

Sermon

January 17, 2021

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

To Whom Does Your Body Belong?

Note: Pastor Ron Breight is on vacation this Sunday. Therefore, we have included a sermon from Concordia Pulpit Resources written on this week's second lesson from 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Used by permission.

One of the greatest blessings God has given to each of us is the body. What a wonder it is! With our five amazing senses, we connect with the astonishing world around us. We see the blue sky and the green hills in full color. We hear the sounds of birds singing, streams flowing, and music playing. We smell the aroma of the delicious pie baking in the oven and then we taste its delightful flavor! Our sense of touch brings great delight as we stroke the soft fur of a puppy! Yes, thank God for the gift of your body! But, as with all blessings from God, there can be trouble. We human beings, sinful as we are, are prone to misuse God's gifts. We take them for granted. We think that we are the owner and can do with them what we please.

GOD'S WORD CALLS US BACK TO THE TRUTH THAT OUR BODIES REALLY BELONG TO HIM AND THAT THIS IS A GREAT BLESSING INDEED!

I.

I was told that the verses we have before us were spoken by a father to his sixteen-year-old son one evening. As we've heard already, this text is pretty direct about some sensitive matters. That sixteen-year-old, now a grown man, relates the story:

I was in my bedroom, which was located in the basement of our house. I heard my father come home about 9:30. He called to me from the top of the stairs, "Hey, Son, come here!" "What is it, Dad?" I answered, standing at the bottom of the stairs. And then he gave me the message of 1 Corinthians 6, in essence: "Did you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? God himself dwells in you! He wants you to remain pure in body! Wait for marriage!" I was too stunned to respond with anything more than a weak, "Okay." "Hmm," I thought. "He must have been at a church meeting!" But those were just the words that I needed to hear that night and at that age. I have been thankful for his voice of truth all these years! We all need a voice of truth in this world because we've been hearing a lot of lies! "It's my body, and I'll do what I want with it!" "If it feels good, do it!" "I am the captain of my ship (my body) and the master of my fate!" We've all heard these slogans, these declarations of human independence and freedom. "No one has the right to tell me what I can or can't do with my body!" says the woman who decides to deal with an unplanned "inconvenience" by planning an abortion. And so it goes, on and on. The voices of this world tell us that it's our body and we have the power to use it any way we want. These voices have lied to us!

II.

Today in God's Word, we hear a different voice. It's not simply the voice of Paul, but the voice of God the Holy Spirit who inspired the apostle to write these words of truth before us. This word of truth was originally given to the Christians of the Church in Corinth because

they'd been told lies by the world around them. Essentially, they were being told that the body is not that important and they could do whatever they wanted with it. After all, the world around them said that the body is only a shell for the soul or spirit. Soon, the body would be unnecessary. When death would come, the body would be gone, and the soul would live on in heaven. Since the real person is "found" in the soul or spirit and not the body, it didn't matter what you did with your body. So while you have your body in this life, it's yours, and you can do what you want with it. The Corinthians were told the lie that it was okay to indulge their bodies with the sensual pleasure of their choice: gluttony, drunkenness, sexual immorality, whatever pleasure they wanted. They believed the lie that while a body was satisfying its desires, the soul was untouched and could still be in acceptable fellowship with the Lord! The Corinthians had their slogans too. In verse 12, Paul quotes one of these slogans: "All things are lawful for me:" The Corinthians misunderstood the freedom they had as Christians. Yes, they were free from the burden of the Law to save themselves, but they took their freedom too far. Paul had two responses to their slogan: "All things are lawful" *"but not all things are helpful,"* and "I will not be dominated by anything" (v 12, emphasis added). Paul quotes another of their slogans in verse 13 that illustrated their desire for a certain kind of indulgence: "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food:" Paul calls them to sober thinking by responding, ".And God will destroy both one and the other" (v 13). But the most serious indulgence that Paul was addressing in this text was sexual immorality. He wanted the Corinthians to understand that the body did matter and that these kinds of sins had a serious, harmful effect on their bodies, on marriage, and on their relationship with others and with the Lord. Paul had his work cut out for him because these Christians were living in a society that had legalized prostitution and considered it an acceptable practice. It's not much different today, is it? The lies are still here. People believe they own their bodies and are free to use them as they please. The sacred, God-given bonds of marriage are cheapened in a culture that believes, "It's okay as long as it's between two consenting adults," and "It's not healthy to deny your natural appetites:" A few days from now is the forty-eighth anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision on *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion. This decision has had a devastating impact on millions and millions of tiny, helpless bodies. Ever since that decision, we've been hearing voices argue, "Abortion is legal in our country, so people are free to use it:" While this is sadly true, God help us hold his gift of the body and all bodies as precious and of infinite worth!

III.

Paul redirects the conversation by putting a spin on one of the Corinthians' slogans. He says, "The body is ... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (v 13). He directs us to the right use of the body, not for sinful indulgence, but for the Lord. He raises the value of the body by declaring the Lord is for the body. Indeed, Jesus had a body, conceived and born of Mary. He offered his body for us that we might have new life. He let his body be nailed to the cross to pay for our sins. His body was given into death for our salvation. Paul declares the truth that, as God raised Jesus' body from the dead, he will raise our bodies as well! How precious are our bodies in God's sight! They certainly are not discarded after death! Paul also teaches the truth that our bodies are members of Christ. In chapter 12, Paul speaks at length about our being the Body of Christ. Since our bodies are members of

Christ, our Lord refuses to accept a "foreign body" into that sacred union with him or with the marital partner. Paul warns the Corinthians to flee the temptation to sexual immorality. We remember Joseph's example when he resisted the temptations of Potiphar's wife: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" he told her (Gen 39:9). But her temptations persisted, and Joseph finally had to flee! Paul warns us that these sins against the body do great harm. We know the danger of disease and the challenges for children without married parents, of broken homes and broken hearts. Our Lord does not want the great gift of our bodies to lead to sad results such as these.

In the last verses of our text, Paul tells us the amazing truth that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. God dwells within us! Do we own our bodies? He contradicts this lie that so many still believe today: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (vv 19-20). Like everything in life, including our bodies, we are not the owners-God is! Our bodies were bought at a price. They were purchased for eternal life. They were delivered from death to life. As Luther taught, Christ purchased us and won us, "not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness" (Small Catechism, Second Article).

To God be the glory! Amen.

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