

"Teamwork"

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Grace and peace be multiplied to each of you from our Triune God, applying also to ourselves the words of the Prophet Elisha to his frightened servant: **"Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."** Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, like pretty much everything in our world, there is little balance when it comes to sports. Depending on the natural gifts you were given, and whether you recognize it or not, your tendency will either be to overemphasize or disparage, with very little middle ground. Our natural tendency in most things is to migrate to the binary – yes/no, black/white, good/bad – and those determinations are usually made according to personal feelings rather than objective facts. Curiously though, despite our inclination to view things as black or white, very little in life fits neatly into one or the other. There are, however, some obvious examples of misguided emphasis in the world of sports.

How much, for example, would you be willing to pay to attend this year's Super Bowl in person? While "reasonable" may be in the eye of the beholder, consider that last year one of the Super Bowl participants rented a stadium suite for his family and friends for \$3M. A bit out of your budget? You and your spouse could probably get by this year on \$50,000. It's easy to lose all perspective. One site that tried to quantify what it would cost referred to it as "an investment." I'm not at all sure that whoever wrote that is familiar with the general concept or goal of investing.

The Super Bowl is by no means an anomaly. It's not uncommon to see Little League players (10-12 years old) outfitted with hundreds of dollars of custom equipment – and baseball is listed as only the 16th most expensive sport. Good luck if you want to get your child into hockey, skiing, or, perish the thought, equestrian.

While the question of "worth it" will be argued until Christ returns, there are obvious benefits to athletics. My own most common and most valuable lesson was to learn how to lose gracefully. There is also the benefit that serves as our focus this morning, and which redirects our focus from the secular to the spiritual: the overused and often cheesy concept of teamwork.

That section of God's Word that will form the basis for our study this morning, and which offers divine guidance on the spiritual aspect of

teamwork, is found in the New Testament Book of 1 Corinthians, the 12th Chapter:

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 12:12-27** *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. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ ¶ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹ 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." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ ¶ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

This is God's Word. May God the Holy Spirit give each of us a wise and receptive heart so that we might accept these as the words of God alone, recognize that they speak to each of us individually, and faithfully respond to them according to our Savior-God's direction and will. To this end we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!"** Amen.

Like it or not, football is arguably the greatest example of the need for, and value of, teamwork. It is the ultimate "team sport." Many sports have almost nothing to do with teamwork – like golf, individual track and field events, gymnastics, singles tennis, and skiing. Others have a minimal reliance, at most. A championship soccer team can have a

couple of chunks that mostly just lumber up and down the pitch, a winning little league team with a couple of star players can include a right fielder that mostly just chases butterflies, and a good hockey team can survive with one dude who would rather be a figure skater. Football is different in that, both on offense and defense, every single one of the 11 players on the field has to do their job for the team to succeed. The best quarterback is nothing if his receivers can't catch his perfect passes, or if he has no offensive linemen to protect him. The best receiver is nothing without an accurate quarterback. The best runner is nothing without blockers. In football, one player can destroy the all-star efforts of the other ten.

Many of you are probably way ahead of me as to how this relates to our text. The Apostle Paul or, more accurately, *God the Holy Spirit* communicating truth to us through his servant Paul, teaches us that kingdom work is designed and intended to be a team effort. Not a baseball or soccer team effort. A football team effort. There are no unimportant participants in kingdom work.

That's where every single Christian needs to begin – with the individual realization that what you have to contribute is vitally important to the work God has entrusted to his Church.

If you've ever participated in a team sport, there is a lesson that you probably learned (maybe the hard way) about team competition: the importance of each team member relying on their teammates to do what they are supposed to, along with the frustration when even just one does not. On one critical play last weekend, for example, of the 22 men on the football field, 21 did their job and one did not. The result for that one man's team was bitter defeat.

Frustrating for that one guy, and for the one guy's teammates for sure, but in the end it was just an overhyped game. If that's all it takes to ruin your day, week, or life, you're way too invested. Not so with kingdom work, which is why every single Christian needs to first recognize his or her individual importance.

The Holy Spirit in our text established the teamwork aspect of his Church with these words: ***For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*** ¹⁴ ¶ ***For the body does not consist of one member but of many.*** God did not design his Church to be a loose collection of individual parts. He designed it to be team, where each has been blessed with gifts that he fully expects us to use. The devil is well aware not only of God's wise design but of how effective his design truly is. His relentless attacks,

therefore, ought not surprise us – the most effective of which is to convince individual Christians that what they have been given is unimportant, and that because they don't have one gift, they have nothing important to offer.

