  
**Preached by Rev Dr. Harry Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, August 30, 2009**

A pastor wrote a member who moved out of the state to see if the family found a new church home. A letter came back saying:

**"Dear Pastor, we now live near an Ivy League school and attend worship every Sunday at the university chapel which is known for its inspirational music and unusually gifted guest preacher. But best of all there's no membership, no pledging and no committees asking me to serve. So, we'll just leave our membership at your church and continue to enjoy our wonderful chapel services."**

Obviously the man who wrote this darling letter lost any sense of what it really means to be, not just a church member, but especially a disciple of Christ. In his defense maybe he was the victim of burnout, teaching in the church school and serving on multiple committees at the same time for years and years...maybe he just needed a break and recharge his batteries before he could reenter the fray when the time was right.

Then again, maybe he always saw church membership in general and the call to discipleship in particular, as just another option of opportunities to choose from to enrich his life.

I can understand why people might see church membership in this light. Our culture provides so many options to choose from, so if you can squeeze it into your already overloaded schedule, you'll make time to come to church, attend a Bible study or a prayer group, but if something else comes up, church is the easiest thing to bump.

But consider this: If your cable service was inconsistent, would you consider it worthwhile? If your mailman skipped your house Mondays and Thursdays, would you care? If you didn't show up for work once a week, would your boss say "Oh well, at least he comes to work most of the time?" If you miss a couple of car payments every year do you get away with saying it?"

You see, we hold others to a higher standard because our quality of life depends on those high standards. And yet when it comes to discipleship and the development of your spiritual life, too often, more important **"things"** take precedence.

**"I'm too busy to pray. I don't have time for meditating on the scriptures. Sunday morning is my only free time for myself."** Yes, the temptation is there for all of us to let our commitments to God, each other and our neighbor in need to slide whenever we feel that something has to give, so it might as well be our commitment to Christian nurture and service, after all who'd miss me?

The church choir director was being driven out of his mind at the rehearsals for a special concert. At every rehearsal key members of the choir were absent. Finally, at the last rehearsal just before the big concert the director announced, **"I want to personally thank our pianist for being the only member of this entire choir to attend each and every rehearsal during the last two months"**. At this point the pianist rose and said, **"It's the least I could do considering I won't be able to be at the concert tonight."**

Last Sunday, I asked you to think of the Church as being like a MASH unit, a field hospital not far from the battle. Soldiers are brought in, their wounds are healed and then when they are ready, they are sent back out again to fight another day. In the same way you may come to worship on some Sunday deeply wounded by life's battles. You come for healing so you can go back out into the real world to fight the good fight for Christ, your neighbor and yourself.

But here's another metaphor for the Church: Paul likens the Church to a body, a living, breathing organism that has been given life and the ability to love and be loved.

Listen: **"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."**

Paul saw the Church as a body. And all the body parts are important and brought together in an essential unity. That's why the eye can't say to the hand, **"I don't need you,"** and your head can't say to your feet, **"I don't need you."** Rather, even the smallest parts are essential.

A high school senior had the potential to become one of the great fullbacks in college football. During his high school years he broke all sorts of records. But the summer before his freshmen year in college he was in a freak accident and lost his big toe. The loss of his toe ended his career. A small, insignificant part of his body proved to be essential.

Our congregation has a lot of big toes. You may be one of them. You think you're not important and wouldn't be missed if you took a vacation from church. But you underestimate yourself. You are needed and essential. We need you and you need us so together we can grow and serve together in Christ. What's more, Jesus desperately needs you! That's right Jesus desperately needs you. That's why you were created in God's image. That's why God blessed you with gifts and talents. You see, you and I are called to be the Body of Christ, so through you and me the ministry Jesus began 2000 years ago can continue.

Remember, the man who wrote his pastor, **"But best of all there is no membership, no pledging, no committees asking me to serve. So, we'll keep our membership at your church and continue to enjoy what we have here."** Can you understand how he was dead wrong in his understanding of his essential role in the Body of Christ? We are called not to enjoy our lack of responsibility but to know God and enjoy him forever. And part of our enjoyment comes from being members of the mystical Body of Christ.

Sure, sometimes you need to pull back from time to time, but in God's time, when you sense you're being called back to ministry, for your own sake and spiritual well being, you need to answer God's call to be and do what you are called to do and be.

I've told you this story before, but it really fits here. A pastor went to visit the home of a man who was one of his most faithful members. All of a sudden, he dropped out of sight. People wondered, **"What happened to Stanley?"** So, the pastor went to visit Stan at his home.

The pastor was warmly welcomed as they went into the living room and sat in front of a cozy fire. Finally, the pastor spoke up. **"Stan what happened? You joined the church, you were so enthusiastic, you seemed to enjoy the people and our ministry, then you dropped out. Is something wrong; did someone offend you? Did**

**I somehow disappoint you?" "Oh no, not at all," Stanley broke in. "Our church is great and you're wonderful, but I just sort of got out of the habit. You know how it is, Sunday mornings are my only time to get stuff around here done, besides even though I miss church, I can still be a good Christian by myself, right?"**

The pastor, instead of going into a mini sermon, took a poker from its rack and pulled a hot glowing coal away from the burning fire, and together they watched it quickly burn out.

After God created Eve, God said, "It's **not good for man to be alone.**" We need to develop friendships that aren't just based on similar interests, or complimenting personalities, we need to develop spiritual friendships, in which we share our commonality in Jesus Christ.

Throughout our time together this morning, I've been urging you to make being part of the beloved community a top priority. I hope I didn't come across as trying to lay a guilt trip on you. That is not my intention. If I did, this morning's sermon failed. It is my hope, however to suggest how important your commitment to your chosen faith community really is. The quality of your life depends on it.

In our chapel every day there are AA meetings. The members of AA meet religiously because each member realizes his or her life depends on it. Each member also realizes the other members of their fellowship depend on him or her to be there for them. They have come to depend on each other as they seek out that Higher Power. That's a personal responsibility each member gladly carries.

May we take our commitment to each other with the same sense of awesome responsibility. May we remember always that together we are the Body of Christ.

Let us pray!