

Epistle

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

12 For just as the body is one
and has many members,
and all the members of the body,
though many,
are one body,
so it is with Christ.

13 For in the one Spirit
we were all baptized
into one body
—Jews or Greeks,
slaves or free—
and we were all
made to drink
of one Spirit.

14 Indeed,
the body does not consist
of one member
but of many.

15 If the foot were to say,
'Because I am not a hand,
I do not belong to the body',
that would not make it
any less a part of the body.

16 And if the ear were to say,
'Because I am not an eye,
I do not belong to the body',
that would not make it
any less a part of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye,
where would the hearing be?

If the whole body were hearing,
where would the sense of smell be?

18 But as it is,
God arranged the members in the body,
each one of them,
as he chose.

19 If all were a single member,
where would the body be?

20 As it is,
there are many members,
yet one body.

21 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.'

22 On the contrary,
the members of the body
that seem to be weaker
are indispensable,
23 and those members of the body
that we think less honourable
we clothe with greater honour,
and our less respectable members
are treated with greater respect;

24 whereas our more respectable members
do not need this.

But God has so arranged the body,
giving the greater honour
to the inferior member,

²⁵that there may be
no dissension within the body,
but the members may have
the same care
for one another.

²⁶If one member suffers,
all suffer together with it;
if one member is honoured,
all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are
the body of Christ
and individually
members of it.

²⁸And God has appointed
in the church
first apostles,
second prophets,
third teachers;

then deeds of power,
then gifts of healing,
forms of assistance,
forms of leadership,
various kinds of tongues.

²⁹Are all apostles?
Are all prophets?
Are all teachers?
Do all work miracles?
³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing?
Do all speak in tongues?
Do all interpret?

³¹But strive for the greater gifts.

Gospel ***Luke 4:14-21***

¹⁴ Then Jesus,
filled with the power of the Spirit,
returned to Galilee,
and a report about him
spread
through all the surrounding country.

¹⁵He began to teach
in their synagogues
and was praised
by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth,
where he had been brought up,
he went to the synagogue
on the sabbath day,
as was his custom.

He stood up to read,
¹⁷and the scroll
of the prophet Isaiah
was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll
and found the place
where it was written:

¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll,
gave it back to the attendant,
and sat down.

The eyes of all
in the synagogue
were fixed on him.

²¹ Then he began
to say
to them,
'Today
this scripture
has been fulfilled
in your hearing.'

Reading the Epistle This Week

This is 2nd of 3 weeks of one long train of thought
Imagine Corinthians as excerpts from correspondence,
One side of conversation with context and partners
Last week, framing one Spirit, Lord many gifts, service, goods
This week, one body, many members
Next week: greater gifts, hymn to love/charity

We've so adopted the diction of 'members and body'
To apply it to collections of humans,
We may forget its crude primary meaning:
Body 'parts', as at least NIV renders *melos*

How big a group do you imagine as 'body'?
Is it the local active congregation in Corinth?
Is it all the emergent communities of faith Paul knew?
Today, is it Trinity Annan, UCC, Christians, globally?

The comic imagery is powerful –
Body parts claiming too much for their gifts,
Or denying the necessary interdependence with others
With a side allusion to the taboo parts for waste disposal

The selected text ends with enumeration or roles:
Apostles, prophets, teachers,
Healing, assistance, leadership, tongues (interpretation)
Are they ranked? Mutually exclusive? Recognizable?

The tantalizing hinge ends the reading –
You know where it's going –
But that's next week!

Reading the Gospel this Week

After a very long nativity, baptism and temptation,
Luke launches Jesus with a sermon in synagogue,
Not with miraculous acts or calls to disciples yet,
Though the Isaiah text lays out an active program in lyrics:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
Because God has anointed me
To preach good news to the poor
God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind
To set at liberty those who are oppressed
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*

That's Luke's summary of Jesus' job –
Loosely derived from Isaiah 61:1-2,
Hints of Isa 58.6 and Lev 25 Jubilee traditions

Jesus starts in 'their' synagogues, 'the' one in Nazareth,
'as was his custom' – so why not 'his-our' synagogue?
It's a place of assembly, not just worship/learning,
A community centre beyond Temple

Was Jesus literate, in Hebrew and/or Aramaic?
Did Luke's community in Syria start in synagogue and leave?
This quote is not a regular *haftorah* reading,
More like the song lyrics I quoted above

The old patterns of rhetoric include variations on this:

'1 .Tell 'em what you're going to tell them.

2. Tell 'em.

3. Tell 'em that you told 'em.'

Luke this week is giving you #1,
Summing up the 'overture to the opera' so far,
Laying out the plot in a 'peroration'

Watch for how this summary gets unpacked,

In the narrative which follows –

Luke's Jesus heading

up to Jerusalem,

up to the cross

up to the sky

beginning in Judea,

to Galilee,

into all the world

a 'launchpad' gospel