Listen again to how God wisely addressed this fiction in our text: ***If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.*** ¹⁶ ***And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.*** ¹⁷ ***If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?*** ¹⁸ ***But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.*** ¹⁹ ***If all were a single member, where would the body be?*** ²⁰ ***As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.***

As obvious as these words ought to be, we still tend to miss the critical message if we don't make them personal. If we don't apply them individually. Suppose a football lineman would reason that because he is not the quarterback, he doesn't really need to block the gargantuan man whose singular focus is to remove your quarterback's helmet with his head still inside. Problem? And that's just to win a *game*. How much more when we are talking about rescuing souls from the eternal torment of hell?

There are other attacks that Satan and his minions have perfected in their effort to destroy the unified body of God's Church. One is to inject it with a couple thousand CC's of jealousy. Our text addressed also this attack. The human body, as God designed it, knows nothing of jealousy. Our feet are perfectly content to be feet. They do not while away the hours longing to be eyes. Our hands are perfectly content to be, and to do the job of, hands. They spend no timing wishing they were kidneys. Each part is not only content to function as designed, each has a love and respect for every other part. Far from experiencing jealousy that they cannot do what another part can, they respect and admire those parts for doing what they themselves cannot. They are treasured as "teammates." Each part also protects every other. In our text we are told, ***"On those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty."*** Our relationship with our fellow Christians is supposed to be modeled after our own bodies. Every morning your whole body works to cover (to dress) those parts that require greater modesty, that were not, since the fall into sin,

intended by our Creator to be exposed. What happens when those modest parts are inadvertently exposed? In love and respect the brain, the arms, and the hands instantly react to cover them. In other words, they fulfill their individual function in love and respect – a team functioning as only a team can.

Our text continues: ***If one member suffers, all suffer together.***

Suppose you slipped on the ice and broke your arm. What would be the reaction of the other parts of your body? Laugh in derision? Secretly delight that that flapping appendage finally got what was coming to it? Obviously not. As Paul said, the whole body would suffer together. All would come to the aid of the injured part. Sympathetic eyes would examine, the other arm would gently cradle, and the legs would carry the body to those who can help. That's what a team does. When one suffers, all suffer together. Learn the lessons from your own body.

Again from our text: ***If one member is honored, all rejoice together.***

How would the rest of your body react if someone were to tell you that you had beautiful eyes? No jealousy, no complaints from legs or ears, no attempt by your other body parts to move into the spotlight. All would be warmed in the glow. That's what a team looks like. When one is honored, all are honored. Learn the lessons from your own body.

Our text sums up all in the final verse: ***Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*** It's not about us as individuals, is it? It's about Christ. Christians are not just "a body," we are ***"the body of Christ."*** Individuals, certainly, but connected to each other through faith in Jesus Christ. Because, again, it's all about Jesus and what he has done for us. We were, each of us, hideously filthy and deformed by our sin and unbelief. But God had mercy on us. He loved us with a pure, selfless love – so much so that he sacrificed his own Son to cleanse and redeem us. And then he did even more. He grafted us into himself. Think of it. If you've ever encountered a long-term homeless person, the first thing you probably noticed was the filth and the smell. Far from wanting to wrap your arms around that person, your first inclination is to get away. With God it was dramatically different. Though we were infinitely more loathsome compared to his holiness, he not only determined to wash away the stench of our sin but to take us into himself as a beloved part of the ***"body of Christ."*** Absolutely amazing.

