

January 30, 2022

**“Why Are We Here?”  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

*1 Corinthians 12: 12-15, 26*

*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. 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. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 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.... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*

*Luke 4:14-21*

*Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

Sermon “Why Are We Here?”

We have two very powerful scriptures to investigate this morning. The word Spirit is used quite often in both of them. It is an important word and concept in our faith and Paul breaks it down for us in his letter to the Corinthians:

“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.”

If people of faith truly believed this then wouldn't that be more reflected in the fabric of our society.

Imagine if we all embraced that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, that our spirit is the most important part of us, then would it matter what our bodies looked like? If bodies are just vessels for the Spirit then why do we judge ourselves and each other by them?

We wouldn't look in the mirror and measure our worth by our weight, or clothes, or our cheekbones, no one would be judged by their skin tone. We wouldn't care about what gender somebody identified, we would just live and love by our spirits alone. And we would all be equal because we would all be drinking of that one spirit.

There you have Paul's vision of the kingdom of God. Where those human-made constructs and divisions don't mean diddly. And the answer to why we are here?

Paul says...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. We are here to suffer with each other, and to rejoice together and to be the body of Christ.

Sometime in the late 1500's St. Teresa of Avila wrote:

Christ has no body but yours now.

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks with compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which Christ blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are Christ's body and Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

I believe this. Why churches still matter, why this church still matters, why we are still here is that we are the hands and feet and eyes and body of Christ.

So what does Christ want us to do as that body? We have a big clue from the Gospel reading this morning. Jesus at the very start of his ministry announces why he was there, by quoting Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,

because the Lord has anointed me;

God has sent me to bring good news to the poor,

to bind up the brokenhearted,

to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and release to the prisoners;

If we are to continue to be the body of Christ this is what is our business and our purpose, to figure out who the captives are, the poor, the prisoners, the broken hearted in this time and place, in our community.

That's where we have to rely on the Spirit that is represented in both of these scriptures. Like Jesus and the early Christians in Paul's community we must remain Spirit driven. The Sermon Seeds Author on the UCC website said something that tied that together for me nicely. She wrote:

“The Spirit descends at the baptism of Jesus and continues to journey with him. It was the Spirit that led him into the wilderness, and the Spirit who filled Jesus for the journey into Galilee. And, as the text within the text proclaims, the Spirit anointed him. The anointing has purpose attached to it. The Spirit actively moves, guides, and directs toward some greater action and activity.”

Jesus left that same spirit with us to help us discern our path, to figure out who the oppressed, broken hearted, and poor are. You were good at that long before I arrived on the scene, but as this pandemic drags on, as the changes that have happened in our society, politically and morally we have to adapt to this new normal. Who are we to be when everything has changed around us? How do we lean into that Spirit and be the body of Christ, in a new way?

Pray with me now:

Spirit of God, we are Christ's hands and feet and heart in this world. Continue to seek us out as the body of Christ. Continue to guide us and move us to a place way beyond just survival but to a place where we are reenergized to do your work in the world. AMEN

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