

Paul talks about the Body of Christ and spiritual gifts within it today. I've heard many sermons about discerning our gifts for ministry, and – let's be honest—most sermons about gifts that I've heard are about discerning your gifts to use in ministries within the Church. They're almost recruiting sermons.

As tempting as that may be—I'm not going to do that this morning—because what Paul is talking about is a much more important topic than who works on the vestry vs who does coffee hour.

If you're thinking that your gifts can only be used for the benefit of your church, you may be thinking too small. Your gifts are be used everywhere. Gifts are given to us for the *common good*. The good of everyone. All of our gifts are to be used everywhere. With everyone;

But this passage isn't Paul just talking about gifts—he's talking about how each person is a part of a larger whole. Each one of us is a needed part of the body of Christ.

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 members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable... But God has so arranged the body..that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it..

Each and every person is important to the body. God sees this clearly. We –many times—do not. Are there some members of the body of Christ that we think don't belong? If we do-- we are

saying "I have no need of you" and by implication, we are stating that the body doesn't need that member either.

We presume to know the mind of God.

There was a time when the thyroid was thought to be a useless organ which did nothing. That was the common thought among scientists for decades. Now we know that without the thyroid—or the chemicals it produces, we die. The thyroid is necessary for the functioning of much of the body. We presumed to know something, and we were incorrect.

How about an example a little more close to home?

Think strong arms is better than a little toe? Let me tell you a story...

In my younger days—say from age 11- to ----well--**now**—I've had a problem with breaking my toes. I've broken all of my toes at one time or another—but the one I break the most is my little toe. I usually do this by walking too close to a chair, or a concrete bench or a wall. Let me tell you-- -something as small as a little toe can become the body's **WHOLE WORLD** in a second of inattention.

So, there may be members of Christ's body that we declare we have no need for, but God knows that we do.

And it's the same for our gifts.

Paul chastises the community in Corinth because they are arguing about which gifts are better.

But each gift is given not just for our own good and edification---but to build up the community, for the common good.

Many of our elders are lonely. They live out their days cut off from people. Unable to move farther than their room or their housing facility. They don't all have dementia. They aren't all sick. But there are many of our neighbors who are dying for a little companionship.

Do you have that gift? It's just as much a gift as a gift for music or science.

There are people in our community right now who would love something to eat that's homemade. Like me. (Kidding) Do you like to cook? I think that's an amazing gift because it's not something I'm blessed with.

Keep your ears open for opportunities to cook.

- Are there people you know who deal with "food insufficiency" as we clinically call it now?
- Are there young families who could use a home cooked meal delivered occasionally?
- Are there people who are out of work, out of place, out of touch—who need a meal, or a cake, or someone to share a meal *with*?

No gift, no person is dispensable. We are not just individuals, alone and separate. We are here, we are useful, and we have gifts for the *common good*.

And each part, gift and person is indispensable in God's eye--even if we can't see WHY—because of our limited perspective.

God made us just the way we are, set us to live among each other, and gave us gifts to use for the betterment of everyone.