

**Epiphany 3C 2010**  
**1 Corinthians 12:12–31a, Luke 4:14–21**  
**Sermon for Advent LC**  
**January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**“How does our Body Look?”**

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. Amen.

There is a great song by the Christian Band Casting Crowns entitled If We are the Body. The premise of the song is that we are the body of Christ and therefore are the ones that Christ calls to be his hands and feet in this world. The chorus has these words, “But if we are the body, why aren’t his arms reaching, why aren’t his hands healing, why aren’t his words teaching. And if we are the body, why aren’t his feet going, why is His love not showing them there is a way? There is a way.” That song was written in response to Paul’s words from our first reading as he is writing to the Church at Corinth that is going through some growing pains and suffering from a lack of unity. Today, the center of Paul’s argument that the Church is the body of Christ has become a foundation to our belief in what the Church is to be. Casting Crowns, in their music, is simply raising the question of why we fail to be the body that we say we are as a whole. Now...there are obvious examples of when the church is the body, and lives as the body, but I would agree that many times the body fails– not because we don’t have the right heart or the desire to do it, but simply because being the body is hard, living as the body of Christ for the sake of the world is challenging– yet the call remains. We are the body of Christ dear friends, how are we doing reaching, teaching, healing, going? How does our body look?

I find the fact that the Corinthians reading is paired in our lectionary– our assigned readings– with the Luke Gospel from today. The Gospel reading from Luke is all about Jesus’ mission and purpose– what he has come to the world to do...to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive, to give sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the Lord’s favor. This is who Jesus is– the one sent from God, anointed by the Holy Spirit and now present in the world to make darkness bright. Why I find this interesting is that the Corinthians reading is all about us, humans, mortal souls who benefit from God and are called to be the body of Christ. The connection is simple then– because of what God has done through Christ we then are the ones that see light in the darkness and furthermore we are the ones who will help to do what Christ was sent to do. Yes you see we, as the body, are the ones then that must bring good news to the poor, help the blind see, free the oppressed in our midst and proclaim the Lord’s favor. We, being the body of Christ then must get going...not simply talking, not simply listening, but going because we now, anointed by the Spirit and saved by Grace are the body. So...how are you doing at reaching, teaching, healing, going? How does our body look?

Paul is very clear in his writing to the church at Corinth that all members of the body are important so if you are hoping to get out of the expectation that you work as a member in the body because you don’t think you have any value– think again. Yes, the call to be the body of Christ is for you and you and you and you. The gift of Christ

who died for you to bring justice and peace and light to life is all encompassing as is the call to be part of the body. We are all in this together. **If you don't believe me... hear what Paul says, "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."** And a little later he says **"But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body."** And finally one more word from Paul, **"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."** There it is friends, the calling could not be clearer- we are the body of Christ and therefore we are the extension of the Lord Jesus whose mission is defined for us in the Gospel. Now...its easy to say that- we are the body, its easy to nod in agreement when I as the preacher ask you if you are ready to get to work...but man o man is it hard to actually live it out once you leave the safe confines of this space. I think part of the problem is that we are hesitant to allow God to speak to us and lead us- we are willing to be part of the body as long as we don't have to stretch too much, we are willing to be part of the body as long as it can be on my own time....but folks...the call of the body is a way of life, a changed life, that starts over often but always moves towards doing more, serving more, going more, and letting Christ work through us more. How does our body look?

Have you ever played the game truth or dare? When I was a kid we used to play truth or dare and I was always hesitant to take a dare because who knew what it would be. But, in that same light...I have a dare for you. Go home this week and pray daily to God that God will show you clearly what he needs from you, ask God to open you up to new possibilities as for your role in the body, ask God to define for you how you can proclaim release to the captives, how you can let the oppressed go free, how you can bring good news to the poor. I dare you to take seriously the call of Christ to be part of the body and to be active. Perhaps God will say- just go to church, go through the motions and you will be okay...but I don't think so...I think God will challenge you, will change you, will push you and stretch you, will expect from you a new and different way of life and will show you the way. Are you willing to ask for that? I only dare you dear friends to try it, but God calls you dear friends to do it...that is your call for you are the body. How will you live out your part in the body?

God loves you and so do I. Amen.