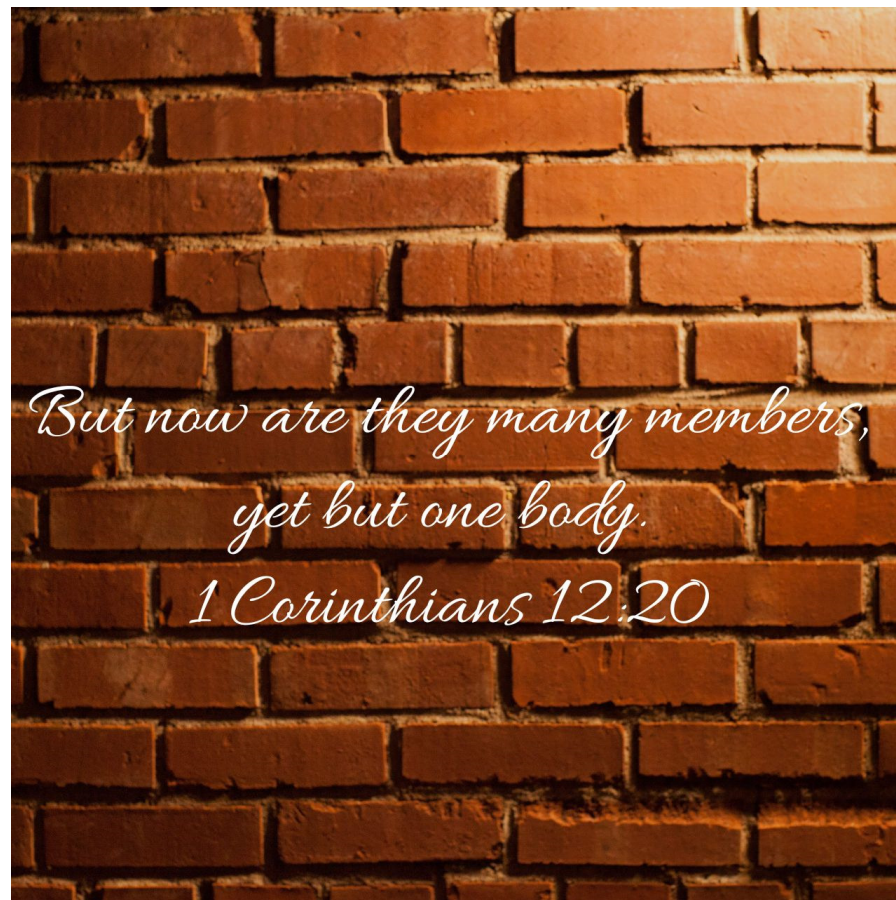
The lessons here taught are more than just learning to treasure our fellow church members. It is more than just learning to identify and use the gifts God has given each of us as members of his body. It is the realization that that is God's design for his Church and therefore the wisest, most stable

platform not only for the protection and preservation of those that are already his, but for the winning of those who are not. God help us to recognize both *what* he has given to each of us and *why*. Amen.

^{ESV} **Nehemiah 8:4ff.** And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose... ⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. ⁶ And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ...the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸ They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹ ¶ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

^{ESV} **Luke 4:16-30** And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And 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 proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³ And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." ²⁴ And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 12:12-27** 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. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ ¶ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹ 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." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ ¶ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.



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The Third Sunday after Epiphany— January 26, 2025

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 11

"Safely through Another Week"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The First Lesson: (Nehemiah 8:4ff) The Christian faith was always intended by our God to be a balancing act – in many ways. There is a time to be sad and a time to rejoice; a time to sorrow over sin and a time to rejoice in forgiveness. So also in our first reading we recognize that the children of God, above all others, ought to be able to rejoice in the goodness of our God and in the joy of our salvation.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 121 (Supplement Page 42)

The Second Lesson: (Luke 4:16-30) Note the dramatic change evident in those who heard Jesus' words in our second reading. What changed? We read first that all spoke well of Jesus, and then suddenly they were so enraged they were ready to kill him. What changed was that Jesus spoke truth that they didn't want to hear: Jews would reject Jesus as their Savior and Gentiles would be welcomed in. God's favor is based solely on an individual's relationship with his Son Jesus.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed *(Projected on Screens)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 408 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Jesus Christ, My Pride and Glory"

The Sermon – 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

"Teamwork"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 324 *(Stanzas 1-2, 5) (Red Hymnal)*

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive"

The Preparation for Holy Communion *(Brown Hymnal page 17)*

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving *(Brown Hymnal page 20)*

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 152 *(Sing of Christ Hymnal) (Projected)*

"Thanks to You, O Christ Victorious"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (19) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-6:00 p.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Samuel Naumann is considering the call to Faith of Manchester, MO. Pastor Paul Krause is considering the call to St. Stephen of San Francisco. Pastor Paul Nolting has announced his pending retirement from the pastoral ministries in Valentine, Mission, and White River. He plans to continue serving during the calling process. Blair Sydow has **received and accepted** the call to continue serving as the upper grade teacher at Holy Trinity of West Columbia. Trinity School of Watertown, SD has called Teacher Claire Abbas.

Care Package – The Women's Fellowship is preparing a care package for our lone out-of-town student. Anyone who would like to add to the package should do so by February 9th.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet tomorrow evening at 6pm.

Midweek Bible Study – A reminder that we have resumed our Wednesday Bible Study. Hope to see you there.