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All Saints Sunday  
Sermon Series: HSL- Life Together  
Sermons  
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## 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31- ONE BODY, SERVED & SERVING

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Last week in Worship we started a sermon series focusing upon the theme **HSL- LIFE TOGETHER**. We examined two basic questions as we consider this theme: **“Who are we?”** and **“What does our life together look like?”** Today we will continue to ask those questions and build off how we answered them last week.

Who are we here at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church? We are **“One People Forgiven In Christ.”** We are sinners forgiven, justified by grace for the sake of Christ through faith in Christ alone, just as the Scriptures give witness. We are Lutherans, Christians, part of Christ’s flock that transcends time, place, and peoples, thus catholic or universal. We are evangelical, because it is through the evangel, the Gospel, that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and keeps sinners in Christ; He gives and works faith through Baptism, the preaching and hearing of the Word, and through receiving the Lord’s Supper. The grace of God through Jesus Christ super abounds in our lives over sin, death, and the devil, yet not so that we should continue on sinning, but that we might be free to live a new life in Christ, for we have died and risen with Christ in Baptism. We are **“One People Forgiven in Christ.”**

We are also **“One Body, Served and Serving.”** All Christians are members of the body of Christ called by the Spirit through the Gospel and fed and nourished by Christ through the Gospel. But in speaking to this point today, we are going to focus in particular upon Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, the body of Christ that the God has called together and feeds and nourishes in this particular place. God has placed us in the body and God has given each of us different gifts and abilities to serve the good of the whole body. God serves us and we in turn serve one another.

Now let me be clear about three things in particular that our sinful flesh despises and that we as Americans in general have trouble with. First, we do not place ourselves in the body of Christ. Second, we do not determine our own gifts, abilities, and areas of service. Third, service in the body of Christ is not optional; it is not a volunteer activity. The body of Christ is not a democracy or a republic. The body of Christ is a divine monarchy, where our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reign supreme.

Our sinful flesh and American mindset want to operate as independent and autonomous free agents. We want to decide things on our own; we want our will to be done. We insist on having the freedom of choice; to be or not to be; to do or not to do. When we think and act this way, we are deceived and living a lie. God never created us as independent and autonomous free agents; true God created us in His image and likeness; true God gave us each a body, mind, reason, and will; true God does hold each one of us morally responsible for our thoughts, words, and actions; however all these 1st Article gifts, gifts which God gives to all people in creation, are limited and dependent upon God and the order that He has set up.

Furthermore, we must understand that we are living after the Fall; though we and all that exist are God's creation because of the Fall we and the rest of God's creation have been infected, twisted, and ruined by sin. Our body, mind, reason, and will that God had created good and free, have become bound and enslaved by sin and so opposed to God. Because of this we lack the power and ability to come to God, believe in Him, or decide to follow Him. St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:14 and 12:3 respectively, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned...and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." God must set us free; God must call and place us into the body of Christ. God has done this for us, for you when you were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**St. Paul writes:** <sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, which are being many are one body, in this way also Christ; <sup>13</sup> for also with one Spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, and we all were given to drink one Spirit.

Through Baptism, God has forgiven us our sins and God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who gives us to believe and confess Christ and daily nourishes us in Christ through the Gospel. Through Baptism, God has called and placed you in the body of Christ; this is our birth by water and the Spirit, our birth from above as Jesus says in John 3, that unites each one of us personally into the one body. This is all by God's gracious will and choice to forgive and save you for the sake of Jesus Christ!

Ok so we don't become members of the body of Christ by our reason, will, or choice, because they are bound and enslaved by sin till God sets them free. But surely we can decide what we would like to do in the body and surely we can order ourselves in the way we think best once we get into the body of Christ? So sorry, but no! Though in Christ we have been set free from sin, this does not mean we are free to do as we like, rather we are free to do as God wills.

God wills that every member of the body of Christ serve the whole body according to His appointment and gifts. God has called and gifted each and everyone of you to serve; not all in the same way, but according to His purpose and gifting for the good of the whole body. **St. Paul writes:** <sup>14</sup> For also the body is not one member rather many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot says, 'that I am not a hand, I am not from the body,' it is not for this reason any less from the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear says, 'that I am

not an eye, I am not from the body,' it is not for this reason any less from the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where then is hearing? If the whole hearing, where then is the sense of smell? 18 But now God set the members, each one of them in the body just as He willed. 19 But if all were one member, then where is the body? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 But it is not possible for the eye to say to the hand, 'Hand, I have no need from you,' or again the head to the feet, 'I have not need from you,' 22 rather much more the members of the body supposed to be weaker are necessary, 23 and which ones we suppose to be less honorable members of the body such as these we clothe with greater honor, and our unrespectable members are treated with greater respect, 24 but our respectable members have no need (of this honor). Rather God has blended the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, 25 in order that there be no division in the body rather the members on behalf of each other should be anxious for all the members. 26 And if one member suffers, then all the members suffer together; if one member is glorified, then all the members rejoice together. 27 But you, you are the body of Christ and members from a part.

