

The Body of Christ

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday January 17, 2021

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Most Sundays I don't talk a lot about our bodies- our flesh and blood – at least not directly.

Our culture, the world around us, the media and many companies think about them a lot.

I shop at a store called “The Body Shop.”

Consider the clothing companies, the health remedies, the fitness industry, even the travel industry.

There are all kinds of industries that want to treat, cover, clothe, make us look strong, young, sexy, beautify, give you a lift, feed your appetites, indulge you.

You can have a lift, a tuck, they will cover over, and then there are all the restaurants, pubs, things to drink, to smoke, inhale, to overindulge your appetites.

Now don't everyone run off to the fridge or start doing sit-ups.

Media, television, videos movies, are all fascinated with sex.

All this covering, improving, indulging, suggests both a fascination, but also a kind of shame.

We are embarrassed and sometimes a bit squeamish about body language.

But the Apostle Paul sets this conversation in a larger framework, as people who are set free in Christ.

I'd like to read this passage to you again.

This time I'd like you to hear the words as interpreted by Eugene Peterson:

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 The Message (MSG)

Just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it's spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims.

You know the old saying, "First you eat to live, and then you live to eat"? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that's no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honors you with a body, honor him with your body!

God honored the Master's body by raising it from the grave. He'll treat yours with the same resurrection power. Until that time, remember that your bodies are created with the same dignity as the Master's body. You wouldn't take the Master's body off to a whorehouse, would you? I should hope not.

There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one."

Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one."

There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit?

Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

So let's look at Paul's words from the beginning of the passage. The Corinthian church had a kind of slogan; "All things are lawful." And it's very true, we don't live under the law, the law is not the issue.

We don't have to live by dietary laws, there are no laws about what we eat or drink.

I am free in Christ.

As Paul points out, "All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial."

Just because technically it's not prohibited, doesn't mean it is spiritually appropriate, or beneficial.

One of the bigger framework questions that Paul is addressing is what are we free for?

We are free in Christ for what purpose?

Paul argues that we are not free in Christ to be enslaved by our own passions, desires, and whims.

As Paul reminds the church, we have been bought with a price, we are Christ's own people.

The Holy Spirit dwells in this body, your body, my body.

God dwells in me, in my flesh.

I am joined with Christ in this life in my flesh and blood and so all that I do and do not do in this body matters. It matters to me, it matters to the Holy Spirit in me, and it matters to the body of Christ, the church, because we are all joined as one.

In this passage Paul speaks about the mystery of sex- physical union with another person.

The Bible tells us that the two shall become one.

Very often I don't think we really take those words seriously understanding the implications of them.

But consider two people who have been married, and one dies. The other is left having lost a part of themselves. The two were one, and suddenly the one is like an amputee needing to learn to live having lost a significant part of themselves.

This two becoming one, I think, is also part of the reason that sexual assault, rape and incest, are so devastating.

Last Sunday we celebrated our baptisms. We remembered are joined with Jesus in the waters of baptism, we are joined in his death, so we might also be joined to his life.

WE were raised up out of the waters and baptism to new life, named as God's own beloved children, part of the family of God- the body of Christ.

Today we're are going to take into our bodies the body and blood of Christ.

We are going to be nourished in our bodies by the bread we break and the cup we share.

Our bodies are sacred temples, the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

We are free to use our whole being- body, mind and spirit, to the praise and glory of God.

Thanks be to God.