

I should preface what I'm about to say by first saying I don't really like Hallmark holidays. That said, Happy Father's Day to all the dads here today. It's not that I'm a Scrooge or that I don't like getting doted on. I do. What I don't like is the consumerism that surrounds these kind of so-called "holidays" and forces us to celebrate something that we either 1.) celebrate regularly anyway or 2.) would rather not celebrate at all. First off, I'm fortunate to have a great relationship with my dad, and I tell him I love him all the time. Not just on a particular Sunday in June. Secondly, I acknowledge that though we all have (or had) fathers, not all of them are good. For some people, Father's Day is simply a reminder of the dad they never knew or the dad they wish they hadn't. Or some of people simply miss their dads, and Father's Day is just a painful reminder that he's no longer with us. Whichever circumstance you find yourself in, may you be comforted by our heavenly Father who loves us perfectly today and every day.

Having said all that, I will acknowledge there was one Father's Day commercial I did like. It's from a while back, and I don't remember what product was being advertized. But it showed a father pushing a shopping cart with his kids in the grocery store, and the mother was narrating the ad. She spoke about how her husband used to be in such great physical shape. But then they had kids. And now he's a little softer and bigger than he used to be. But the things that have made him that way, namely spending time with the kids, have made him more attractive to her than ever. In a culture that's obsessed with body image, it's good to hear a message focused on the entirety of who we are as people.

As a church we're in the midst of a series on the Body of Christ. Today's focus is on the goodness of our bodies. Society usually tells us that if we don't have perfectly sculpted bodies we're bad. A couple weeks ago Michigan football coach Jim Harbaugh was skewered on social media for taking his shirt off during practice with his team. He's 51 years old, and he's really in pretty good shape. But the media mocked him for not having the body of one of his world class athletes 30 years younger than him. Scripture has something better and more profound to say about our bodies. Hear this word from the Apostle Paul.¹

1 Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

This may be a familiar text to you...maybe even painfully familiar. Growing up, I heard it a lot in church as a way of shaming me into not doing something. Don't drink, don't smoke, don't eat

junk food, don't have sex – your body is a temple, you know! And there's absolutely wisdom and truth in that! And it's theologically in line with the intent of the text. After all, Paul is writing a corrective letter to his wayward Corinthian church for their unchristian behavior. But I don't think guilt is the most helpful or healthy motivator. And that's certainly not the most interesting way to understand Paul's message.

When Paul says we're temples of the Holy Spirit, he's getting at something way bigger than “don't have sex outside of marriage!” Paul is saying something much more profound. He's explaining a holy mystery that is absolutely crucial to our identity as Christians. Saying that we are temples of the Holy Spirit means that God lives in us! That's a huge deal! And Paul's listeners would've understood that in ways we might not at first glance. Let's back up for some context.

Jews believed the original dwelling place of God to be on Mount Sinai. After all, this is where God met and talked with Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments. But then during the Exodus, God leads the Israelites out and through the wilderness with a cloud and pillar of fire, and every time they stop to set up camp, God's Spirit settles in the tabernacle. Eventually, once the Jews arrive in the Promised Land and build the temple, this is where God's Spirit resides.

In fact, there was a specific place within the temple called the Holy of Holies. It was in this inner sanctuary where God's Spirit dwelt, and this space was set apart by a big veil or curtain. It was such a holy place that the only person who could enter it was the high priest, and he could only do so only once a year on the Day of Atonement. When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, they put bells on him so they could hear him moving and tied a rope around him just in case so they could pull him back out if something happened to him while he was in there. No one else was allowed to enter the holy place where God's Spirit dwelled.

Fast forward to Jesus. Do you remember what happened in the temple the moment Jesus died on the cross? The temple veil, the big curtain that set apart the Holy of Holies – the place where God's Spirit dwelt – that veil was torn in two (Matt 27:51). The very thing that separated humanity from the holy dwelling place of God was torn apart.

