

From Invisible to Indensible

Sanctity of Life Sun. – 01/24/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 24-26 (selected portions) **“But God has so composed the body (of Christ)...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together”.**

Introduction

- ⊗ Though they are invisible to most of us, you and I each have two tiny organs in our ear called the utricle and the sacculus.
 - ➔ The utricle senses your head’s horizontal motion, and the sacculus detects its vertical movement. They are two tiny fluid-filled sacs that live inside the mystical semicircular canals in each ear called the vestibular labyrinth.
 - ➔ The magic happens using otoliths (literally “ear stones”) that are microscopic crystals of calcium carbonate – the stuff that makes up chalk, stalagmites, seashells, and Tums. When these otoliths act up, you can get quite queasy.
 - ➔ Whenever your head moves, the otoliths lag a little behind for a minute and tickle miniature hairs that signal your brain that a shift of position has occurred. This data is compared to that of the other ear as well as what your eye is seeing to give you a sense of direction and orientation. Experts call it proprioception or kinesthesia – the body’s awareness of its alignment in space.
- ⊗ Sometimes one of these itty-bitty otolith particles strays from its usual location. The ear then tells the brain something that doesn’t match up with what the eyes see and you end up with a condition known as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo or BPPV.
 - ➔ BPPV can cause nystagmus – an involuntary wobbling of your eyeballs as they try to follow the imaginary movement. The result – your balance gets messed up, you feel dizzy, maybe fall down and there’s a good chance that you’re going to throw up.
 - ➔ You see, from head to heel, the entire body either moves together or goes haywire thanks to this single speck of dust.
- ⊗ It reminds me of the way James describes the human tongue in his letter – chapter 3:5-8, as being like a little rudder that directs a large ship or how a great forest can be set ablaze by just one small spark.

I. Believers who are Disoriented

- ⊗ In our Epistle Reading today, St. Paul addresses the Christians who live in the bustling city of Corinth. Paul is like a doctor sent from God on a house call to this young Church. And here in chapter 12 he diagnoses their condition – that they have become disoriented to their invisibles.
 - ➔ They are treating many of their fellow believers – those who are not serving in prominent, public or popular positions – as if they are invisible, and therefore un-valuable to the Church.
- ⊗ Earlier, in chapter one, those who follow Paul are overlooking the ones who follow Apollos or Cephas or even the so-called Christ-follower crowd. Then in chapter five one member of the church allows his lust to get the best of him so that he takes up his stepmother as his mistress. In chapter seven we hear about one saint suing a fellow believer in an unloving grab for power and/or money. And in chapter nine members are looking at their pastor as nothing but slave labor instead of a respected spokesman for God.

- Then this dysfunction continues in chapter 11 when they treat Holy Communion as if it is merely a gathering for food rather than God's means of grace; His expression of Christian fellowship.
- In all of this, these Christians so quickly became blind to the way that the Jews earlier tripped over Jesus and lost their faith by focusing on their need for influence, and how the Greeks became so obsessed with gaining wisdom that the true Wisdom from God – His Son, Jesus, became invisible to them even as He stood right in front of them.
- ✘ This self-centered, sinful focus upon themselves proved to make the Corinthian Christians spiritually – even physically dizzy and sick as Paul says in chapter 11:30, “That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died”.
- Yes it is dangerous when the eye and the ear don't perceive the same orientation of the body. A dog that chases its tail round and round, when it finally catches it and bites into it with a ferocious chomp, quickly learns that the invisible part of his body is just as important as the part he uses daily to devour his meals.
- ✘ Martin Luther describes it like this: “If anyone's foot hurts him, yes, even the little toe, the eye at once looks at it, the fingers grasp it, the face puckers, the whole body bends over to it, and all are concerned with this small member. Again, once it is cared for, all the other members are benefited.”

II. Invisibles in our World Today

- ✘ This time and place in which we live has its own invisibles too. We 21st-century earthlings have people among us who easily become invisible. They are classified as embryos – cells, tissue, tumors, uterine contents, products of conception – but “not human yet”. And the fact that our laws and leaders make abortion legal only assists us in overlooking them as persons. Instead they are considered unpretty inconveniences – valuable only for use in research or as experimental material.
- Or we categorize the invisibles as elderly and incapacitated – better off dead because they are now a burden to our lifestyle, but certainly not human anymore. Physician-assisted suicide, as we now have in Colorado, allows us to ignore them as neighbors; to value them only for our inheritance or organ transplants.
- Other invisibles among us are the physically disabled and intellectually impaired. “Who would want to live like that”, we say. “It's tragic and sad and important that we ‘save’ them from their misery” when the truth is that we only want to save ourselves from loving them as God loves and cares for us poor, pathetic, sin-soaked souls.
- Yes, so-called “euthanasia” only empowers us to forget those whom we deem to be less important than ourselves. Just the same as racism and favoritism and bullying and sexism and any of a number of other forms of discrimination based upon a person's skin color, age, gender or social status allows us to deem one person and his/her life as being “less important” than our own.
- ✘ Of course, invisibility says more about the person who is looking at the other one than it says about the one who is overlooked. The problem isn't really about their position or condition but instead about a difference between our vision and what we hear from God.
- It is my vision that I need to be concerned about. Do I hide that person from my view because I don't know what to do with his/her vulnerability; because I don't want to change my situation to care for or consider him as being important and valuable just as much, or maybe even more than me?

