

Sermon January 23, 2022

Scripture I Corinthians 12:12- 31

This morning I want to ask you to look around the church and find someone who looks exactly like you...

Couldn't you find anyone? Now I want you to look around and find someone who thinks exactly like you...

Again, you weren't able to find someone. Now look around and find someone with the same skills you have...or the same experiences that you have.

There is no one exactly like you, even if you are a twin, you are not exactly alike with your thinking and experiences.

None of us is like anyone else in this room or even in this world. What a joy that is! Imagine how boring the world would be if we were all the same.

But how often do we look around and want to be like someone else? I wish I was as smart as that person; I wish I knew more about technology; I wish I was as fit and athletic. On and on it goes as we compare ourselves to other people.

A sea captain and his chief engineer argued as to which one of them was more important to the ship. They couldn't agree, so they decided to switch roles. The Chief Engineer came to the bridge and the Captain went to the engine room. After a couple of hours, the Captain came on the deck. He was covered with oil. He waved a monkey wrench at the Chief Engineer and shouted, "Chief, you'll have to come down here, I can't make the ship go"

The Chief Engineer replied, "Of course you can't. We've run aground!"

Each of us is unique and each one of us is important to the Church, the Body of Christ. What gift do you bring to the congregation?

The greatest gift you can give to the church and to the world is to be yourself. No one else can do that. And reciprocally, to extend the same grace to others: "accept one another, just as Christ accepted you."

In the Letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls us to a better way of dealing with our differences. He compares the church to the human body; although it's made up of many different parts, it forms one body. And so, it is with us. Despite our obvious and many differences, God calls us to a unity that is not bland uniformity, and to a diversity without division. To three different churches Paul writes, "There is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free, male or female, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Right now in the world there are all kinds of divisions and understandings that separate us because we are not listening to one another. There are many strong opinions right now about whether to wear masks or not to wear masks. But in the church, in spite of our differences we are called to be on body-working together.

Each one of us has skills and gifts that we can offer for the healthy ministry of this congregation. Each one of us has an opportunity to give these gifts and share them for the good of all.

This week, I had the opportunity to talk on the phone with many of our deacons. Through these conversations, I discovered that we have many members that have a variety of gifts. I talked with some that like to visit with those who are ill, and others that like to help with KirkCare, and others that write notes. They all talked about the variety of things the Deacons do and how they work together to accomplish their ministry.

During my first week here, I have been learning about the variety of ministries of this congregation and how each one is important to the others. These ministries make First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood the unique congregation that it is. Just as none of us is the same there are no churches that are the same as any other.

As a congregation we are also part of the Body of Christ. We are connected with other congregations in our city, our nation, our world and our denomination. We have particular gifts to share with the world.

Some of the gifts I have learned about this week are the awesome music program and the vibrant youth programs. These gifts are expressed uniquely in this congregation.

As a pastor in the Presbyterian Church for over 38 years, I have met a lot of church members and have worked in a variety of pastoral positions in about 10 churches. One thing I know, is that I have never met one person who is exactly like another.

Also, although we all follow the Book of Order and are of the same denomination, no congregation is exactly like. Even churches that are about the same size have a different context for ministry, One does an emergency shelter for homeless people and another serves a free meal, others support social services in the community.

The Good News today is that God created you, with your own gifts and talents that are important to the Body of Christ and to the world. The church is alive and there are a variety of ministries expressed by different congregations.