The Spirit of the living God, who until this time had only resided in the temple behind a veil that was only passable one day a year and only then by the single most important religious person in the community – that Spirit was moving. After Christ was raised, God's Spirit dwelled in a new way. We're currently still in the church season of Pentecost, where we celebrate the Holy Spirit taking up a new residence. In First Corinthians 3:16² Paul says, **“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?”**

God's Spirit lives in you! Take a moment to let that sink in. What does that tell us about our bodies? Our bodies, regardless of what anyone else says, are absolutely and unquestionably good! Scripture tells us that elsewhere, too. Psalm 139 says we're knit together in our mother's womb, fearfully and wonderfully made. In the creation account in Genesis 1, everything God makes is proclaimed "good" until God creates human beings in God's image. After that God's creation is called "very good."

And if that weren't enough to demonstrate that our bodies are good, the God of the universe came down from heaven and put one on. [Greek philosophy in Paul's day trying to escape flesh for spirit. Word made flesh big deal.] The incarnation is the most powerful testimony to the goodness of human bodies.

We are temples formed as dwelling places for the Spirit of God. This is our identity. We are somebody, contrary to the cultural view that we're only somebody if our temple looks like this or that. No! Each one of us is made in God's image. And that makes us good enough to be dwelling places for the Spirit of God Almighty, creator of heaven and earth!

Our response: Take care of the temple

- We have amazing people who take care of our physical worship space, our temple so to speak
 - o Mike Carson and Anna Reece, our custodial staff – thank them when you see them
 - o Volunteers who come in and clean the pews every week, gather/restock prayer cards
 - o Volunteers who take care of church grounds
 - o Altar Guild who make sure we're ready for worship, sacraments, put flowers on altar
 - o Folks who put out coffee
 - o CR: Set up and tear down team, hospitality team
 - o They do these things week in and week out, keeping the temple in good shape so that we may glorify God in this place together. We need to take care of the temple.

Same true of our bodies: Our response, as Paul says is that we're to glorify God with our bodies

- Had this whole thing planned to talk about what that looks like in terms of getting the right amount sleep, eating well, and exercising.
- But as I hashed out those details, two things came to mind.
 - o First, we already know it's important to do those things. So do them. Sleep more. Eat better. Exercise. There, I said it.
 - o More importantly, the question that kept coming to my mind this week, and it was only reinforced and magnified after Wednesday night's events, was this:

- How do we talk about the goodness of our bodies with people whose bodies are not well?

Even if we're in the habit of taking good care of our bodies – eating right, exercising, getting plenty of sleep – eventually all temples break down. That's the reality of living in a sinful world. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

What to say about temples that are crumbling?

- What to say to people whose bodies are being invaded by disease?
 - Several folks in our midst fighting cancer. My good friend Jenny has particularly aggressive form of breast cancer. Her doctor's last hope is a test drug in a clinical trial. She's 40 years old with a two year old. What do I say to my friend about the goodness of our bodies when hers is on the verge of being overcome?
- What to say to friends and family whose bodies are at the edges of life?
 - Visited yesterday with elderly woman who had a stroke, can't remember anyone, confused, doesn't know where she is or what's happening to her
 - Her question: Why doesn't God take me home?
 - Where's the goodness in her body?
- What to say to people whose minds are battling illness?
 - My wife spent weekend in FL with family of childhood friend who passed away at 35
 - Suffered from mental illness and drug addiction, the combination of which ravaged her body and mind to the point where she was simply too weak to live any longer
 - How can a mind and body that were made "very good" by God be out of life at 35?
- What to say when our temples, our bodies are attacked/violated as those in Charleston were?
 - Nine lives, from ages 26-87, beautiful people, all of them in midst of prayer and praise
 - Nine beautiful and good bodies violated and destroyed by a hate-filled and terribly racist young man on a mission. What do you even begin to say to that?
 - The victims' families had some of the most powerful words I've heard. *You hurt us. Repent. Seek Jesus. God forgives you. I forgive you. God have mercy on your soul.*
- What do we the church, followers of Jesus, have to say to our brothers and sisters whose bodies are struggling to stay good or to those have already lost the battle?

