

Pleasing God – Serving in the Church

1 Cor. 12:12-31

April 11, 2010

You may have heard the little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. It goes something like this. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but of course, Nobody did it. Well sure enough, Somebody got angry about that because they were certain it was Everybody's job. Everybody knew that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Somebody wouldn't do it. And so it ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

We laugh and chuckle because there is a lot of truth in that little ditty. We can all think of places where we have seen this kind of behavior; at work, at home, and even in the church. Unfortunately, it reflects a dysfunctional organization where serving self reigns over serving others. I would guess that if we were to analyze it from a Biblical counseling perspective, we would find that Everybody, Somebody, and Anybody all had heart idols and needed to repent of their sin and pursue godly change. Ironically, Nobody is the only one without fault. I'll leave you to think that through on the way home.

But seriously, an honest examination of my own heart reveals how much my flesh cares about "me" and what a struggle it is to prefer and serve others. I am often willing to let others do what I could do or at least help to do. I can get angry or frustrated with others because I am sure they are not willing to do what may or may not be their job. And I can easily allow others to be blamed for what I could or should have done, but was more concerned with my own wants and desires. It is a struggle common to all of us and one which we will overcome only by seeing who we are in Christ and entrusting ourselves to the transforming power of the Gospel.

This morning we will look at pleasing God in our serving within the Church. In doing so, it is important that we first review some important truths about being the people of God. We must remember that we are a part of a very special and holy community that finds its identity and purpose in Christ. As part of that community, we have been set apart and now serve a King and a kingdom that is more real, has an eternal permanence, and is of greater value than anything this world can offer.

And perhaps most important, we must remember that we are in every way the living, breathing body of Christ. Christ is the essence of the church. We are not just in Him. He is also in us. He is actively shaping, molding, and preparing us for service in His kingdom. While Christ walked this earth he had a physical body. But now, His body is present in this world through His people. And as the Church, we are present with, and belong to Christ. Let us recognize and stand in awe of the privilege and beauty that is the Church.

So how are we to please God in our service within the Church? Simply put, we must serve through the power, grace, and gifting of Christ or it will be a hollow, man-centered service that accomplishes nothing of spiritual and lasting value. Serving out of obligation, to gain the recognition and approval of others, to gain authority over others, or obtain control over ministry to accomplish our own purposes does not serve Christ or the church. We may not set out to serve with man-centered goals. But over time, our service and ministry can gradually become more about us and less about serving Christ and His body.

As we consider this morning's passage, we must not only recognize and marvel at the church's identification with Christ, we must understand the essential role that serving plays to equip and minister to the body. We find in Hebrews 13:20, a humble prayer that God would equip us with everything good that we may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. You see God will equip us to do His will and is working in us that which pleases Him for the purpose of His glory.

Now the primary means that God has ordained to equip his people for good works is the Church. This comes through the preaching and teaching of the word and all those ministries that support the body life and community in equipping and encouraging believers to please God and bring Him glory. Our service to others within the Church takes on a spiritual value beyond the physical tasks and responsibilities we carry out. From wiping babies' bottoms to bringing a meal to flock, we serve Christ and His body through the gifts, talents, and energy He gives; and thus please Him as we become a visible expression of His love to one another and to the world.

This morning we are going to work through 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 to 31. This is a familiar passage where Paul uses the human body as an illustration of how the church is to properly function. This is not the first expression of the community of believers as a body in 1 Corinthians. Earlier in Chapter 10 verse 17, Paul references the bread of the Lord's Table and says that we who are many are one body. This apparent dichotomy between one and many is then expanded in Chapter 12 in terms of unity and diversity. In Christ, the diversity of many believers is in perfect harmony and support of the unity of one body.

Throughout Paul's letter to the Corinthians we can see that harmony and unity was something the church there was struggling with. They were finding it difficult to develop the kind unity and harmony within the church that pleases God. In Chapters 1 and 3, Paul warns them of divisions and urges them to be united and of the same mind. To some extent, this appears to have kept the Corinthians from maturing spiritually and likely contributed to the factions among them. In Chapter 5 Paul warns them because they were not concerned with the impact of sexual immorality being tolerated in their midst.

