



*You are the body of Christ!  
Each one of you is a part of it.*

*Let us pray:* This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus. *Amen.*

This prayer is from our Book of Common Prayer, *Prayers for Use by a Sick Person* (p.461). Thanks to the Olanders for reminding us of this gem which applies to each of us, sick or healthy. Among other things this prayer reminds us that parts of our life, especially now, are uncertain. What matters, especially now, is our response. And, sometimes we need God's help in discerning what that right response should be. We are always to be asking the questions: what would God have me do, what would God have my attitude be in this set of circumstances? And then trusting that God gives us what we need to appropriately respond.

In considering these questions, focus on the passage from Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 12, verses 1-8. This time using the paraphrase found in The Message:

**12** <sup>1-2</sup> So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture

around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

<sup>3</sup> I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

<sup>4-6</sup> In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

<sup>6-8</sup> If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

None of this is easy – or not easy all the time. The reminders that we are part of a whole. We are not to be isolated or doing everything on our own and only from our own perspective. Remember the phrase “God helping you”. Remember our Baptismal Vows which include the phrase “With God's help.” We are to do what we can do – and we are not alone.

When we are called to help, we should help but not take over. How hard that can be for us Type-A personalities and particularly when the one we are helping does the task differently than we would! If you're put in charge, don't manipulate. Don't micromanage. Make the goals clear and then let go. Let others be part of the project or the solution. Be open to God working in each of us and often in mysterious ways. Similarly, let's not denigrate ourselves. One of my long-time friends has a habit of saying “I'm sorry” for almost anything and everything. It drives me crazy! Yes, sometimes things go sideways. Sometimes we don't live up to our full potential. But quite frankly, a lot of things just happen and we don't need to say “we are sorry” for those. Part of what Paul is getting at is being honest, self-aware and clear about what is ours to own and what is not.

In a way, Jesus is on this same track. First, he asks the disciples, “who do they say that I am?” Others. A not-so-challenging question. And the answer depends upon, perhaps, who the disciple answering the question felt most in tune with. John the Baptist – maybe not a good choice since he had been beheaded for speaking truth to power. Although some scholars now believe Jesus

was, for a time, a follower of John the Baptizer. Another offers up Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. I have to tell you that for most of the Biblical prophets, life did not end well. So why would they want Jesus to be a prophet like them? Did they not connect the way those prophets' lives ended with the possibility that the same could happen to Jesus? Probably not.

Jesus shifts, then, from a relatively softball question to a hardball: Ah, but who do you say that I am? Time's up. It's make or break time. Be honest even if it costs you. Be self-aware about how believing Jesus is the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah, changes your life. How believing Jesus is the way, the truth and the life impacts how we make decisions. What our values are. How we treat each other.

In an article entitled "Now is the Time to Attend to the Relationships that Matter" by Alexis Drutchas published in *Elemental*<sup>1</sup> earlier this month, she wrote:

Yes, we need to wash our hands. We also need to love out loud. ...

Given that time may be short, my patients and their families would consider their priorities, zeroing in on what they live for rather than what they need to live.

Drutchas is a palliative care physician who has been working with patients with COVID or COVID-related illness quite a bit in 2020. And, she notes

Though my work as a physician prepares me more than most, it was not until my own sister's life lay in transient shadows that I realized how impossible it is to be prepared for the unexpected loss of someone we love. Looking back, it was then that I started to learn that living with emotional intentionality may just be our only way to try.

I have learned the true question inhabiting the underbelly of loss: *Am I living with intentionality in my actions and in the love I show? If not, am I willing to face my own potential regret when tragedy inevitably arrives?*

Paul and Jesus both urge us to live with emotional intentionality. "Who do you say that I am?", Jesus asks. If you acknowledge and you believe that I am the Messiah – the anointed and appointed one sent by God, then how does that impact how you live and how you love. Paul carries that further and asks us to place each day before God. Give thanks to God for all that God has done for you. Look and live into the future with confidence that God is love. Be at peace. *Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://elemental.medium.com/now-is-the-time-to-attend-to-the-relationships-that-matter-3b6b87b818a>