

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Third Sunday after Epiphany - Year C

99th Sunday of Pandemic - Online Worship Only

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Psalm 19

I Corinthians 12:12-31a

Luke 4:14-21

01/23/2022

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

14Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16When 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, 17and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18“*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, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*” 20And 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. 21Then he began to say to them, “*Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*”

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Body of Christ

Good morning! As much as I love the Gospel reading, I think the second reading from I Corinthians can help us more this chilly Sunday morning. But first, a story...

In college when I was a counselor at Camp Luther, the one-week-long camp put on by the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, we spent a whole week talking about the different ways that individuals are gifted. One of the ways we achieved this was by doing a test that grouped us all into different “colors.” Each color was essentially a personality type. It was basically a more entertaining version of the Meyers-Briggs test. I’m not entirely sure, but I think I was blue... It was strange to see how the insight helped us all to understand each other. As the week went along you would begin to make connections with your friends and their personality traits. “Oh, you’re such an orange” we might say to someone who was empathetic. “Pay attention, Yellow!” we would say to the person who had drifted off during a conversation.

Being a blue (or green?) I remember wanting help with taking down a canopy tent in the rain and assuming that others would know and help, all without me ever asking. And while another blue would know that even if I DID say I didn’t want help, I just didn’t want to ask. But not everyone was a blue, so they were oblivious to my pain, staying dry while I worked. After it was finished and I was sulking in frustration a concerned orange came over, sensing my anger. After explaining the problem, they wisely pointed out that very lesson, not everyone thinks like I do, and it’s stupid to think that they would.

The week made it clear that we needed ALL the colors to get things done. We had my friends Jody and Carl who were the deans, in charge of the overall program, able to see the whole picture and keep us going in the right direction. We needed Fritz, who was basically our resident MacGyver, who showed up at camp with a vehicle full of tools and parts, ready to fix the large collection of stuff that would inevitably break. We needed people who woke up early and got the coffee going, and we needed people like me, who stayed up late to watch the campers.

It's a lesson the church learns time and time again. A lot of times the pastor will get all the attention, but for every pastor there is an office secretary like Sue who makes sure everything runs smoothly. Just look at this worship service! I may be leading it, but if it wasn't for Dale we would be singing the same 10 hymns that I happen to know every week. And if it wasn't for Megan, who is behind the screen making sure that Zoom and all the other technology runs smoothly, I wouldn't be able to do my job. For every council president we need an equally attentive council secretary, diligently taking notes on the meeting. For all the big dreamers who think with deep pockets, we need the treasurers to figure out the numbers and how we can actually get it done.

Paul writes *“12For 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. 13For 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. 14Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many... 26If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all*

rejoice together with it. 27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”¹

It’s something Paul knew 2,000 years ago... and yet, we need constant reminders. Or, maybe we forget that this applies to all aspects of our lives. How often in our world do we hear that not every member is important? A favorite show of mine, Doctor Who, features a character by the same name who has repeatedly said *“in all my years of time and space I have never met a person that wasn’t important.”* But we need all of us to thrive. Life is about so much more than survival, and in order to truly live, to thrive, we have to make sure that everyone is welcomed. But it’s even deeper than that! It’s more than just welcoming the outsider, it’s about realizing that they aren’t an outsider at all, but a critical part of the system as a whole, a part that has returned and who now brings full function to all. Dr. Melanie A. Howard writes *“For Paul, diversity within the Body of Christ is not just a nice ideal toward which the congregation can aspire. Rather, it is an essential component to the full functioning of that body. Paul recognizes that every type of spiritual gift is necessary, and he hopes to convince the congregation in Corinth of the same.”²*

So, next time you feel like you can do it alone, remember that it’s about more than just surviving. You might be ok for a bit, but you will be missing something. And the next time you feel like YOU are the one who isn’t needed, just remember that life would never be the same without you. Christ has called us all together, so never forget. Amen.

¹ I Corinthians 12:12-14, 26-27 NRSV

²<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/third-sunday-after-epiphany-3/commentary-on-1-corinthians-1212-31a-5>