Later in Chapter 6, we see the lack of unity exhibited in that there were public lawsuits between fellow believers. In Chapter 8, the lack of unity and consideration to others is seen in those who would knowingly wound the conscience of a weaker brother. And in Chapter 11, we see that in their coming together some were inconsiderate and uncaring toward others and in despising the church, made a mockery of the Lord's Table.

Paul continues in Chapter 12 by addressing their lack of knowledge around spiritual gifts. In describing the purpose and nature of these gifts it is likely that Paul is countering misuse and wrong thinking. Paul emphasizes in verse 4 that the variety of gifts have one source, the Spirit, though many ways of serving, but through one Lord, who is Christ. It is likely that some believed some gifts were more important providing them a higher status in the church. Some may have been misusing their gifts for personal recognition or for their own benefit. There may have been other concerns, but the end result was that these gifts were not being used for the common benefit and service to the Church.

This takes us to our passage this morning. Turn with me to Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians starting with verse 12. As we work through this passage, I would like us to focus on the practical application of serving within the Church in a way which pleases God. Clearly, the main purpose of these verses is to illustrate the proper function and sovereign design of the body of Christ. But I believe there are important lessons that fall out of the text that can inform and guide our service within our own community here at the Chapel.

Follow along as I read through our text this morning; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

Let's begin our time in the Word with prayer.

As Paul turns from speaking about spiritual gifts to the relationships between members of the body, he reminds his readers of their identity in serving and communing with one another. Let's go back to verses 12 and 13 and review the text. *"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. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."* In these verses, we see serving's identity. In other words, the source, nature, and unique characteristics that gives our serving in the church its core essence.

The first of these is found in verse 12 where Paul reminds his readers of the unity they have in Christ. The church is a community that is united with Christ. Just as the human body has many unique parts with differing purposes, we perceive it as a single entity. None of you looked up here this morning and thought "Oh, there is Mark's arm and look there are Mark's legs too." None of you were surprised to see my head show up with the rest of my body, although it would have been hard to preach this message without my eyes, ears, mouth, and brain. So while we recognize the various parts of the body, we naturally understand that its identity belongs to the whole. So it is with the Church.

The community of believers is one and finds its identity in Christ. Yes there are many members but the Church cannot be separated from Christ nor can or should Christ ever be severed from the church. In fact, not only do we have our identity in Christ, but the illustration's deeper reality is the connection here to life itself. That is, just as the body cannot live without the head, we cannot have life without Christ who is the head of the body. John 14:19-20 says, "*Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. **Because I live, you also will live.** In that day you will know that I am in my Father, **and you in me, and I in you.***" In Galatians 2:20 Paul writes, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, **but Christ who lives in me.** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

So how do these truths extend to pleasing God in our service within the Church? First we must remember that when we serve one another individually we serve the whole. You would never tell someone that you served Pastor Devon's stomach a cup of coffee. Nor would you talk about how you helped someone's hands with a project around their house. When we serve, we recognize that we serve the identity of the whole first. Paul's makes his point clear. The community of believers is one body because so also is Christ. When you serve the body you serve Christ. And when you fail to serve the body, you fail to serve Christ. Is this not the sobering thought of Matthew 25:40 where Christ says, "*Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*" If we are to please God with our service within the Church we must serve each other as though we are serving Christ.

Just as serving's identity is seen in the unity we have in Christ, the next verse makes it clear that it must also be understood that the community of believers is joined in the Spirit. Regardless of our identities prior to our conversion, we have been transferred to Christ's Kingdom and are now one in the Church. It is interesting to note that Paul uses two expressions in this verse that both have to do with water. His purpose is to convey that we share a common means of coming into and being sustained in Christ's body. Spiritually speaking, this is to be seen in an external sense, in the word "baptism", and in an internal sense, in the phrase "made to drink". The fullness of the resulting image conveys an essentialness of the Spirit's saturating presence in our lives as having a placing, unifying, and sustaining part of being in the body of Christ.

