

Sermon
January 18, 2015

1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]

1 The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. **2** One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. **3** The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. **4** Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." **5** And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. **6** Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." **7** Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. **8** The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. **9** So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. **10** The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." **11** And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. **12** At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family--from beginning to end. **13** For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. **14** Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.' "**15** Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, **16** but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." **17** "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." **18** So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes." **19** The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. **20** And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD.

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18 (1)

1 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. **2** You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. **3** You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. **4** Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. **5** You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. **13** For you created my inmost being; you knit me

together in my mother's womb. **14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. **15** My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, **16** your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. **17** How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! **18** Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

12 "Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything. **13** "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"--but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. **14** By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! **16** Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." **17** But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. **18** Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. **19** Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

John 1:43-51

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." **44** Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. **45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. **47** When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." **48** "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." **49** Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." **50** Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." **51** He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Father,
God's Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit:
Amen.

What would you think if I told you that commercials are at the heart of our society's devaluation of our bodies? That advertising media actually look to degrade viewers, to dissatisfy readers, to depress listeners? That sounds downright crazy, doesn't it?

But follow me here for a second. The ultimate goal of commercials, their reason for existence, is just to sell you stuff. Even commercials for nonprofits are selling you on donating to their work. Even Smoky the Bear is selling you on changing your behavior.

Commercials want to sell you something. And almost without exception, commercials do this by making you think that you're unhappy, unworthy, unloveable. But this product they're hocking, that can bring you true happiness. In that purchase you can find worth. In that commodity you might discover love.

Amy Laura Hall, a professor at Duke Divinity School, talks about this phenomenon in this way. "Commercials," she says, "first tell you that you have a problem you don't actually have, then sell you a product that you didn't need in the first place!" What Amy Laura points to, here, is that commercials lie to us about our needs, about our perspectives, and especially important for today's readings, about our bodies.

Scripture gives us an entirely different perspective on our bodies, on our self worth. In Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, he tells us that our bodies are members of Christ Himself, that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Rather than degraded pieces of flesh, we are beings beloved by God, forever connected with God, forever inhabited by God. How different is that than the common commercials we hear?

Here at Christ, we've begun a number of initiatives to help the community remember the value of our bodies. The healing services so close to the heart of the congregation reflect a belief that God is intimately involved in the wellness of our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. Some of you have mentioned

the possibility of having yoga sessions and nutrition classes here, each of which offer a wonderful witness to God's rejuvenating our bodies. Our upcoming interest meeting in Across the Spectrum is a first step to help the community see that God values all bodies, regardless of ability. In different ways, each of these initiatives helps us to reaffirm what Paul tells the Corinthians: our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, so we ought to honor God with our bodies.

Mmmm. That's nice. If only it ended there.

Newsflash: it doesn't. The core of this message for Paul, the reason that our bodies are members of Christ, that we may live as temples of the Holy Spirit, that these bodies may offer God glory, is that we were bought with a price. We are not our own.

Here's where the warm fuzzies of God valuing our bodies begins to rub our American individualism raw. Bought with a price? This is my body. What do you mean I'm not my own! I make my own decisions. I live my own life. It's my body, I'll do what I want. Whatever!

Of course, we know that our behaviors affect other people every day, that the way we use our bodies is about much more than just ourselves. If a mother takes in any toxins while pregnant, those poison not only herself but also her child. But other examples are no less true. How one family member spends money affects the ability of the rest of the family. How one person eats can change the entire dynamic of a dinner table.

But Paul isn't talking only about affects, about our bodies affecting other bodies. It's not just that we're supposed to play nice with our bodies in order to not hurt others, though that is certainly true. What Paul is getting at is that your body, well, isn't yours.

You were bought with a body. A body that was born to bear life into you. A body that lived to show you abundant life. A body that died that death might have no power over you. A body that rose from death that you too might spend eternity in God's kingdom. In his birth, life, death, and resurrection, Jesus took our lives. Not from us. Jesus didn't steal something from us. God in Christ took our lives from sin and death, from evil and the devil, and instead restored them to the potential of Eden. It is a good

thing, a necessary thing, a blessing that our bodies are not our own! Without Christ taking them, without Christ taking our body in the manger, taking our body at the wedding in Cana, taking our body in the cross and taking our body from the tomb, we would be left to our own devices. Left alone, only to listen to what commercials have to say about our bodies rather than what God, who has a human body, has to say about us.

The good news we find in Paul is that our bodies are not just random matter, but instead that they truly matter to God, to the church, and to the world.

Given this good news, how might we utilize our bodies to the glory of God?

Of course, all those things we mentioned about our already established ministries are good, and something we must continue to do. But what about some more, shall we say, sensitive subjects?

Our bodies are meant to glorify God, so whatever we're doing to turn people away from God has to end. Gossip must end, for talking bad about people, whether they're strangers or family, does nothing to glorify God.

In our bodies, we are members of Christ's body, so whatever we do to cause division and brokenness must end. Cliques must end, for there is nothing insular about the body of Christ.

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, so whatever spirits we bring that grieve God must come

to an end. Lust, gluttony, greed, wrath, envy, pride, laziness, and every other spirit of selfishness does nothing but corrupt the temple that is our body.

Some hear this word “must” and denounce it as a work of the law rather than the freedom of the Gospel. But listen closely to what these musts mean. We no longer remain in bondage to sin and death, but instead are bound to Christ’s goodness. When we say that turning people away from God must end, when we say that division must end, when we say that the sins of selfishness must end, we proclaim the Gospel that we are free from these things. We no longer remain bound to division, but are free to live reconciliation that the world might know the redemption of God. We no longer remain bound to

seclusion, but are free to develop community that the world might know relationship with God. We no longer remain bound to selfishness, but instead may live selflessly that the world might know the selflessness of God.

Our bodies are meant for this kind of life, not as a law, but as good news, as freedom, as a gift of deliverance from the old ways that prevented our bodies from wholeness, from wellness. You were bought with a body, the Body of Christ. Each week we gather around that body and we together take that life of Christ within ourselves. We eat the body that was born to bear life into you. We eat body that lived to show you abundant life. By that body, our bodies become fully alive. As we eat this bread, the

fullness of life of Christ is taking root in us. Here, in the body of Christ on the altar, we find the power to be the Body of Christ in that world. So today, as you hear the words "The Body of Christ, given for you," remember that Christ gave His life that you may live. Let us live that life, then, for the sake of God and the sake of all creation. Amen.