

**Sermon Notes of  
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on October 14, 2018:**

**"What (Who) is the Church?  
(1 Corinthians 12:12-27)"**

**[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows what it means to be a part of the church – the body of Christ.]**

**Notes**

Introduction:

- This month we are going to continue our series about the church.
- Some of the material comes from Gary Deddo's essay on the church (12 segments), which is on GCI's website.
- And so the question today is, "What or who is the church?"
- Now, we need to realize that the church is not the building outside, but rather each of us here.
  
- The word "church" is mentioned 112 times in the New Testament.
- It begins in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus said to Peter, "and on this rock I will build my church."
- The word for "church" in the Greek is *ekklesia*. It's derived from *ekkaleo* – meaning "to call out" or "an assembly".
- So when we define the word "church", it means those called out.
- Now, what's important to realize is that the church on earth is an extension of and a reflection of the church in heaven.
- Now today, as we draw closer to God, as we fellowship and have snacks together afterwards, we are reflecting something that is much greater than just ourselves.

Letter to Diognetus:

- So, today, we're going to talk about the church – your spiritual family ancestors from a special letter.
- It was an anonymous Letter to Diognetus (Church Father), possibly dating from 134 A.D. to possibly the second century.
- This was a non-Christian writing about Christians – believers in Jesus and a part of the church, in that time period.
- And as we read through this, note the similarities of us today and realize that this is our spiritual heritage, our spiritual family, who lived in tougher times than most of us experience today.

The letter:

*"Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life.*

*Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.*

*And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country.*

*Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven.*

*Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything.*

*They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they, rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life.*

*They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred. To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen.*

*The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.*

*Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together.*

*The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself."*

- This letter speaks about the transformation process that we are all going through.
- Last week, we talked about the fact that we enter the kingdom through suffering, which began with the early church members.

- From that letter, we also see that a life of a Christian or believer is distinct.
- So, what does this mean in today's context?
- Our job or calling today is to love God and to love others – and when we do that, we are noted as being different than others.

### Paul's description of the church:

- So, let's unpack a number of verses in 1 Corinthians, where Paul uses one of his four metaphors to describe the church, with the metaphor of the human body.
- Now, the Corinthian Church, even though it was the body of Christ and they believed in the Father, Son and Spirit, they still had their problems.
- The church at Corinth was known by other Christians as a little bit dysfunctional.
- We know that it's impossible to love others without first loving God.
- It is God's love flowing through us that enables us to love each other.
- This passage of scripture relates to each and every one of us today, as well.
- Now the body of Christ doesn't include everyone (the non-believers), but the ones who have responded to God's calling, those who put their trust in Jesus and have committed their lives to Him.

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NASB):**

**12) For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

- So, the first point is that each of us comprise or are a part of that one body of Christ, which is the universal church everywhere and in that process we reflect the very Son of God.
- Jesus said that He would build His church – so this isn't just our church – it's the church of Jesus Christ, who loves us more than we can imagine.
- Now here's an interesting quote: "Be where the body is".
- Ed served as our Student Body President at Ambassador College in Pasadena from 1989 to 1990.
- One night, Ed was talking to the student body leaders of the college and his one phrases that impressed pastor Craig the most was, "Be where the body is".
- Ed's comment was that if the student body was on the basketball court, be in the stands.
- If the student body was in a concert, be there to participate or be in the audience.
- The Greek word, *ecclesia*, means "assembly."
- Now it takes more than one person to assemble.
- An assembly is a collection of people gathered together for fellowship.
- Now the Christians we read about in that letter and the life that they led, we see that they had a different perspective on life than the society around them.
- The church isn't necessarily about the message given, it's about coming together, singing together, worshiping together and being a family sharing our heartaches from

the week with one another, sharing our blessings from the week and to rely upon one another for comfort and encouragement.

- And when we are assembling together, we are reflecting the church in heaven.
- And so when we are together where the body is, that's a good thing such as in our flourishing groups or in our Bible classes or getting together for coffee or lunch.
- The early church met in people's homes.
- It wasn't until 200-300 AD, before the church meet in separate buildings.
- Now, it's our role, even though we are citizens of heaven, so to speak, to get involved in our community to be that light and to be that example, to help others and to be a good neighbor.