We are not just united in our identity with Christ as His body while somehow maintaining our own independence from it. We do not just belong together as a loosely

connected community of people. The church is not just a gathering of people for a common purpose. God has inseparably joined us together through the Spirit. There is no such thing as partial or incomplete members of the body. Praise God that we have been fully joined to it; and just as the parts of our body cannot function without the whole, so we are joined and have life together with Christ as the Church.

So in terms of ministry and service what does it mean that we are one in our identity and joining to the church? First, we are to serve and work in a way that guards the unity and harmony of the whole. In practical terms, we must be careful not to think in terms of elevating one Elder over another. Just as the Corinthians developed factions around Paul, Apollos, and possibly others, we must be careful not to create division around our leaders. Second, we should never pit one ministry against another. While ministries have different roles and purposes, there are no elite ministries that are greater or more a part of the body than others. Likewise, we must also strive for unity when we compete over limited resources such as people and funding, always keeping in mind the good of the whole community. And finally, there should always be a spirit of preferring one another and a striving for unity and peace as together we shoulder the burden of ministry and serving one another in the Church. In this way, we please God and avoid the pitfalls of the Corinthian church.

As we move into the heart of the passage, Paul further deepens the illustration between the human body and the Church. In verses 14 to 20 we observe that through a diverse body, God has established serving's design. That is, God has sovereignly established the church by giving it a variety of gift and abilities that are marvelously orchestrated in service for His glory.

Please follow as I read verses 14 through 17. *"For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should 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. And if the ear should 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. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?"*

In verses 14 to 17 we can see the necessity of the diverse nature required to serve the Church. In fact, like the human body, we are to see that diversity is essential to its health and function. Each part of the body has a purpose that fits within a larger purpose and for the sake of the whole. For example, it would be silly and unhelpful if we had four arms or four legs rather than two of each. It is by design that the sum of the parts of the body exists to support the whole and that its diverse nature allows for both proper and complete function. We are also to understand that no part of the body is less or more a part than any other. While there are many functions and roles, all are equally and wholly a part of the greater body.

One practical application here is that we should not envy the role or function of another. Whether in roles of leadership or in serving, we must be content with the ministry God has given us and serve Christ through the church with our whole hearts and efforts. Nor should we pity ourselves and give in to discouragement, thinking that

we cannot serve or are not as gifted as others. All this does is prevent us from pleasing God in our service and destroys not only our joy, but possibly the joy of others as our attitude poisons the ministry of others. There is no opting-out of your belonging to the body of Christ. God has given you to the Church and therefore to all those who make up His body. You are to use whatever gifts and abilities God has given you to serve. In doing so, you will develop a content spirit and a joy in giving of yourself to others.

The other amazing aspect of serving's design is its divine orchestration. Part of the beauty of the Church is the way in which God sovereignly gifts and enables His people for service and ministry. If you have ever heard an orchestra warm up, you understand the clash and barrage of conflicting sounds as each instrument plays independent of the whole. But soon they stop and the conductor walks up, taps his baton, raises his arms, and suddenly the individual instruments join together in majestic melodies, harmonies, and counter melodies as they work together as one. So it is with the body as we join together with God as the perfect conductor bringing us into unity and harmony for the glory and honor of His name.

Follow again as I read verses 18 through 20. *"But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body."*

Paul tells his readers that God has arranged or placed the individual members in the body; and not just some, but each one of them. There are no exceptions. And how has he arranged them? At His own choosing or in other words, as He saw fit for the good of the body. Elders, deacons, nursery workers, office staff, facility maintenance, teachers, and the list could go on, all are gifted to serve as God chose. Brothers and sisters, we have been saved through Christ, are being transformed through Him, and have been placed into the body to do His will and bring Him glory. Not to do whatever we want as though we are independent from one another. But rather, to work as God has divinely orchestrated our role and function within the Church.

We cannot tell from the text, but I believe Paul wrote this to correct the Corinthians in the way they thought about their gifts in service to one another. I believe there are two warnings here. The first is to be careful that we do not doubt God or become discontent in our gifts, roles, or function within the church. When we begin to question God and His sovereignty, we open ourselves up to discouragement, frustration, and sin. We may not blame God directly, but if we do not allow God His authority as the creator and sustainer of the church, we imply that we know better or that God is somehow capable of making a mistake. Either option is a lie. As you serve in ministry, remember that God has placed you there and will give you grace and strength to serve.

