

In the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

Today's readings invite us to reflect on unity and purpose—what it means to belong to one another and to work together as one.

These readings come from times and places far removed from our own, written in contexts of division, struggle, and hope. Yet, they speak powerfully into our world today. Why? Because the human condition has not changed, and God's call to us remains the same. Through these stories, God asks us: How (as the people of God in this time) will we live in this broken, diverse, and beautiful world? How will we, as the church, embody my love and purpose?

The passage from 1 Corinthians 12 reminds us of the imagery of the body, a powerful metaphor Paul uses to describe the church community. We would be mistaken to think that this is a simple image. It is profoundly challenging.

The community in Corinth was vibrant but troubled. Paul’s letters reveal a group of people struggling with division, competition, and a desire to prove their spiritual authority over that of others. Some saw their gifts of speaking in tongues, prophecy, or knowledge as markers of greater faithfulness. Paul’s response in 1 Corinthians 12 is to reframe their understanding of spiritual gifts entirely. He emphasizes that these gifts are not the end goal but tools for building up the community. And the foundation of it all, he says, is unity and mutual care.

Paul emphasizes that every member of the community is indispensable. “The body is one and has many members,” he says, “and all the members of the body, though many, are one body.”

Paul goes on to describe how each part of the body, whether a hand, foot, or eye, is essential to the well-being of the whole. The body cannot function properly if any part is dismissed or undervalued. This image is not just poetic but

deeply radical. In a world that often prizes independence and hierarchy, Paul calls us to interdependence and equality. Reminding us that each person's gifts are not for their own glory but for the good of all and that the Spirit gives diverse gifts and that this diversity is essential to the church's life and mission.

This is not just a call to recognize diversity but to embrace it as a reflection of God's own nature. God's vision, revealed through the life of Jesus, is one of wholeness—a community where all are seen, valued, and loved. Jesus' ministry exemplified this.

Jesus called fishermen, tax collectors, outcasts, and women to follow him, creating a group as diverse as society itself. Jesus healed lepers, welcomed Samaritans, publicly forgave those society labelled as sinners, and challenged the powerful. In doing so, Jesus showed us that God's love knows no boundaries. It crosses cultural, social, and

economic divides, bringing healing and restoration to all.

But Jesus did not simply welcome diversity; he wove it into his mission. Each person who encountered Jesus was transformed and empowered to live out their unique gifts. Consider the Samaritan woman at the well, who became a witness to her entire village. Or Zacchaeus, the tax collector, who turned from greed to generosity. Jesus' life demonstrates that our differences are not obstacles but opportunities for the Spirit to work through us in unique ways.

Turning to the Gospel reading from Luke, we find Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah and declares that the prophecy has been fulfilled in him: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the

oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Here, Jesus announces that his mission – God's mission, is a mission rooted in healing, restoration, and liberation. Jesus through his life and ministry brought people together, lifted up the marginalized, and created a community that reflects God's vision of wholeness.

What does this mean for us today, in a world so fractured by divisions of race, class, nationality, and ideology?

How do we live out this vision of being one body with many members in our own communities?

It means that we, the church is called to be a living example of unity in diversity.

Paul's words challenge us to see every person as vital, no matter their role or ability. They remind us that we belong to one another and

that our individual gifts find their greatest purpose when used in service to the whole.

We are also called to recognize and celebrate the image of God in every person, especially those the world overlooks. This is not easy. It requires humility, listening, and a willingness to be uncomfortable. It requires us to lay aside our prejudices and assumptions and to work together for the common good.

This is where the image of a mosaic may be helpful. A mosaic is made up of countless small, broken pieces of glass and stone. Each piece is unique in shape, size, and color. Alone, they might seem insignificant or even useless. But when brought together by the artist's hand, they create something breathtaking.

And the real beauty of the mosaic depends on the diversity of its pieces. In the same way, our world—and our church—becomes more

beautiful and whole when we bring our diverse gifts, experiences, and perspectives together.

This is what Paul calls us to in 1 Corinthians. This is what Jesus models in his life. And this is God's vision for creation and the church – to be a community of wholeness, where every part is valued, and every person's gifts are brought to the table. A place where diversity is not a problem to be solved but a gift to be cherished. A place where the brokenness of the world is met with the healing power of love.

Paul's Body of Christ image is not simple because it challenges us to grow together, not one person excluded. It challenges us to learn from one another, and to build a community that reflects the fullness of God's image. When we reflect this unity in diversity, we become living witnesses of God's inclusive love.

How can we reflect this inclusive love in our lives?

It begins by seeing others as God sees them—as beloved, unique, and indispensable. It means listening to voices different from our own and celebrating the variety of gifts and experiences within our communities. It involves reaching out to those who are marginalized, just as Jesus did, and creating spaces where everyone feels valued and included.

Let us be the mosaic, brought together by the hand of the artist of all creation.

Let us together be the mosaic, bring together our diverse and broken pieces to create something breathtaking – a reflection of the beauty and power of God’s love.

Let us, like Jesus, proclaim good news, bring healing, and build a community where all are welcome. And may we remember that we are

one body, many members, bound together by the love and purpose of God, led by the Spirit who makes all things new.

Amen.