**13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.**

- So Paul tells us that in God's economy, the membership of the church cuts across all socio-economic, educational, language, or racial barriers.
- So in the body of Christ, we are all one – we are one family who love each other.
- And we're also going to see, as Paul points out, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is that each and every one of us, in the body of Christ, are needed.
- Now, some who feel that they are lesser than others, will be shown that they, too, have important gifts.
- Our transformational life that we live out is distinct and different than what we naturally do as human beings.

3 important facts about spirit-given diversity in the body of Christ stated by Paul:

- Spirit-given diversity is the fact that each of us, at God's choice, has gifted us in unique ways.
- God has placed us, by His choice, in the body, as He sees fit, not necessarily how we see it.
- We should rejoice in the fact, that whatever role we might have in being part of the body, part of the church, part of the family, it's for a reason.
- Paul is not talking about interchangeable parts, where one can be replaced with the other.
- We are all needed in the body of Christ – each of us – to uplift and fulfill and edify the church.

1. The body needs different functions if it is to live, grow and serve.

**14) For the body is not one member, but many. 15) If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,"**

- Now, what kind of body would it be, if the foot decided to only walk when it felt like it? Or "I'm only going to walk when someone asks me to do a job or I have a specific assignment."
- Or if the hand says, "I'm only going to lift things when I feel like it" – what kind of body would that be?

- In this metaphor, we see the importance of everyone working together, even though they may not be specifically called upon.

**15) If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16) And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.**

**17) If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18) But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.**

- Do we believe that we are here, specially placed in the body, as God has desired?
- When we believe that, it makes a difference.
- If we don't believe that God loves us and has included us and placed us in His body, as He desires, that makes us think less of ourselves.
- We need to realize that all of us are precious in God's eyes and being part of the body of Christ is no small thing, despite what Western society might tell you.
- God has called each one of us with a role.

**19) If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20) But now there are many members, but one body.**

- So, the foot isn't off doing one thing and the hand off doing something else.
- Now we know that the head of the church is Jesus Christ – He is always part of the body.
- And each of us, as members, are a part of that body should remind ourselves of that fact and live that role out.
- We are all valuable – we are all loved by God.
- And in the church, He has placed us for a specific purpose.

### 3 Important Facts about Spirit-given Diversity in the Body of Christ stated by Paul:

2. Members promote unity as they discover their dependence on one another.

**21) And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22) On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;**

**23) and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor,**

- So, we see here that Paul takes that net from under us and says that there is no room for anyone of us to say that we are less than anyone else.
- Now, we know that corporate America is based on performance and what we can get done and our value is based on what we can produce.
- This shapes our thinking because that's what we see in life as well as in commercials and ads all the time.

- But in God's economy or organization, it's drastically different – it has nothing to do with the performance based society that we live in.
- It's interesting to note that God doesn't call us to be successful in the church, but rather God calls us to be faithful in the church.
- So, our role, today, is to share God's love with each other and with others

**23b) and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24) whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25) so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26) And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

- Now, if you have an ache in your shoulder, it's hard not to notice that or be aware of that.
- And if you have a migraine, it's hard to function normally.
- If you have any of the aches and pains that we can experience, your body is very aware of it.
- And likewise, if any of us, in the body of Christ, are hurting or are in need, Paul is telling us that we suffer, too.
- And likewise, when one of us in the body is rejoicing over some accomplishment or blessing, we rejoice likewise.
- And that's why it's so important that we come together so we can provide for each other.

### 3 Important Facts about Spirit-given Diversity in the Body of Christ stated by Paul:

3. Diversity of members fulfills the will of God in the body.

### **27) Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.**

- Each and every one of us here today are members of the body of Christ.
- So, when we ask the question, "What or who is the church?" the answer is that it's all of us together as members, all of us as believers, all of us who are responding and participating in a life that is a reflection of the very kingdom of heaven, the very church in heaven.
- So, when we think about that phrase, "Be where the body is" let us be encouraged to assemble together and to connect with each other during the week – that's our role, to love one another.
- That defines who we are, as a church.

Closing prayer