

Whatever you do, do not go to church!

Scripture reading- Romans 12:3-5 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. **4**Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5**so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

As I think about this morning's Scripture reading I'm struck by the image Paul gives when he questions what good would the body be if the body if it were just an eye or a foot, etc... Well, I've got a pretty good imagination... I think it would look hideous!!

It appears that Paul uses the phrase body of Christ 99 times in the NT. This idea that the church is the body of Christ is a term that the early church, and I believe the church in the 21 Century, can relate to.

We understand the body. The body is made up of many parts. In all of my reading about the church being the body, Paul never mentions any part or member of the body filling the role of the head. The head of the body is only filled by Jesus.

Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-30

Col. 1:15-18 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16**For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. **17**He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18**And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Eph. 4:15,16 (context is unity) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. **16**From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Notice that as Paul speaks about the church he's not speaking about a place... a building. The word for church is Ekklesia meaning "meeting or assembly." And church is never used to describe something that isn't currently meeting.

We may know intellectually that this place is not the church but our language

many times betrays us. Often we refer to church as a place we go. We say it all the time. "Sunday mornings I go to church." Or "the church is doing this or that."

No matter what happens here in Chelmsford, the church is Christ's body and it will thrive because we are under the head of Jesus. This word head means origin, or source. Jesus is the source of the church. Through Jesus we have meaning. Jesus as head controls the body. Therefore we need to know that if Jesus is the head we are to stay under the head of Jesus.

Because we are a body, we all have a place in the body. We all have a function in the church. Until we can understand this we will continue to come to church. Listen **whatever you do, do not come to church!** We do not go to church... we are the church.

Look at what happens when we go to church. When we go to church we go as observers. We might go to church and want to see certain things happen that make us feel like we really went to church. When we go to church we go knowing that in a little while we will leave and do whatever it is that we do.

Listen to our language. Once again it has a tendency to betray us. When we go to church we call this room an "auditorium." Do you know what auditoriums are for? Auditoriums are for audiences. And audiences are passive. Audiences come to observe.

But when we buy into Paul's words that we are the church and that Jesus is the head of the church. When we buy into--that we do not go to church... my goodness, **what ever you do, do not go to church!** When we buy into the idea that we are the church--we move out of a passive/observer roll--to where we are all functioning parts with real purpose in this church.

Here's what passive/observer church look like:

1. I might come and insist on having my same seat every week.
2. I might come and file my nails (do my thing)
3. I might come and insist that church go my way
4. I might come and go through the motions of when to stand and when to bow my head, but have little to no interest in what's going on in worship.

This is what happens when you go to church. **Whatever you do, do not go to church!**

Here's what takes us out of the "I'm going to church" to where we are the church.

1 Cor. 12:12-13 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. **13**For we were all baptized by [c] one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Did you hear what Paul said? We became members of the body of Christ because we have been baptized into Christ's body. This body thing is not some kind of exclusive club. We can't pick and choose who is a part of the body. We--all of us here who have been baptized into Christ's body are now members of that body. All of us who have been baptized have placed our lives under the Lordship of Jesus. The good news is we are the body. Perhaps the bad news for some is this body includes you... and... me. We are only the body of Christ in that we have placed ourselves under his lordship.

I mean look at us... We're pretty different in a lot of ways. What is it then that brings us together? What brings us together is Jesus. It's good that we're different. In fact I think it's vital that we're different. The head (Jesus) never intended to bring us together in order to form on part of the body--like a foot or a hand or an ear. Many times we can have an attitude that if more people were like me in how I see things and do things church would be a better place. If there were more people who see God exactly how I see him or worship him exactly how I worship him, then this church would be a whole lot better. Listen we are a body made up of many parts.

I have a vivid imagination. What would it look like if we were a body of eyes, or feet, or noses? I think it would look rather hideous.

But this is not what God wants. What God wants is for the body, in its different parts to come together and to work together under the head.

Ok... I've said all of this to talk with you about holiness. Your shepherds and minister have agreed that for the next 3 weeks we'll be sharing with you what it means to be holy in worship.

This is not intended to make this body into a foot or and ear. Rather it is intended to help us see that church is not a place we go so that we can be observers, but church is the body of believers who assemble to actively participate in honoring God as we enter into his sanctuary... not an auditorium.

Remember what I said about passive church. Passive church happens in auditoriums.

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When we enter into God's sanctuary we do not enter as one part, but we do enter as one body that is made up of many parts.

Here's what it looks like when we know that **we** are the body of Christ.

1. In worship our focus is on God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

In our worship, our focus is not on self

- our problems
- other people
- other circumstances

Too often we bring all this baggage of our worries and difficulties with people and our hopes and plans for our own lives.

2. In worship the playing field is level. We have all fallen short this week, but we have the opportunity to come and to behold God in all his glory.

When we come as the body to worship we come together with all of the heavenly beings. We get to join the singing with the angels, and the archangels, the cherubim and seraphim. We get to sing, and magnify and bless His holy name!

3. In worship we are formed spiritually. Worship not only presents Christ, it causes Christ to be formed in me. Here why it's important to understand holiness in worship: Worship is itself the structure of life--whether in word or deed.

-When I'm holy in worship (meaning that I'm focusing on what God intends for me to focus on) I not only hear and see--I b-e-c-o-m-e!

-I am to become God's word and God's bread to the world around me.

-To be formed by worship is to take on the characteristics of Christ. It is to be shaped by His presence within our lives.

I'll leave you with these words this morning... whatever you do, do not go to Church. You and I are the church and Jesus is the Head. Let us be holy in all we do!

Rom. 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your

bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

Peace to you this day...

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