→ So instead it's easier to say that "different means less valuable"; "out of sight means not useful"; "difficult life means unimportant life".

III. From Invisible to Indispensable

✘ But Paul shows us today that invisible doesn't mean nonexistent or insignificant. In fact, many of the most invisible things are actually quite indispensable.

→ Don't believe me? Well, what about tomorrow? You can't see it. You can't know much about it with certainty. Yet, without tomorrow today is your last day. Here's a few others: think about memories; angels, love, gravity and of course God.

✘ Paul shows us the one and only superpower that destroys invisibility. It's a power that we receive from outside of us; one that is available to everyone. This superpower; this Word undoes discrimination, darkness, despair, and death itself.

→ It is the power and truth of belonging. You belong. I belong. They all belong too. We belong to each other and to something – someone bigger and greater than ourselves. We belong to the One Father Almighty; the One who put His creative, indispensable power into our race's once-nonexistent atoms with the breath of His own breath into our yet-to-be-created lungs. And in doing so He made ALL humankind His precious treasure; His indispensable handiwork.

→ We belong to the One Christ Jesus, who put our insignificant flesh upon Himself; who put our sinful blood into His veins; our guilt upon His hands, and our punishment upon His shoulders. Why? to redeem ALL humankind with His incarnation, compassion, and crucifixion so that now ALL human flesh belongs to Him; to the One who put His forgiveness into our consciences and His resurrection into our broken little bodies and lives. And the result? we are now His dwelling, His temple, from the moment of fertilization to forever in His family, His household; as His inheritance.

✘ He has made each one of us for Himself. Look, God would never make something that is unimportant or un-valuable, would He? So that means that you and I are all indispensable folks. It means every one of us is part of a community; members of the kingdom; a structure; a body together, just as Paul teaches us here today.

→ Paul says that this body of believers; the body of Christ looks for you and every embryo; this family; this community seeks after you; longs for each baby still within the womb; for all infants, toddlers, youngsters, teenagers, students and adults. Yes, we in Christ's Church hold and cherish and care for you all; whether you are afflicted, impaired, young, elderly, rich, poor, yellow, black, brown, red, white or any shade in between!

✘ And so we don't; we can't overlook abortion as somebody else's business. We can't ignore physician-assisted suicide as someone else's problem. We won't devalue surprise pregnancies, or infertilities, or embryo experiments, or terminal diagnoses. We won't forget about people with disabilities, or about procreation and parenting, or about sanctity of life as if invisible. Every one involves our neighbor, our brother, our sister, our body, because everyone is a blessing and a treasure; a gift, a privilege, a responsibility of ours because they are ALL a priority to God.

→ Because they are indispensable to God, every life is indispensable to us – worth defending, speaking up for, sacrificing ourselves to help; a joy to cherish and honor and esteem as the handiwork of the Creator Himself.

✘ For this to happen, your assessment of yourself must first be understood in concert with what God's eyes see. So your eye cannot look in the mirror now that your ears have heard the truth

of God's Word – about God's creation and re-creation in baptism – and see a life that is anything but indispensable because of Christ.

→ And now that same Word that speaks transformation and life and eternal love to you is the affirming Word of life that you get to speak and impart with them. You get to show them love so that they will benefit from your courage and compassion; and know that they too are not invisible, but indispensable to God and to you.

→ As Paul says, we need each other. And in Christ we have each other. We all belong!

Conclusion

✘ To be Christian is such a blessing folks. It is to get off of the fence and belong to a body of indispensable lives, washed in God's amazing grace. You see, the Gospel gives you and me a front-row seat not only to salvation and eternal life but also to participate in our Almighty God's miraculous work and love; to make an eternal difference in individual souls; to impact your community with the truth.

→ Please pray with me: O Lord, Creator of life and gift-giver of all love and value; grant each one of us here in Your body of believers the ability to remove the blinders that devalue life in every form and instead to see and recognize Your handiwork in all people at every stage of life everywhere in this world. Strengthen and increase Your love in me so that I will reach out more boldly and eagerly to embrace every human being as my neighbor; as one whom You desire to save from sin today and for eternity. In the name of Jesus, Amen.