

Sermon Series: “Body Talk—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—1/19/2003

Title: “The Purpose of the Body of Christ”

Text: Ephesians 4: 1-16

Intro.: *Ills.: The Collin Powell Doctrine*

Theme: We serve together as Christians in this local church because we have one Lord, one faith, one purpose, and many gifts all aimed at growing Jesus’ church until he returns.

Serving FROM the strength of our unity under and in Christ

- Knowing Who calls the shots
 1. Knowing who is the Master and who is the bond-slave
 2. **Print and read Ephesians 4: 1-2, 8a**
 3. Fellowship = *fellows in the same ship*
- Knowing what holds us together
 1. **Print and read Eph 4: 3-6**
 2. A *common purpose* —a common confession of faith in a God who made us, saved us, and keeps us in the family
 3. A *common mission* —to make disciples of Jesus Christ
 4. A *common leader* —Jesus Christ is the head of the Church

Serving THROUGH the strength of our Divinely resourced ministry

- Acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of our individual and group giftedness
 1. “*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. . . and he gave gifts to men.*” (vs. 7,8)
 - **ILLS.: Everybody, somebody, anybody, and nobody**
 2. Seeing fellow Christians/church members as *comrades* not *competitors*
 - **ILLS.: Being like the bee**
- Acknowledging and uniting behind Christ’s gift of leadership
 1. Intentionally following the leader — Christ’s *gifts* to his church
 2. **Print and read Ephesians 4: 11-12**

Serving FOR the purpose of growing

- Knowing what our mission is:
 1. **To Gather** for celebrating and serving (“*By this all men will know that you are My disciples.*” John 13: 35)
 2. **To GROW** deeper, wider, and farther into our relationship with each other in Christ
 1. “*I pray that. . .Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*” Ephes 3: 17-19
 3. **To Go** to invite others to Jesus and His life
 1. “*In other words, God was using Christ to restore his relationship with humanity. He didn't hold people's faults against them, and he has given us this message of restored relationships to tell others.*” 2 Cor. 5:19
- Knowing how we accomplish that mission
 4. **Functioning as the Body of Christ** –individually and collectively (**Print and read verses 12, 16**)
 1. Being humble enough to be a servant and serve(*Came not to be served but to serve . . .*)
 2. Being humble enough to see the good of the Body as a higher priority than my own (Phil 2: 3-4)
 5. **Maturing in the Word** —both in knowledge and use of the Word (**Print and read verses 13,14**)
 6. **Taking responsibility** —for what happens to the ministry and to each other (**Print and read verse 15**)
 1. A sign of maturity in our own homes and families is when someone *grows up* to take responsibility for others
 2. *speaking the truth in love* (truth without love is a warped lie of Satan; love without truth is no love, at all)

7. **Letting the love of Christ rule** —doesn't mean that we have to like everyone but Christ we are commanded to love

1. “*the whole body. . . grows and builds itself up in love.*” (vs. 16)

2. “*And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*” Col. 3:14

3. “*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*” 1 Peter 4:8

The Collin Powell Doctrine

During the years of the Persian Gulf war most Americans became very familiar with Gen. Collin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, as he daily directed our military efforts and communicated and explained those strategies to the American people. Having lived through the Vietnam War era, Powell had seen the destructiveness of what a disorganized and purposeless leadership, military, and American public had done to doom the war efforts. Seeking not to repeat that scenario, Powell devised a plan to insure that our military personnel were not sent into battle ill-equipped and misdirected. At the time his military philosophy became to be known as the Powell Doctrine. It went something like this: ***Have a focused mission and objectives—a committed and directive leadership—a well resourced fighting force—and a well defined exit plan.*** Putting this plan into place, the American forces were able to completely defeat the Iraqi armed forces in less than 100 days.

Everybody, somebody, anybody, and nobody

This is the story of four people: ***everybody, somebody, anybody, and nobody.*** There was an important job to be done and ***everybody*** was sure that ***somebody*** would do it. ***Anybody*** could have done it but ***nobody*** did it. ***Somebody*** got angry because it was ***everybody's*** job. ***Everybody*** thought that ***somebody*** would do it. But ***nobody*** asked ***anybody.*** It ended up that the job wasn't done and ***somebody*** blamed ***everybody*** when actually ***nobody*** asked ***anybody!***

Being like the bee

The honeybee has one of the most highly developed social structures in the animal kingdom. At the heart of the hive, which may house as many as 80,000, is the queen bee. Without her, the colony has no future. But the 80,000 don't just sit around watching their queen. Each bee has a specialized duty to fulfill. Some are forager bees who encounter the perils of the outside world in order to collect food. Guard bees protect the hive entrance from intruders. But even more specialized functions are being performed. Scientists have recently learned that a few bees serve as undertakers; they are responsible for removing dead bodies from the hive. And other bees are water collectors who bring in moisture to regulate humidity. In addition, plasterers make a kind of cement to repair the hive, and scent fanners station themselves at the entrance and fan the scent outward to signal the location of the colony to lost or disoriented bees. Another kind of bee, the scout, keeps the hive alerted to opportunities and dangers in the outside world. The variety and specialization of the worker bees seems endless.

Ephes. 4:1-16

¹As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train // and gave gifts to men." ⁹(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. [NIV]