



Being Good News for Our Community - Spring 2017

Study 2 - Do Not be Arrogant

1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Luke 18:9-14

(sermons on Jan 29th)



Introduction

Paul had founded the church in Corinth around 51AD, on his second great missionary journey through what is now Turkey and Greece. Corinth was the largest city in Greece and the small Christian church was under pressure from rich pagan temples that dominated the city and Jewish teachers who opposed Paul. The church included both Gentiles and Jews. Some of the Gentiles were rich, others were slaves; those Jews who had become Christians were now an unpopular minority within a minority in the city. So the church



was divided socially even before groups claimed to follow different Christian teachers. At the beginning of Paul's First Letter, Paul writes about the need for unity, before tackling some problems faced by living in a pagan society with different moral values. In chapter 12 Paul returns to the question of unity in the church, which is threatened by pride in racial origins and in different spiritual experience.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 The Unity of the Body

v.13 *all baptised by one Spirit into one body...* – Paul is emphasizing that all Christians are part of the church on the same basis: the same ceremony of baptism when they would have had to declare the same faith in Jesus; and the same gift of the Holy Spirit to be at work in their lives.

1. The Corinthian Christians were divided between those who were 'Jews or Greeks, slave or free'. What different categories could cause division in the church today? Are there any divisions that might lead Christians to look down on other Christians?
2. What do we all have in common as Christians? How can we focus on those things rather than on differences that might divide us? What effect do divisions have on those outside the church?

1 Corinthians 12:14-26 The Parts of the Body

3. Who in the church might feel that their background, or their gifts, mean that they 'do not belong to the body' like the foot or the ear in verses 15-20?
How can we make sure that everyone *does* feel that they belong, that they are just as and where God wants them to be (v.18)?
4. About whom in the church might some people in the church be tempted to say, or to think: 'I don't need you' like the hand and the feet in verses 21-26?
How do we make sure that everyone in the church, and everyone's contribution, is valued?
5. Verse 26 describes shared suffering and shared honour: how best can we share in this way: in our worship together, in growth groups, one-to-one.... and beyond Trull and Angersleigh?

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 Roles in the Body

- v.28 *apostles – there are different interpretations of the use of the term ‘apostles’ beyond the Twelve and Paul. Sometimes ‘apostles’ seem to be those called by God to establish a church in a new place.*
 - v.28 *first... second... third – perhaps in authority, especially in questions of doctrine or morality*
 - v.28 *prophets – again, interpretations vary; but ‘prophets’ often have a direct message from God to a particular situation in a church.*
 - v.28 *those able to help others – perhaps especially in distributing gifts for the poor (eg in Acts 6:1-4) and providing all kinds of material, social, psychological and spiritual support.*
 - v.28 *gifts of administration – literally ‘steering’: local leadership?*
 - v.28 *speaking in different kinds of tongues – probably spiritual languages used in prayer and worship; probably at the end of the list because, in Corinth, there was a particular problem of pride and division amongst those who exercised these gifts.*
 - v.31 *eagerly desire the greater gifts – those of preaching/teaching at the beginning of the list, and as Paul goes on to say in chapter 13, any gift exercised in love.*
6. Which of these roles/gifts do we see in our local churches? How do we recognize and develop people’s gifts? How can all gifts be exercises in a spirit of love and service?

Luke 18:9-14 The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector

- v.10 *a Pharisee – ‘separate one’, part of a Jewish pressure-group who emphasized keeping God’s Law in the hope that, if they were pure enough, the nation would become independent again; they opposed any compromise with Greek & Roman pagan practices; they wanted to prepare for the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God (which they saw as in the age to come, and for obedient Jews only).*
- v.10 *a tax-collector – Tax collectors were seen as traitors as they collected taxes on behalf of the Roman authorities, cheats when they collected more than their agreed percentage on top of the official rate, and ‘unclean’ because of their close contacts with the gentile authorities.*
- v.11 *prayed about himself – or prayed ‘with himself’, rather than really talking to God*
- v.12 *fast twice a week – more than was required by the Law*
- v.14 *justified before God – forgiven, restored to a right relationship with God*

7. How can we think and act like the Pharisee in this parable?

8. How can we be more genuine in our prayers like the tax-collector?

Do Not be Arrogant

9. Christians are sometimes seen as being judgemental, or are accused of looking down on other people, or being hypocrites, pretending to be better than they are. Is there a danger that we might give this impression in Trull or in Angersleigh?

How does this put people off and make them reluctant to explore our faith, or accept help?

How can the teaching in these passages help us to be humble rather than proud and arrogant?