The second warning is to avoid being idle. The implication of this text is that the believer should be active and have some role within the body of Christ. John MacArthur writes in his commentary on 1 Corinthians these helpful words. *"A Christian who does not have a ministry is a contradiction. He is disobedient and denies God the right to use him in the way He intends and for which He has gifted him. When we refuse to follow God's will and God's plan we deny His authority and Lordship as well as His wisdom and*

goodness." Imagine an orchestra with missing instruments and empty seats. The ability to play the music in the way it was intended is compromised. We are given to the Church to do God's will. This includes service and ministry to one another. If we do not engage in service and ministry we refuse God and deny the body gifts and abilities that were intended for the whole.

Whether we are fully or partially idle, we disobey the call and design of God for the body to be the visible evidence of His love in the world. While we are grateful for God's faithfulness in giving us Elders, leaders, and people to willingly do the work of ministry, we must also recognize that we still need people to serve. Often we make calls for ministry workers that go unfilled. And at times it seems that ministries function on the heroic efforts of a few instead of being fully staffed. The body needs all of its parts to function properly and if you have not joined in membership, are not serving, or are not fully engaged in ministry, we need you to be. Talk to your Elder or a ministry leader to see how and where you can serve. I pray that the Lord will soften hearts this morning in an overflow of service that we would cheerfully give of our talents and abilities with one another and therefore to Christ.

In the next portion of this passage Paul connects the diversity in the body with the mutual dependence of the parts. In the body of Christ our being one and service to one another are tied together. In terms of pleasing God, we are to see and understand serving's interdependence upon one another. We are not self-sufficient. We find our sufficiency in Christ and are dependent upon the body. Any self sufficiency we perceive is an illusion. Any sufficiency we have is to be found in Christ and through His body, the Church.

The first point from this passage is found in verse 21. Listen as I read this text. "*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."*". Each member of the body needs the others. The individual parts each have a shared need for the whole. In relation to the human body this illustration sounds obvious. Of course the parts of the body need and are dependent upon one another. Paul uses the certainty of this reasoning to make his point. Just as this is true of the human body so it is with the body of Christ.

Whether in ministry or in life, our cultural mind set is to make it on our own. Our strongest sense of community can be very narrow and is often limited to our biological families. It often takes a greater need to force us to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Christ. But in light of this passage, we need to be careful that we don't function as if we have no need of one another. In doing so, we deny others the opportunity to serve and be blessed. We elevate ourselves to a position over others as if we do not need them or the Church. And in the end it denies others the opportunity to use their gifts and resources to serve Christ by supplying encouragement and practical helps.

The next four verses take Paul's illustration even deeper. Not only do we have a shared or common need for one another, we also are to have a shared consideration regardless of the role or function played. In fact, as we will read, we are to give honor to the lesser or weaker parts. Not only can we not say that we do not need the body, what we typically think of being prominent and deserving of honor is turned upside down in the Church. And those parts which seem less important or significant are those we need the most.

Again, follow along as I read verses 22 through 25. Paul writes, *"On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."*

I believe Paul is addressing another problem in the Corinthian church. Individuals who were prominent in the community or well-known in the Church received honor and praise while those who did the important and sustaining work of ministry went unappreciated. Paul turns this kind of thinking on its head and taking a lesson from the human body reminds them that the less honorable and unpresentable parts are those the body protects and cares for. And why is this to be so? The answer is so that there may be no division in the body. Honor and respect for those who appear to be more ordinary and lowly members serves to unite and draw the body together.

Paul contrasts the thought that we do not need one another in the body by pointing out that not only do we need each other, but the individual and ministries we think the least significant are often the ones we need the most. The truth is some of the most important and vital ministries in the Church are those that too often go without recognition and honor by others. Our human nature tends to lead us to honor and respect those who appear to be successful, popular, or talented in some way.

