

Sermon – October 28, 2007

“The Power of One – NOT!!”

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Intro:

1. Brush with Fame story
  - Carousel Ball – College – Limo – Call to get Ahhnold – before he was the governor, just finished T-1 – Pile of Bags – His/My Thoughts
2. I’m not naturally a team player – nor is it a part of American psych
  - Started in third grade with 5 classmates and Japan report
  - Hate group work in college, team sports, etc
3. When we look into scripture, it becomes pretty clear that God wants us to work together, to be team players. Let’s listen to a reading from First Corinthians Chapter 12:

Scripture Reading: Video

1 Corinthians 12:12-20

History of Paul & the Corinthians – bad-kid church, but most loved, constantly finding new ways to get in trouble. If the church at Corinth were a child, it would be the child you would not be surprised to hear say “But you didn’t tell me I couldn’t use the lawn mower in the family room”.

In the portion of 1 Corinthians leading up to the section we just read, Paul is dealing with the childish behaviors of the Corinthian Church

- Some are using the Lords Supper to feast and get drunk, so he rebukes that practice and reminds them what communion is to be about
- And then, of more importance, he challenges them to not divide themselves based on their spiritual gifts – their talents or their roles if you will.

Paul in this letter, and in most of the letters he wrote to the fledgling churches makes unity a priority, making it clear that it is God’s will that we work together as the body of Christ.

And in studying the scriptures, I think we can find 3 main reasons that unity in the church is a priority of God’s.

- I. God uses our differences, our uniqueness, our own talents and graces to serve specific roles on the team – the body. That was the heart of the scripture reading we just heard.
- Surrendering to the will of God, becoming part of the body does not mean losing our identity as an individual, it means completing it, it means harnessing and channeling all that makes us who we are to a greater good, to advancing God’s purposes
  - If people were in charge of selecting who should lead the decisive moments of church history, we wouldn’t choose the right leader. List of unlikely persons God has used –
    - **Abraham** – a very old man with a cynical wife well past child bearing years that God chose to found what would become the Jewish people
    - **Moses** – a man who stuttered, who had anger management issues that culminated in murder and becoming a fugitive – yet chosen to lead the people out of slavery to the promised land
    - **David** – the youngest son in a very NON-ROYAL shepherding family, filled with greed and envy and lust that ultimately led him to the murder of his most trusted advisor so he could have his wife, yet David is regarded as the pinnacle of Israel’s kings, uniting the kingdom and the people
    - **The apostle Paul** – a man so inflamed with hatred toward followers of the fledgling Christian faith that he dedicated his life to stomping out that faith, until he met the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus and was transformed into the man who would bring the light of Christ to the gentiles, travelling thousands of miles planting scores of churches and preaching the gospel, until ultimately he was executed by the Roman Empire for his faith
    - **Martin Luther** – A cantankerous monk who dared to question the corrupt practices of the established church, who nailed 95 theses to the door of the Cathedral at Whittenberg and unknowingly started the Protestant reformation and changed world history
    - **John Wesley** – a bookish, shy and self focused academic who struggled with his faith for years until he felt his heart strangely warmed at Aldersgate, and knew that God was offering him the GIFT of a saving relationship, and knew that he had to share that message with the people that the church of England would much sooner ignore – going on to ultimately and somewhat reluctantly found the people called Methodists.

God uses who we are, our strengths AND our weaknesses to work together to accomplish his purposes.

- II. God wants us as part of the body because we become accountable to one another, and we hold each other accountable to God
- That was the early history of the Methodist movement – small groups that met weekly to encourage one another and holding one another accountable by asking, “How is it with your soul?”
  
  - In our own church we sharpen each other, act as conscience for one another
    - That’s a painful but necessary process, but it won’t work if we detach ourselves from the body, if we won’t listen with an open heart and mind.
  
  - We need to acknowledge that as we go forward in our capital campaign and relocation process, there are those of us in the church who need to hear those prophetic voices which are reminding us to not forget the poor and disenfranchised, not to forget this neighborhood, not to forget the missional focus which drives the heart of what our church is.
  
  - But likewise, there are those in this church who need to hear the voices that are genuinely concerned about the future existence of this church in its current deteriorating facility, a facility designed for a congregation of 2000+, a facility in a location with poor visibility, with costs for maintenance, repairs and utilities escalating alarmingly. We need to LISTEN to those voices who see a bright future for this congregation, a legacy that stretches beyond the 10-12 years of an uncertain future we would face here, even if that bright future is not the exact one we ourselves might have envisioned, or even preferred.

III. Finally, God wants us as part of the body because working together we can accomplish more, be more bold, take more risks, achieve greater glory, work to see that God’s kingdom is established on earth as it is in heaven.

- In 1969 I was 7 years old when the Apollo 11 mission launched to the moon. I remember watching on TV the astronauts stepping onto the moon for the first time, and somehow, even at that age, I understood that the boundaries of what we call humanity were

being stretched that night – even broken. But I don't think at the time I appreciated the fact that thousands of people had worked together, ordinary people working together to achieve the extraordinary –

## LET'S WATCH

God calls us together as a church – to act in unity - because God wants us to be bold, to take risks, to accomplish those purposes and designs that NONE of us could conceive, much less achieve, alone.

- Close with the Methuselah story:

Methuselah was one of those early Genesis characters, heroes we don't hear much about any more. He lived longer than anyone else recorded in the Bible, and I suspect he managed to live so long by NOT taking risks, and by NOT dreaming big.

Indulge me while I read the entire biblical account of the glorious life of Methuselah:

Genesis 5:27: **Methuselah lived a total of 969 years.**

**Then he died.**

(NIRV)

We're called as God's people, as the body of Christ known as the church to do more than live a certain number of years. We're called to live boldly, to take risks, to say things and to do things that many in this world would rather we not say, would rather we not do.

Lakewood United Methodist Church is the oldest church in the area now called Lakewood. It was formed in 1881 and served the city for 126 years and then it \_\_\_\_\_. We have the unique and distinct honor of completing that sentence by the attitude and the actions we all take, TOGETHER, over the next several years. Let's strive, together, to do and to be what God calls us to do and to be. Amen. Let's Pray: