

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Grace, mercy and peace are yours because you have been made members of Christ's body, the Holy Christian Church through baptism.

NIV 1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Prayer: Lord Jesus forgive us for not caring for each other as you would have us to do. Send your Spirit today through your Word of Law and Gospel to give us a new mind and a new heart to be a stronger body of believers to accomplish great work for your Family.

Introduction: Did you make a New Year resolution to improve an area of your life? Maybe your marriage, your parenting, your faith, your health? I made one to build a stronger body so that I would be able God willing, to play sports with Gabriel when he is old enough, just like I do with my other children. What do I need to do in order to accomplish my goal of building a stronger body—one that can last, one that can avoid needless injuries, one that can recover quickly from sickness and unavoidable injuries, and one that does not lose strength over time? Impossible, you say? True enough; every tick of the clock brings our strength and health down because of the curse of sin in this world. But there are some things we can do to build a stronger body relative to our age. Diet, exercise, rest, vitamins etc. In our text for today, the apostle Paul uses the picture of our body to teach us about the spiritual health of believers.

As members of the body of Christ,
Theme and Parts:

Let's Build A Stronger Body! **We need Jesus** **We need each other**

Part 1: We need Jesus

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

What is this "one body" that we were baptized into? It is the Church of God. When we talk about the body of Christ or the Church of God we are talking about a group of people who have been called out and brought together. The body of Christ, the Church of God is not something we join or sign up for. The design, foundation, structure and building of this group are all up to its Prime Architect: Jesus Christ.

We need Jesus Christ first to make it possible that we can be a member of this body, the Church of God. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Connection to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Our Savior, is what brings us into the Church of God, the body of Christ. Jesus Christ doesn't just speak for us that we might be accepted into this special group of people. Jesus Christ is the very head of this group
NIV Colossians 1:18 **And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.**

Not only is he the head of this group, he is also the very foundation on which the whole Church of God and his body of believers is built on:

NIV Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

We need Jesus Christ first so that we can become members of the Church of God, this special group of people with full rights and privileges of children of God, especially the forgiveness of sins and eternal life; second because he is the head of the church and the foundation of this special group of people. There is nothing the body of Christ can do without its head – Jesus Christ. There is nothing the body of Christ can withstand without the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word.

When it comes to a serious situation, maybe an emergency or a tense pressure packed moment at work, we have the common saying, "Keep your head." Lose your head in any situation and the results will not be in your favor. Jesus Christ is vitally important to us as the Church of God. We cannot survive without His plan and His direction. We also understand that if someone or something is top heavy, they are easy to push over. A strong foundation is necessary to withstand the attacks and advances of our enemies. Jesus Christ is vital to our health as a group of

Christians because we need our firm foundation in his life, death and resurrection for us as we read, hear, and learn it from His Word!

We want to build a stronger body of believers. Then we want to attach all the members of the body to the head to receive His thoughts and His direction so that in all the tense and heart pounding situations of life we will be controlled by our living head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God our Savior. We want to build a stronger body of believers. Then we want to place all the members of the church on the foundation of Jesus Christ, life death and resurrection for them so that when the attacks and advances come from the devil, this world and our own sinful nature we will not be pushovers, but instead have a strong foundation in Jesus Word to stand strong.

Sadly, we can't do this on our own. We cannot build the body of Christ stronger. We need Jesus. He builds his body, the Church of God. He uses his means of grace, the word and sacrament, to give his thoughts, direction and will to his body. He builds his body, the Church of God, on the foundation of His Word – soul by soul.

NIV Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

NIV Acts 2:47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And **the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

Put your trust in Jesus to build a stronger body of believers here at St. Luke's.

Part 2: We need each other NIV 1 Corinthians 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!":26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

We do need Jesus to build a strong family of believers, the body of Christ. Jesus in his infinite wisdom and power built his body to be strong as each part relies on the other. We need each other to be a stronger church for Christ's Kingdom!

The human body is living breathing proof of God's intelligence. What body part do you need in order to hear? An ear, right? Well there's more to it than that, isn't there? What are the three smallest bones in your body? Adjoining the eardrum are three linked, movable bones called "ossicles," which convert the sound waves striking the eardrum into mechanical vibrations. The smallest bones in the human body, the ossicles are named for their shape. The hammer (malleus) joins the inside of the eardrum. The anvil (incus), the middle bone, connects to the hammer and to the stirrup (stapes). These small bones vibrate and move sending mechanical vibrations through our nervous system to our brains so that we can hear variations in sounds.

There can be no doubt that our bodies were put together with a plan to be efficient and work together. The body of Christ was also put together with a plan to be efficient and work together. We need each other just like you need every part of your body to be the most efficient and accomplish great things in your life. Can you survive without hearing? Without seeing? Without walking? Yes, but that is not the most efficient.

In the body of Christ, there is no need or place for looking down on others because they lack certain gifts or abilities. Each one of us has been brought together into His body. He is our creator. There is a reason for our lives joined together at St. Luke's. And that reason is to serve him together.

For example, when I compliment my wife on her beautiful hair, her whole face glows. And if I break my toe, my whole body will be wracked with pain. If one body part is in trouble or under distress, the rest of the body goes on high alert. Thank God he designed our bodies to work that way naturally.

As the body of Christ, the church is to work that way as well. We are to care for those members of Christ body that are under distress and hurting. We are to rejoice with those believers who have been blessed and accomplished great things for the Lord because we know that the Lord uses His whole body to accomplish his kingdom work.

I overheard a conversation at Applebee's and the man said, "He's got it all together." What does someone look like that has it "all together"? Calm, cool and collected. No loose ends. No wild sides. Under control. Strong, confident. Let's build a stronger body here at St. Luke's all together. We need Jesus to bring us together under His Direction and on His foundation in His Word. And by Jesus' design, we need each other to use our abilities so that we can be calm, cool, and collected under pressure as the body of Christ.