First, we stand in solidarity with them

- We are the Body of Christ – last week: when one member suffers we all suffer

- That's why we started our sanctuary services today with the same prayer being prayed in churches across the country³
- *We declare our love as one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism*
We declare they do not grieve alone today
- One of the many gestures of solidarity and support this week came from a state senator in Colorado. After hearing about the murders on Wed night, he couldn't sleep, so he got up and wrote a note of love and encouragement to his local AME church in Denver and left it on the church door. The idea has since gone viral and countless others have followed his lead under the hash tag #onlylovecandothat⁴
- Sometimes there are no words
 - Presence goes a long way. Just showing up matters.
 - Last month when Travis Gryder died tragically, I stood in line with many of you for three hours to let Gryder/Eggers families know they weren't alone
 - Yesterday with my friend who had the stroke there were no words to say that would bring her comfort. But I stayed with her and held her hand in silence until she stopped crying and eventually fell asleep.
 - Never underestimate the power of your presence to bring comfort and healing

In addition to standing in solidarity through our words and our presence, we also need to remember that as the body of Christ we're part of a bigger story – it's in that story that we find real and lasting hope.

In John 2 after Jesus turns over the money changer tables in the temple, he gets into it with the temple leaders.⁵ **2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body.**

We know that Jesus' temple, his body, was destroyed. But we also know the rest of the story. In the Apostles' Creed we profess, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Our hope is in the resurrection – that Jesus' body didn't remain broken and destroyed. Instead it was gloriously transformed and made fit for eternity in heaven.

Paul has a long discussion about resurrection bodies in first Corinthians 15. He describes the continuity between the original creation with our earthly bodies and the future new creation with

³ <http://onechurchliturgy.com/>

⁴ <http://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/colorado-lawmakers-letter-inspires-love-black-churches-n378681>

our heavenly, resurrected bodies.⁶ It is a contrast between life as it is and life as it is to come in God's eternal kingdom. Our present bodies are built for the present reality of life in a world that has become fallen. Our bodies are good but broken. They are subject to disease and decay, and eventually they'll fail us. But just as Jesus' body was resurrected and transformed, our bodies will be too.

This is the good news we cling to in the midst of overwhelming darkness. It's our *strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow*. For all who struggle with illness, disease, and suffering... hear this: it won't always be this way. It won't always be this way. Try to remember that if ever your prayers for healing seem to go unanswered. God is a God who heals. But God heals on God's terms and in God's time. And maybe the answer for some people is that they will not experience full healing until they enter their resurrected bodies. That's what it took for Jesus, despite his prayers for another way. But God will keep his promises, and all will be well. Christ's resurrection is a testimony to that. Great is God's faithfulness.

Until that time when God takes our good but broken bodies and transforms them into glorious and eternal bodies, we wait. We wait with each other. We carry one another's burdens, especially for those who can't carry their own. We wait with each other so that no one has to be alone. And we wait on a God who has promised never to leave us or forsake us. We wait on a God who promised a time when there will be no more crying, or suffering, or pain, or death. We wait in hope and expectation of better things to come.

I want to close with one of my favorite waiting psalms. Psalm 130 expresses much of what we've talked about here this morning. From crying out to God from the depths, to the unfathomable depths of God's forgiveness and grace, to the expectant waiting of Christian hope for a better tomorrow. I'd like us to read it together. And realize when it says Israel, that's God's chosen people, holy and beloved, whom all believers including us have been grafted into to experience God's salvation. Let's read this psalm as a prayer together.⁷

Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

2 Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

4 But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

⁶ Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), p. 155.

6 my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

8 It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Lord, we wait on you, as you wait with us. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.