So how do we respect and honor those who labor in ministry and serve on our behalf? By showing our ministry workers and diaconal teams our appreciation, encouraging them as we have opportunity, and by praying for them on a regular basis. Leaders, you have an even greater responsibility. Be aware of the gifts and abilities that God has given them and encourage them to develop them for His glory. Follow the example of Christ and serve those whom you lead. Watch that you don't unnecessarily frustrate your ministry teams by not respecting or properly leading their area of ministry. Rather let your words and actions support and build up them up so that they develop and mature in service to the body.

Another way to show consideration and to honor those parts that lack it is to watch out and care for them. Individuals who serve under authority of others are often vulnerable. Be careful you do not ask others to do what you could easily do yourself. In other words, be considerate of those who are serving in ministry and do not abuse your role or position of authority in a way that needlessly imposes a burden or even inconvenience upon another when it is something you or someone else could easily do. We are not serving in a God-honoring way when we justify pushing work off on others simply because it is outside our area of ministry or responsibility. Let me encourage you not to hide behind roles and procedures in a way that is uncaring toward others.

Here are some examples that may sound a bit unrealistic, but will help to make the point. For instance, don't ask for someone to drive 20 minutes one way to church to turn the lights on and then again to turn them off because that isn't your ministry team's job. Instead, always be willing to make small sacrifices that serve others in larger ways. Another more realistic example would be to not become defensive when another ministry encroaches on your area of responsibility. Look to develop a spirit of humility and cooperation for the good of the body. And last, don't avoid tasks that appear menial, like stacking chairs, just because you feel it is beneath you. Instead, remind yourself of the equality in the body and see it as an opportunity to serve Christ.

Allow me one last application for leaders of ministry. I believe that respecting and honoring those who serve means being careful that you do not abuse your authority by putting others in a position that counters the instructions or direction given by another Elder or diaconal leader. I doubt that any of us would do this intentionally. But if we are not careful it can happen, putting others who serve the body in a difficult position. If this happens, it would be better to go to the other leader and work out a solution that you can agree to and thus preserve the harmony and unity of the body and giving consideration to the individual or team placed in conflict. This gives proper respect and honor to those that serve among us.

Paul concludes the human body illustration in verses 26 and 27. He has shown that the body has a common or shared need for all the parts and he has shown how the body cares and is considerate of those parts that appear less significant. He now reminds them that as one body they have a shared connection. That is what one part of the body feels or experiences the whole body shares in.

Follow the text as I read verses 26 and 27. Paul writes, *"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."*

Beyond the shared concern that is to be exhibited in the body, there is also a shared connection. That is, we cannot exist in the body and not feel and experience what other parts of the body are feeling and experiencing. When one member of the body is hurting the whole body hurts. When one member of the body is persecuted the whole community is persecuted. When one member of the body is blessed we are all blessed. And when one member of the body rejoices all its members experience joy.

Paul is saying that we are a part of the whole and the whole is a part of us. We are a part of the body of Christ and the body of Christ is a part of us. There are several ways that we can fail to recognize or act upon this truth. For some, they may never join with a local body. Others exist on the periphery of community refusing to join in the body life of the Church. And some withdraw completely as if they have no need or connection with brothers and sisters in Christ. Others join with the community, but fail to exercise their gifts and abilities in service to others or in willing submission to ministry leadership. But if we are to please God in serving in the Church we must be an active in it.

Our mutual connection also speaks to serving one another in suffering and difficulty. Our bond in Christ joins us together in a unique way that should motivate and draw us to support and care for one another. It will be seen in acts of kindness and love when your brother or sister is discouraged or struggling. It will be felt in words of encouragement that build others up for the glory of Christ. And it will be clearly evident in the willing sacrifice of resources to meet the needs of others. 1 John 3:16-18 says, *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to [what?] lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."* Consider the extent of serving and love we are to give to those in the body. So if you feel little or do little when another member of the body is in need, it begs the question are you truly a member of the body?

Paul ends this morning's passage by speaking to the gifts given to the Church; gifts that are to be used in serving one another for the good of the body. These are serving's gifts, sovereignly given and allocated to the body by God. Given with the aim and purpose to allow the members of the body to love one another and bring glory to the father.

