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2nd Sunday After Epiphany
January 15, 2012

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12 – 20 “GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY”

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Glorify God in your body, for you were bought with a price. Glorify God in your body, for you have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Glorify God in your body, for you have been baptized into Christ Jesus and joined with His death and resurrection.

Do not be as the unrighteous, the unbeliever. Do not persist in sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, greediness, drunkenness, abusiveness, and swindling. Instead, glorify God in your body, for you don't belong to yourself, but to the Lord.

You may be wondering what all this talk of glorifying God in your body is about during the Season of Epiphany. You may think that the reading from 1 Corinthians 6 seems to have little to do with the revealing or public manifestation of Jesus as not only true man but true God in the flesh. Rest assured, no mistake has been made. The public manifestation of Jesus Christ and God's call for you to glorify God in your bodies has a much greater connection than you might at first think. Yes, during Epiphany we focus and celebrate that the man Jesus has been revealed as God with us in our humanity, the eternal Son, but this is not the only thing revealed. As Jesus is revealed as the Christ, God's Son, so too is Christ's Church revealed as the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ.

Those who have been washed, sanctified, and justified through baptism in God's name have been made members of the Body of Christ. Those who have received the washing of water with the Word have been purified and made holy for Christ as His Bride. We now belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, body, soul, and mind. Our bodies now belong to Christ Jesus, who gave His body and blood to redeem us from sin, death, and the devil. Our bodies now belong to the Holy Spirit who gives us life in Christ and has made us holy by dwelling in us bodily through faith. Our bodies now belong to God the Father as His children, because we belong to Christ; now we are heirs of the resurrection of the body to life everlasting. Once we were filthy, impure, and unrighteous because of sin; once we were zombies, the living dead; once we were slaves to the devil and our carnal passions; once we only profaned God in our bodies; but now in Christ we are free, free to Glorify God in our bodies.

St. Paul writes: *“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,*

nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”(1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

All of us share the same terrible and profane past. We are conceived and born as sinners, as sinful, in all that we are, body, soul, and mind. We came into this world as unrighteous unbelievers. As a consequence of Original Sin we sinned against God in our bodies and profaned His good creation. But in the fullness of time God sent His Son Jesus Christ to undo our terrible and profane past, born from a woman, born under the Law, born holy, pure, and free. Jesus glorified God the Father in His body and offered His pure and holy body and blood as the sacrifice to cover the guilt of sin and redeem us from our terrible and profane past. Through Baptism and the preaching of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit has washed your sin away, called you to faith in Christ, and freed you to live in newness of life, glorifying God in your body.

Many in the Church and in our broader culture dismiss, laugh, and scorn God’s clear teaching in Scripture that Christians are to glorify God in their bodies. Sadly the voice of the Serpent can be heard lying and deceiving even those whom God has made members of the Body of Christ. Seductively the Serpent says, “Didn’t God say that you are free? Doesn’t that mean you can use your body however you choose, as long as you are not hurting another person, as long as things are consensual?” Or perhaps you have heard the other lies of Satan, “The body is not all that important, it can die after all. The soul is important because that is eternal, so what one does with the body is of little concern.” Or perhaps you have heard the Devil say, “Just do what comes naturally. If you have the desire, then fulfill it, because that is the way God has created us.”

Members of the Body of Christ in the Church of Corinth also heard these Seductive lies of the Serpent. They listened to the voice and reason of the age and as a consequence were returning to the ways of unrighteousness without ever knowing it. Just like many in our age some within the Church at Corinth thought that sex could be practiced with whomever one desired. It was natural they argued, just like the belly or stomach has the desire for food and so one then eats the food desired, so it is with sex. The body desires sex, therefore give the body the sex it desires. At least one person within the Church at Corinth was having sex with his stepmother and plenty of others were having sex with prostitutes. The people were having sex with whomever they desired in violation of God's Law and good order of creation, that sex is to practiced within the life-long union of husband and wife.

St. Paul writes: 12 All things to me are possible but not all things are beneficial, all things to me are possible but I will not be lorded over by anything. 13 Food is for the belly and the belly is for food, but God will destroy also this and these. But the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body, 14 and God also raised the Lord and He will raise us through His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Therefore am I to take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 16 Or do you not know that the one who is being joined with a prostitute is one body (with her)? For it says, "the two will become one flesh." 17 But the one who is being joined to the Lord is one spirit (with Him). 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin which a

man does is out of the body, but the one who engages in sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought for a price, therefore glorify God in your body.

St. Paul counters the lies of Satan with the truth of God's Word, with the truth of the Gospel. Yes, Christians have been freed from the condemnation of the Law; yes Christians are free in Christ to do many things that ancient Israel was not (like eating pork and other foods, not having to be circumcised, not having to keep the Old Testament feasts and festivals, and not having to make all the Old Testament sacrifices). Yes, Christians can drink wine and beer, dance, play cards, watch movies etc. But, Christians are not free to do whatever they want. God has called us to do what is beneficial, that is what is good for our neighbor and us according to God's will as reflected in the Ten Commandments; we are to love our neighbors as our selves. For instance, I know that I am free in Christ to drink beer, but there are times, places, and people with whom it is better that I do not drink beer. Christians can eat and drink many things, but gluttony and drunkenness are not good for our bodies nor for others around us.

In this world our bodies may desire food, drink, and sex, but we are not free to be gluttons, drunkards, or sexually immoral. Rather in Christ we are free to receive in our bodies what is good and pleasing to the Lord; food and drink as appropriate, and sex as a gift of love between husband and wife. God calls us to glorify Him in our bodies because our bodies are members of the Body of Christ and destined to be raised as our Lord Jesus was raised and still lives bodily. God calls us to live sexually pure lives because the Holy Spirit lives within our bodies; your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God calls you to glorify Him with your body, because you have been redeemed from sin, death, and the devil by a great price, the body and blood of Christ Jesus His Son.

However you may have profaned God in your body; be it any kind of sexual immorality, drunkenness, or abuse; do not persist, but repent and receive again the forgiveness of Christ and the new life in Him. Whatever lies you have believed and idols you may have worshiped, repent of them as one redeemed by Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus gave His body and His blood to free you from all sin and all unrighteousness; His body and blood to free you from sexual immorality, drunkenness, abuse, lies, and idolatry. Return to your baptism where you were washed, sanctified, and justified. Jesus has taken your sin, your filth, your unrighteousness and given you His righteousness. The Spirit has cleansed you with the water and the Word of Baptism, you are now holy and pure. The Father has adopted you in Christ and made you an heir of resurrection life.

Glorify God in your body, for you were bought with a price. Glorify God in your body, for you have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Glorify God in your body, for you have been baptized into Christ Jesus and joined with His death and resurrection. Amen.