

Sermon Words for August 23, 2020

Text: Romans 12:1-8

Title: New Life in Christ

Preacher: Rev. Jerry Cho

Date: Aug. 23, 2020

1. Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard said an interesting thing about a relationship between a pastor and his or her congregation. He said, "People often think that the preacher is a performer on the stage and the congregation is audience, watching the preacher's performance and sometimes critiquing. But the real truth is that the congregation is the performers on the stage of life and the preacher is a prompter who stands at the corner of the stage and whispers the lines when the performers forget their lines.

2. I am here today to whisper to you your lines you might have forgotten so that you may perform your Christians duties well in the life of our church and in everyday life. My whispering is based on St. Paul's whispering to his congregation in the city of Rome. Although there is 2,000 years of time difference between St. Paul's time and our time, the message hasn't been changed that much.

3. Like any other organization, our church is a group of people with different personalities, temperaments, gifts and talents. The only difference between other social clubs and our church is that our church is a group of people who are united in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

4. St. Paul defined church as the body of Christ. After Jesus's death on the cross, the spirit of Jesus was resurrected in the form of the Christian church. Jesus's passion for truth, love, and the kingdom of God could not stay dead. The spirit of Christ was risen again in the hearts of his followers and in Christian churches around the world.

5. St. Paul said that the head of our church is Jesus Christ and we are all members of the body of Christ. As our head gives commands, our arms and legs carry out the head's commands. When our head says, "I am thirsty. Get me something to drink," our legs take us to a fridge and get water. Likewise, when Christ gives us His commands, our church members should carry out Jesus's commandments. Do you know what Jesus's commandments are?

6. Jesus said, "Don't be greedy. Help the poor. Don't be arrogant. Be humble. Don't hate people. Love people. Don't be violent. Be a peace-maker. Don't be full of yourself. Be full of God." In a nutshell, Jesus said, "Love God and love one another." That was Jesus's commandment to us.

7. When the head gives a command to the body but the body does not carry out the command, there is a problem of paralysis or serious nerve damage. When a person has a stroke and half of his body is paralyzed, he cannot move half of his arms and legs. Likewise, if our church doesn't carry out Jesus's commands, there is a blockage between Jesus and us, we need to restore vascular and neurological connection in our system. We can restore the free flow of the spirit between Christ and us by self-reflection and repentance.

8. Another problem we can think of with regard to the malfunctioning of our body is hypertension, or high blood pressure. I take a med, Metoprolol for my hypertension to prevent a stroke or a heart attack. When we accumulate anger, resentment, conflicts over a long period of time, we may harden the artery of communication and hinder the free flow of harmony and as a result, will have a risk of stroke or heart attack in our church. When we develop a paralysis of not speaking to each other, forming calcium of factions and cliques, fights may erupt and we may lose some members.

9. Another physical problem we can think of is too much sugar or too little sugar in our body. In our church money is like sugar. If our church has too much money than necessary, our church becomes greedy and selfish. But luckily, our church does not have that problem. But if our church doesn't have enough money to pay our bills, then our church will suffer from hypoglycemia, low blood sugar. Our church will lose vitality and strength. We will become financially too weak to support ministries.

10. Now let us listen to the positive message of St. Paul. First, St. Paul said, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters to present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God." When ancient people presented sacrifices to God, they slaughtered the animals on the altar and burned them. Likewise, when we worship God, we need to kill our ego, our self-centeredness, and our selfishness for the will of God and for the common good of our church.

11. Dead bodies don't move around. Dead bodies get moved around by a living person. We, Christians, are supposed to be dead, which means our ego must be dead so that the living spirit of God may move us around for the common good of our church.

12. Paul also said, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect."

13. When Paul said that we shouldn't be conformed to this world, he did not mean to tell us that we should not use cell phones, computers, or electricity. He meant to say that we should not be selfish like secular people. We should not be hateful, deceitful, or dishonest as secular people.

14. Paul said, "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that we may discern the good will of God." The world is full of evil, lying, hateful, greedy, selfish, angry, and violent people. Paul wants us to be good, honest, kind, generous, forgiving, and peace-loving people. It's been said, "God prefers a kind atheist to hateful Christians." God wants us to be genuinely good people, not dogmatic, judgmental, hateful, religious bigots and fanatics.

15. And then Paul said, "Don't think that you are better than other people. Be humble to one another." When we have our disagreements, let us not think that our ideas are better than other people's ideas. Instead, let us think that we may be wrong but other people may be right. Sometimes being kind is better than being right.

16. This leads to my final point. Let us value mutual respect, cooperation, collaboration and harmony more than competition, dominance, power struggle, and politics. Our body parts don't compete with one another. Eyes and ears don't fight for power. Our liver and kidneys don't fight each other. If they do, the whole body suffers. Likewise, each committee and each ministry function of our church should not compete but should work together harmoniously for the common good of our church and for the cause of Christ.

17. Our church has many parts. We have Church Council, Finance Committee, Trustees, SPRC, Mission Committee, Booyah team, EPH, music department, Youth Group, Mission committee, worship committee, membership care team, Senior Citizen's Team, Friends of Patricia, the book club, and so on and so forth.

18. Although we have different functions, let us all work together with mutual respect and love for the common good and for the health of our church. Let us use our gifts and talents, our time and money, our skills and knowledge, our love and our labor for Christ and for the kingdom of God. Amen.