Listen again as we read the text. Finishing with verses 28 through 31 where Paul writes, *"And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way."*

In verse 28 we have the allocation of gifts to serve within the body. Here is God's perfect provision seen in its allocation and appointment of gifts. They are not randomly or arbitrarily assigned. They are appointed, or set in place, as with a purpose. The three gifts listed here are around the receiving and declaration of the word of God. This too is to have a unifying effect upon the body. Those with gifts around the Word are to exercise those gifts for the good of the whole, edifying and strengthening the Church to protect it from error and false teaching. They are to selflessly serve and minister to the body, keeping it from division and strife so that its testimony is not harmed or corrupted by sin and foolishness.

In the last few verses, Paul reminds them of serving's aim. There is purpose to the diversity of gifts. Just as there is diversity in the body, so gifts are distributed and not every gift is given to every member. Therefore, we are to be content with our gifts and understand that their distribution is a part of God's design for the body. Just as the whole is gifted as God designed so it is with each member. But there is one gift, a more excellent way that we all are to strive for. While it is not contained in this passage, Paul elaborates upon it in Chapter 13; and that is love.

While God is pleased when the various gifts he has given are used to serve, we are to strive to have a quality of love within the body. This is a superior gift, if you will, and is to be valued and pursued above all. The body of Christ is to be known for and characterized by love. When people engage in community and the body life of Clearcreek Chapel they are to say "these people truly love each other". To paraphrase 1 John 4:11, brothers and sisters, if God loved us in such a great way, then we ought to love one another. And so I urge you to let your love for God be seen in the transforming power of the Gospel so that we overflow with love for the body of Christ.

We are running out of time. So let me conclude with a few closing thoughts. My father is a retired high school English teacher. He taught at the high school I went to and I even had him for two of my classes during my time there. I can still visualize his classroom; the back corner where his desk sat and the rotating book tree that he called Schindler's un-library. Unlike other classrooms, the desks were usually positioned in a large circle around the walls of the room. And for some reason on one wall he put up a bunch of posters. Thirty years later I only remember one of those posters. It said, "Work is love made evident".

Brothers and sisters, it is easy to love when it does not cost us much. But true love is shown in what we have sacrificed; or in the words of that poster in my father's classroom, it is shown in how hard we have worked for the sake of another. In the kingdom economy, God's work is accomplished primarily through the local body. Whether that is in ministry to one another, in service to the greater body of Christ outside these walls, or in bringing the Gospel to the lost, this is the community that God has chosen to serve Him. And as a believer you are a part of that holy and precious community called the Church.

I have woven most of the application throughout this morning's message and while I would love to summarize and repeat it all, there is not the time. And in the unlikely chance that one or two of you are disappointed by that, you can download the message from the Chapel web site and hear it repeated again. But I feel compelled this morning to make three appeals.

First, and most importantly, if the talk of serving and loving one another and belonging to Christ is outside your experience and you find yourself desiring and drawing near to Christ, my appeal is that you place your trust in Christ this moment and bow before Him as Lord. Do not wait. He will save you and join you to His body, the Church. If you have questions or wish to speak to someone, feel free to come forward and speak to one of the Elders or someone you know from the Chapel after the service.

Second, I appeal to those who have been coming to Clearcreek for some time and are considering membership. Join with us and be a part of this community. What is holding you back? Is there fear? Is there hesitation? Again, speak with an Elder or someone you know. We need you and want you to be a part of the Chapel family. There is protection and care within the body. And you will be served and have opportunity to serve others.

Third, I appeal to those of you who do not regularly come to flock meetings to join with your brothers and sisters in community there. I know there are many well intended reasons not to be there and the conflicting pursuits of life. Regardless, are you willing to make the sacrifices to join in the mutual blessings of community and fellowship present in Flock? Examine yourself honestly and ask is God pleased with your opting out of the community and fellowship of our flock gatherings. I will tell you that Flock is where strong relationships are built and our cares and concerns are more fully shared. Flock is where concerns turn into prayers and friendships turn into meaningful expressions of love. Will you make the sacrifices to be there on a regular basis? You are a part of this local body of Christ and it is a part of you. Flock is key element of our body life here at the Chapel and speaking on behalf of your Elders we want you to be a part of it. With all my heart I ask you, will you join us?

Let's pray...