

1 Corinthians 12:12-26 - "From Invisible to Visible" - Life Sunday - 2021

Adapted from a sermon by Rev. Fredric Hinz, lutheransforlife.org

The world is full of mysteries. Not just the "who-done-it" types that entertain us, but profound mysteries which fill us with awe and wonder.

Some of these mysteries involve our amazing bodies. Take for example our body's pituitary gland. Even though it's the size of a pea, invisibly located at the base of the brain, it rules as the king of all the glands. The human body is very sensitive to hormones, therefore, failing to control the about of hormones in the blood can result in disastrous effects on our health, and can even result in death. Mysteriously working together with the brain, the pituitary gland releases the right amount of hormones at the right time for our growth and development.

A far greater mystery is spoken of in Genesis 1:1, where we read, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* And six times we're told, *"God said...and it was so."* How does that work? God's invisible words are spoken and a visible, material world is brought into being. This is a mystery that we'll never be able to comprehend even though some of us try, coming up with a variety of false conclusions. One thing mainstream science and scientists do admit is that all matter came into existence at the same time—in an instant, out of "nowhere" and from "nothing"! Of course this is not entirely true since "the fact of the **matter**" is that before matter came into being, there was God. That's why the first words of Scripture say, *"In the beginning, God."* All things depend on God's existence, His presence, and His Word. *"In Him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28).

Then, of course, there's the mystery of the new creation, which we witnessed at the beginning of the Divine Service with the Jordon Baptism of Nathan and Natalie Jordon. As I mentioned a couple of Sundays ago in relation to Jesus' Baptism in the Jordon river. "Our unity with Christ in Baptism works both ways. While Jesus inherited our sins and all their fruits (which He was able to overcome through His death and resurrection), we inherited His death in payment for our sins together with His victorious resurrection from the dead, that we may live in unity with God and one another according to the New Life which is ours now and forever in Jesus Christ." Another profound mystery.

Today, our text picks up on this mystery of our unity with Christ and one another by speaking of our unity in the midst of our differences. "Unity in diversity" is the mystery described by the Apostle Paul. In chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians he encourages us to cherish this unity that is ours in Christ. At the same time He urges us to guard against jealousies and divisions that might spring up from within the body of the Church because of our differences. *"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable."* Like our physical bodies, the church is composed of many parts which are meant to work together. How foolish it is, Paul says, not to acknowledge both our own importance in the body as well as the importance of every other part whether external or internal, visible or invisible, large or as small as the pituitary gland.

This same truth can be applied to all members of the human family, all members of society. No one is to be considered less than anyone else—to be dispensed of as though they are unimportant. Unfortunately, this is exactly what’s happening in most parts of our world today. Those youngest among us (those not yet born), as well as the oldest and those with various disabilities (who tend to be less visible, especially during the current pandemic) are considered by some to be dispensable. This is the inhuman, perverse judgement of those influenced by the materialist philosophy of our age—of those whose evolutionary mathematics equate worth with usefulness, and value with strength. “The survival of the fittest.” As a result, those who depend on us the most are dispensed with through things like abortion and assisted suicide.

Thankfully, this is not the math that God uses to calculate our value or worth. Paul sums up God’s math when he says, “*On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,*” ...for “*God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body.*” This means that weakness and dependency, far from being things that disqualify us from society and the church—that make us a zero in the eyes of the world—are the very things that make us more valuable in God’s sight.

To the world, this is a great mystery; that God would hold everyone equal and highly valued based solely on their status as a human being, apart from any ability to produce or compete. In fact, to be given great worth based on the fact that we (unlike other parts of this physical world, are created “*in the image of God*” (Genesis 1:27) is a offense to many (those who don’t believe in God).

But that’s exactly what God has done. He who spoke the world into existence and sustains its existence by the power of His Word; He is the One who says that each and every person, no matter how young or old, weak or strong, seen or unseen, is an indispensable part of the body. And God proclaims this truth most clearly, and most powerfully by not only by saying that He “*desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4), but by making salvation possible for all people through the physical life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, whose physical life as our Savior began as an unseen embryo, and who was considered by the world as dispensable, has become the most indispensable of the indispensables of this world. Through His death and resurrection, we who often fail to treat others as the indispensable people they are; who often act as though we are more important than others, are declared fully and freely forgiven because of His suffering and death on a cross on our behalf.

This is one of the greatest of mysteries, that God loves and cares for each one of us weak, vulnerable sinners; that He declares each of us to be an indispensable part of the whole. And it’s through this mystery that the Holy Spirit works to enable us to repent of our sins, rejoice in God’s forgiveness and restored unity with Him and the whole family of God, and glorify God through our reflection of His love for others; a love which thinks of all people as indispensable.

[Children’s Sermon] I have two coins to show you. These coins are from two different countries. This is a shilling, which is old money from England, and this is half a Shekel, which is new money from Jerusalem (where Jesus died). Which do you think is worth more money? It’s hard to tell by their size. We may think that bigger is better. In England, and Israel, like in America, the government (who makes these coins) tells us what they are worth. This half a shekel is worth about 15 cents, and this old shilling is worth about two dollars. Looks can be deceiving.

Something similar is true when it comes to you and me. Some of us are small (like me), some of us are big. Some are good at math, some are not. Some are boys and some are girls; some are weak, some are strong.

Do any of these differences make us more or less important in the eyes of God? No.

Do you know what Jesus looked like before He was born? [Show fetus model] Yet even at this size, Jesus was almighty God. Looks can be deceiving. That’s why we trust in what God tells us in the Bible, because He is the one who made us.

God tells us that we are all important. He loves us all the same. That’s why He died on the cross and rose from the death to save us all. And He wants us, as His saved people, to let others know this Good News by loving and caring for them.

All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.