

### A Body of One 5-24-20

When we think what we have had to go through, especially recently, we may feel sorry for ourselves. We get depressed, despondent, and get this feeling of worthlessness and restlessness. These are all to be expected during trying circumstances. However, no matter how gray our outlook may be, remember Jesus went through a lot for you to have this life you have. What you make of your life is individual, unique, and it is up to you to make your life better in any way you can to please yourself. It's not always about pleasing everyone else, sometimes it's just about making ourselves happy. There will be turmoil as is pointed out to us today in I Peter. We may think we are suffering but look again at what Christ suffered so the world could be changed for the better.

When we look at the world we live in, it's quite remarkable. We have taught ourselves how to have church outside the building. Funny thing is, our denomination of the United Methodist Church, has been asking us to do just this for some time now. All it took was a pandemic to push us outside those borders. Sure, we have other restraints during this time, but some sermons as were my own have been sent to you from outside the walls of the building we call church. This is amazing to think about, but it has been done. Now with the warmer weather, we can start thinking further outside the walls and realize it is we who are the church, and not the building. We are a body of one. Don't just sit and count the numbers on Sunday morning, but be part of the One. Every congregation is part of the conference in our area labeled Eastern Pennsylvania. Each of those conferences are part of an even bigger group and we called ourselves United for a reason.

Jesus looks up to heaven in our text today and he gives his farewell speech. He reminds us he came; he did what his Father expected him to do, and now it was time to return to his Father. He feels his job on earth is complete and asks for a final blessing upon the

people as he is ready to return to heaven. He is doing just what we see in the action movies today: He came, he did a job – he conquered, and at the end of day he returned home. What a job he did! Jesus did more than any action hero in the movies. He died and was resurrected. Not even Arnold Schwarzenegger ever did that in any of his movies. He didn't have to race up the steps of the museum of art in nearby Philadelphia like Rocky Balboa, but he could have. Imagine Jesus at the top of those steps in a hooded robe jumping up and down in victory, essentially this is his final speech. He knows he is victorious, and he did it by conquering the opponent of death.

We are the people of the church. We may be small in number or many, but at the end of days, we are one. All the denominations, the Lutherans, the United Church of Christ followers, the Adventists and Catholics, we all serve the same God. It is that same God who keeps us strong even in the hardest of times. We have overcome so much in life at this time, much unexpected, many surprises but at the end of the day when we lie down to sleep and say our prayers, it is the same God listening to all of us, one body.

Heed the warnings in I Peter. Be humble before the Lord, place your fears upon Him, and He will care for you. Be always conscious that it is the devil who waits around the corner to trip you up. He is a cunning one that old devil, and he tries to break us up every chance he gets. He puts notions in our heads that things are not running well enough. He makes us think we need more, when what we have really is enough. It's like the HGTV shows I like to watch. I am hooked on "Love it or List It", and it seems many more decide to love the homes they have with just renovations done. Others move on and list the homes. I look at so many of these shows and think I would love the home just as it is at the beginning. Sure, they look even better at the end but aren't our lives like that? Our bodies may look more like they need renovations, but that's on the outside. Just like the homes, you must see what's going on inside. Our self-renovations come from God,

listening to him, and maybe not always getting everything, we want; just like on the TV shows, but what we need. Yet the devil hovers nearby showing us something bigger and better if we just worship him instead of God. He may offer something fresh and more exciting, but like a bigger more modern home, it comes with a price.

We are a body of one, our churches, all joined together not separately. There are tons of churches right now in our denomination and others similar using the same lectionary we do here. We may even have the same chosen ideas for our sermons, but we present them differently. We each come up with our own thoughts and words to express to our congregations. That is precisely what makes us unique, different from everyone else. Perhaps you listen to other sermons on a Sunday morning, and that's great. Many may be much better and some you may not enjoy as much. We as pastors really do try to express part of ourselves that you can relate to, and it may not always be welcomed, but it just shows our individuality. However, as individual as we are in our thoughts that we gather, we are one in the message.

Jesus did his job. He was sent to save the world, and he did that. He gave the people who heard him firsthand an experience none of us have had yet. He was the word made flesh as John begins his gospel. He came to save us and show us different ways of seeking forgiveness, and we get that today. We pray and ask for forgiveness and we have faith to believe we are forgiven. We trust in an unseen god, and feel He is answering our prayers. We see it, we feel it, we are able to know it is true by our life experiences. Yet there is more. We need to spread our stories. We need to tell others what God has done for us. We need to share the stories of Jesus with others and let them decide for themselves whom they will follow. I see messages all the time on Facebook that some don't feel they need to go to church that God is in their hearts. It's good to know and that is true. However, our

churches (if the service comes from a church building or out on the front lawn) are where we gather as that body of one.

We have seen and lived through some very interesting and trying events. We will go on, in or out of our buildings, because they are just mortar and stone. Jesus was the cornerstone, the one that the builders rejected. Yet, even though some rejected him and still do, he continues to support the building of the kingdom. Jesus is the center and most important part of our future. Knowing Jesus and accepting him in our hearts, that is the most important decision we need to make. Where we live, no big deal. If our homes are modern or show a shade of the past eras is of no matter. It is our hearts that if they need renovation, need to be attended to the most.

Jesus asked his father in heaven to protect us as he was preparing to ascend back to heaven. He asked for us to be one, as Jesus and the Father are one, he wanted all his people to act as a body of one. Don't let fear and anxiety separate you. Don't look at the church as the only place to worship, because we have learned it is not. Let us be that body of one just as Jesus wanted us to be, then and now, time is irrelevant to His plans. Keep your faith, stay the course, pray and ask for forgiveness because you will sin and fall short. Yet, God is listening in the streets, in the jail cells, in the hospitals, in the churches, and in our own homes. Amen.