God has set the members of the body of Christ just as He willed. God has given each of us gifts and called us to serve as He has determined. God has gifted each and every one of you and He has called you to serve the body as a whole. Now there are some gifts and areas of service that get more attention or even seem to be more important than others, while it seems that other gifts and areas of service tend to go unnoticed. For instance, in the church, much focus and attention is placed upon the pastor. The pastor is called by Christ to preach and teach the Word, to baptize, to preside over the Lord's Supper, and to forgive or retain sins in Christ's name on behalf of the congregation. The pastor has a very public and visible office and area of service within the body of Christ. As such the pastor's gifts and abilities (which do vary from pastor to pastor) are quite known as well as his weaknesses. But not everyone in the body has been called and gifted to be a pastor.

People of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church though you have not been called and gifted to be a pastor, that in no way makes you, your gifts, and your areas of service any less important; you and your service is necessary for the good of the whole body! You should never think that you are not needed or that there is nothing you can do to serve the body. Nor should any one of us look down or put down another member in the body thinking that his or her gifts and areas of service are not as important as our own. We are tempted to do this with others who are more similar in gifts and areas of service to us; we are tempted to compete for attention and recognition. But members of the body of Christ are not to compete against one another, but to serve one another. Our daily struggle should not be with each other but with our own sinful flesh, with the devil, and with this fallen world.

**St. Paul writes:** 28 And which God set in the Church first Apostles, second Prophets, third Teachers, then (those with miraculous) powers, then gifts of healing, helpful deeds, (gifts of) leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all Apostles? Are all Prophets? Are all Teachers? Are all working miraculous powers? 30 Do all having gifts of healing? Do all speaking in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But be zealous for the greater gifts. And yet I shall demonstrate to you a still more excellent way.

God has not called and gifted all members for the same office and area of service, but God has called and gifted every member to serve the whole body. God called and sent the Apostles to be the official witness of the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ; they were given the unique place to be the first to proclaim the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name and to pass on the preaching and teaching of Christ.

So too the Prophets were unique, called and chosen by God as His instruments for writing Holy Scripture by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God has called Teachers or Pastors to faithfully preach and teach the Word of Christ to the body in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the apostolic proclamation. But God has also called and gifted you to serve the body and to serve in love.

In the body of Christ there are no volunteers. In the body of Christ service to one another is not optional. Service in love toward each other for the good of the body is what is expected, because we are **“One Body Served and Serving.”** As a body we are served by Christ our Lord. Christ served us by living in perfect obedience to God’s law. Christ served us by dying for our sins upon the cross. Christ served us by rising from the dead and defeating death. Christ serves you weekly in Worship; for here He forgives you your sins; here He gives you His body and blood; here you hear His Word; here Christ pours out His Spirit upon you. Now forgiven and served by Christ we serve each other.

**So what does our life together look like here at Holy Spirit Lutheran, as One Body Served and Serving?** First it looks like this, Christ serving us in Worship; the body of Christ being gathered around Christ to receive the gifts of Christ. But it also looks like every member in the congregation giving and serving one another as God has gifted you.

Now I realize that it may be challenging at times to discern how God has gifted each of us to serve in the body, but that too is where our brothers and sisters and Christ are of a service to us. Often our brothers and sisters in Christ can see gifts in us that we may not see or they encourage us to serve in ways that we may be shy or afraid to even though we are gifted. So let me encourage you and help you discern your gifts and areas of service.

God has called and gifted every member to give a reason for the hope that they have in Christ Jesus to all who ask. If you can speak, then God has called and gifted you to do this in your every day vocations (as parents, children, what ever your particular work is, and in relation to family, friends, and neighbors). Now this does not mean public speaking or knocking on doors, but simple every day conversation and conduct of your life. God has called and gifted every member with particular resources of this world- money, time, energy, specific skills and talents. Some of you are good with children, others with working with your hands, some with organization, still others with handling money, and these are but a few.

Opportunities to serve abound in our congregation and the service that each of you provides is necessary, whether you teach CFK, usher, lead the congregation in singing, read, keep up the church property, handle day to finances, put the bulletin together, organize outreach events, paint, and clean the bathrooms. All these areas of service and more are necessary in our congregation for the good of the whole body! So give some further thought and prayer to how God has gifted you to serve the body, because your service here is needed.

God has called us into the body of Christ to be served by Christ, to receive His forgiveness won in Christ's death and resurrection and delivered to us in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. God has gifted each one of us to serve the body as a whole as the whole body gives witness to Christ Jesus in the world together. If doubt of your gifts or guilt for not using them nags you; if you have served, but not in love; then repent and receive the forgiveness Christ serves you. For Christ's sake you are forgiven! Live now in Christ's forgiveness as **“One Body, Served and Serving”** Amen.