

Ben Lattimer  
Sunday Service, Sermon  
October 22, 2023  
On 1 Corinthians 12  
*In this Together*

## Sermon

*Intro / Hook Story - Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*

It all started long ago when the Truth... FELL from the sky... The truth fell from the sky and broke into two pieces...

That's how the book, *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* begins. It's a children's book by Douglas Wood that Nana got for our boys, I think. The Truth fell from the sky and broke into two pieces. Now one day, a man finds one of the pieces. It's shiny and beautiful - and on this piece of the Truth there are inscribed the words, "You are loved..."

The man takes hold of the broken Truth. It makes him feel proud and happy. He shows it to his people and they embrace this piece of the Truth. "You are loved..." It fills them with a sense of value and purpose...

*Back to the Scripture - Part 1 - Thinking too little of ourselves...*

Sometimes we think too little of ourselves...

*Suppose a foot says, "I'm not a hand, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the foot still belong to the body? Or suppose an ear says, "I'm not an eye, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the ear still belong to the body? If our bodies were only an eye, we couldn't hear a thing. And if they were only an ear, we couldn't smell a thing.*

We wonder what we can do... If I had a million dollars - then I'd make a difference... If I were the President, then I'd fix things... Who am I? Just a part of a small church in a small denomination here in a small town...

It's all about perspective though... Who are you comparing yourself to? OK, so maybe you're not as rich as Elon Musk. But compared to the rest of the world, most of us in here probably fall in the top 1% of wealth... Maybe we're not the president - or even in Congress making the laws. That's fine. What gifts do you have? Because they're all from the same spirit...

I look around and I see myself surrounded by incredibly talented people, making a difference all around them. I see teachers investing in the next generation, I see seniors looking out for each other in retirement communities. I see kids, being friends at school to other kids who need a friend.

Where has God placed you - to make a difference?

What part of your story - what part of your *self* is God just waiting to use?

I remember that story of Art and Peggy Gish we told a few weeks back - those Brethren Peacemakers who even used their "old-ness" for God's glory! It was the grandmother principle - going into places of conflict knowing that there are some things a person won't do - some things even a soldier won't do if their grandmother is watching...

I *dare* you to challenge God to find some part of you - some part of your story that God CAN'T use! Because here's the thing... God doesn't just work through us in spite of our brokenness... Sometimes God is most at work through our brokenness - doing the work of healing and redemption.

You are a part of the body of Christ - precious and beloved - and there is work to be done... Do your part.

So you're a foot and not a hand? Be the best dang foot you can be.

*Back to the Scripture - Part 2 - Thinking too little of others...*

Sometimes we think too little of ourselves - and sometimes we think too little of others.

*A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part. It takes many parts to make a single body. That's why the eyes cannot say they don't need the hands. That's also why the head cannot say it doesn't need the feet.*

Every part matters - we are all interconnected... In Bible study this week, Rick said - "Remember the last time you smashed your finger with a hammer!" The last time - because it's certainly been more than once. The smashed finger hurts - but it's not alone. Your other hand drops the hammer and holds the hurting finger. There's the quick intake of breath by your lungs - and the exclamation that may or may not be child friendly that comes out of your mouth. Your brain kicks into gear - and your feet may carry you to the freezer to get an ice pack. Everything feels the pain - and everything works together to bring relief.

We are interconnected - all part of the greater whole. All are diminished when any are... And all are raised up when one is... We belong to one another...

But sometimes we forget. We start thinking in terms of scarcity - and hold on too tightly to our blessing, allowing our neighbors to be diminished. That comes with a price. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said it - "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Instead, this Bible passage invites us to see others as valuable parts of the whole - just like us. It invites us into curiosity - to wonder how God might see them - to see the ways they are important to the body and to make space for them to do that work to which they are called.

It's not about pretending we can somehow give up our privilege - instead it's *using it*, as good stewards of what has been entrusted to us. Recognizing that we have a role to play - and so do they. We bear the image of God - and so do they.

We maintain our identity and individuality within the community - remembering who we are - but embracing rich diversity, not conformity. Rather than looking down upon those who are different, who think differently, who vote differently than we do - rather than looking down on them, we're invited to be curious. To see them as God sees them, and look for the ways they're differences matter to the whole.

Maybe we can't fix it all. Maybe there's no such thing as a utopia. But we can create these pockets of it - pockets of resistance to the division around us. That's where this passage leads - in the very next chapter, when Paul writes, "Now I will show you a better way..." And then he shows them the way of love... "Love is patient, love is kind... Love never fails."

#### *Old Turtle Reprise*

The man took hold of the broken Truth. "You are loved..." He and his people were filled with a sense of value and purpose... But then they started to look down on the others - those beyond their tribe. Those who did not share in this Truth... Great wars began and the world was broken...

After many years a little girl sought to repair the world - sought to bring peace... She went on a journey, searching for the other piece of the Truth that had fallen from the sky... Eventually, with the help of the wise Old Turtle she finds it... It fits together with the first piece of truth making it whole... "You are loved..." said the first piece. "And" added the second... "And so are they..." Then people began to understand.

Amen.