



to be “like” a field, “like” a building or a bride. But here Paul moves from simile to theological truth. We are not “like” the body of Christ, we ARE the body of Christ. And his body is one. Even though made up of many members, just as our own physical bodies are, all the parts work together to make up one body, and all of our members young and old, ill and well, weak and strong, are equally valuable and important in the one Body of Christ. Together we make his body healthy for we are all equal in the eyes of God. In the book of Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37, Luke tells us that there were no barriers between Christians in the early days of Christianity. Rich and poor, men and women, educated and uneducated believers lived and worked, ate and worshiped side by side. In fact he tells us that some who were wealthy sold many of their possessions to provide for the needs of the poorer members so there would be equality among them. And Luke relates in Acts 2:47, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” The way these Christians lived was having a tremendous effect and impact on the society around them. People were coming to Christ because of the example of these early Christians.

We Christians today need to pay attention to God’s Word in Luke and Paul. Just as those early Christians shared one another’s joys and sorrows, we, too, need to take heed. “If one member suffers,” says Paul, “all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” 1Cor.12:26. In his song, “If This Is Not A Place” singer and song writer Ken Medema questions the true purpose of the church. If we are not the Body of Christ in the world, he asks, then where shall I go to cry? And if this is not a place where my spirit can take wings, then where shall I go to fly?” We should ask ourselves this very important question: What would this church be like if every member were just like me? Would this church be doing better or worse? Because it is only through the Body of Christ that this world will come to know Jesus. It is through you and me.

Madeleine L’Engle the American novelist who wrote Young Adult Fiction gives us a great example when she relates her experience after she had visited an Episcopal church in New York. She tells us that a man stood up in that church and said, “I hope this is appropriate to ask. I was an abused child. I’m terrified of being an abusive father. I need help and prayer.” Madeleine L’Engle knew then this was a church she could stay in. “Because people are willing to be vulnerable,” she says, “this church is very different. Sometimes it gets messy, but that’s okay. People are not afraid to ask questions. We’re able to admit we’re all broken, we’ve all made terrible mistakes, we’re all in need, and we all want things we don’t have.”

She said they meet in an upper room. The building was cold, and they gave all their beautiful things to the Metropolitan Museum. “There’s not a mink coat in the place,” she says, “and there’s not anyone else my age there either. They’re all very young, very alive. The five o’clock Eucharist is largely street people on drugs, HIV-

positive, or with AIDS.” One member told her it was the only place where he was called by his name. “It’s a church in which a mother whose 27-year-old son had died is free to say, ‘People think I’m terrible because I can’t pray.’ And I can reassure her, You don’t have to pray. We’re praying for you. That’s what the body of Christ is about.” That is what the church is all about. Some churches make rules and regulations which exclude people. I would think that Jesus might be angry about that, or weep. You are many members but one body in Christ. **Amen.**

*Pastor Barney*