7/8/20 Devotional

Let us reflect upon the following passage from the New Testament

“*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.” “There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.” “There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work in all of us.” Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”* I Cor. 12:4-7

The letter of I Corinthians is about the church, the body of Christ, the family of God. It speaks to our diversity. We are diverse in so many ways. We are diverse in terms of our talents, abilities and spiritual gifts. To one is given the gift of wisdom, to another the gift of knowledge, to another the gift of healing, to another miracles, to another prophecy and so forth. God calls us to use our gifts and abilities in the ministry of the church and in our lives.

We are diverse in terms of our preference for styles of worship and music. Some are comforted by hymns and inwardly groan when praise music is played. Others adore praise music and inwardly groan when hymns are sung. For some music and singing is the high point of worship. Other people would rather spend more time in prayer, silence and quiet contemplation. Still others come primarily to hear a sermon. And others love the fellowship of worship. Though different, we come together for a common purpose, to worship God.

We are diverse as to whether we tend to be more right brain or left brain. Science tells us that the way we think may be determined by which side of our brain is dominant. Left brain dominate people are more fact-oriented, analytical, and literal. Right brained dominant people tend to be more creative, artistic, emotional, and visual.

We are diverse in terms of our age, race, gender, ethnicity, and our life experiences and the wisdom and insights we have gained in life over the years.

We are different in terms of our preference for service in the church. Some enjoy singing in the choir, or serving as a deacon or elder, an usher, liturgist, on a committee, teaching Sunday school, helping homeless people, working with youth or helping in the office.

Our passage addresses the concept of diversity using the metaphor of one body with many parts. Although there are many parts, it is one body. This passage affirms the richness of diversity within the context of unity. Both notions are being affirmed. We are unified by a common faith and by one God, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Originally, this passage was addressing the challenges of having Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, rich and poor all worshipping and working together in one church. Such diversity created problems and the apostle Paul was attempting to teach, encourage and bring unity and harmony in the church. The emphasis was upon unity in Christ amidst diversity.

We are told that some of us are hands, some are eyes, some are ears, some are feet, but all parts are essential. What is God's word in this text?

First, God created us as diverse people. This was God’s intention and plan from the beginning. God has called us, as diverse as we are, into His one church. God created diversity; diversity is good. Diversity means that you are a unique person. God's intent was to create a rich tapestry of people in His church.

Second, all of the parts of the body of Christ, all members of the church, are important and equal. All persons are significant and necessary for a healthy church. All persons are needed for the effective functioning of the body. If one part of the body suffers every part suffers with it. If one part is celebrated, every part rejoices with it. We are interdependent. This is God’s plan.

Third, God wants us to love and accept one another's diversity. God wants us to celebrate and respect one another in the church, even though we may think and act differently. We are to respect one another's differences, to respect our varied abilities and gifts, to be patient with one another, and to always strive to understand and affirm that each of us has a place in God's family. We are not alike, we don't see things alike, but we are all precious persons in God's sight.

Fourth, God imparts diversity, not to instill confusion or chaos, but so that in the Spirit we will work together for the common good. We have a single purpose. To build up the church in order to fulfill God's purpose for His church, which is to spread the gospel, to make disciples of all nations and to win the world for Christ. May God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be glorified in His church. How do you see yourself as a part of the body of Christ?

May God be glorified,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel