

We are One – Epiphany III --- Immanuel Holden -1/24/2010  
Nehemiah 8:1-10 --- I Cor. 12:12-31 --- Lk. 4:14-21  
Pastor Ron Jackson

About 40 years ago many of us sang: (Sing it) “We are one in the Spirit – we are one in the Lord ... and we pray that all unity will one day be restored ... and they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they’ll know ...”

Yes – “we are one”. - *Such a simple sentence may drive an English teacher bonkers – and my computer grammar checker also urged me to change the word choices.* ☺ --- The subject and the verb agree in number - but the subject and the adjective describing the subject do not agree in number. “We – one”? I don’t think so --- unless we are describing a very young child = a “wee one”. ☺ Well now – enough of this grammatical foolishness.

The statement is true: “*We are one!*”. This is a strong message from Today’s Second Reading – from 1st Corinthians: “Just as the body is one - and has many members, and all of the members of the body, though many, are one body --- so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit *we were all baptized into one body.....*”

Does this suggest that we are not individuals - or that each of us is the same as everyone else? Not for a moment! Just as we may have observed again, recently, that every snowflake is different from every other snowflake ☺ – we have surely observed that each one of us is dramatically different from every other person. *Yet - we are one* - and each of us is designed to be herself or himself – and yet, to live and to *work* together with *all* other people – and - to *walk* with each other ....

Today’s 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians reading - deals with *this* important truth: “Indeed, the body does not consist of *one* member - but of *many*. If the foot would say, ‘Because I am not a hand – I do not belong to the body’ - that would not *make* it any less a part of the body. And if the *ear* would say - ‘because I am not an *eye*, I do not belong to the body’ - that would not make *it* any *less* a part of the body. If the whole *body* were an *eye*, where would the *hearing* be? If the whole body were *hearing*, where would the sense of *smell* be? --- But as it is, God arranged the members in the body – each one of them. If all were a *single member*, where would the body be? As it is, *there are many members, yet one body*. The *eye* cannot say to the *hand*, ‘I have *no need* of you’ nor again the *head* to the *feet*, ‘I have no need of you’..... God has so arranged the body, so the members may have the same care for one another. If one member *suffers*, all suffer *together* with it; if one member is *honored*, all *rejoice* together... Now you are the *body of Christ* - and individually members of it.” *What a marvelous design!!! We are one – in Christ*. Might each of us do well to become *more aware of all other people* --- and then - within the

body – concentrate on being *our own unique self* --- *and* - at the same time, be committed to continue to walk and work together with all others???????

Today is the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday since Christmas – and next Sunday is Immanuel’s annual meeting – on the Sunday *between* the NFL Conference Championships and the Super Bowl. (Good planning, Dan!) Soon after Christmas, Dan gave me a copy of my Annual Report from a year ago – with a little note that it was time for another such edition. He did not know, then, that some of the content of that “last year’s pastoral report” would fit into Today’s message. In that report I quoted from a sermon that I had preached, at Immanuel, on the Fourth Sunday in Advent ’08. It was a helpful message *then* – and I believe that is still appropriate *today*.

*A year ago, I wrote:* “Each of us is *important* because each of us is a *presence* of God - to others. My wish for Immanuel is that we will be ever more mindful of how *privileged* we are - and that we will continue to be willing participants in God’s reaching out to others. Here is part of what was proclaimed, at Immanuel on Advent IV. ‘God’s plan *was* – and God’s plan still *is* – to enlist *people* in the *process* of being *present* to *other* people – for the *benefit* of *all* people. Christmas is about “*presence*”. Please note the clear pronunciation of the word – as well as the spelling = p r e s e n c e. Eternal God is a *presence* among us --- in the living Christ – the promised Messiah, born of Mary, the young woman who didn’t understand what was going on, or how it could be – but nevertheless said: *OK!* This living Christ is *present* among people, *at present* – having become one of us, in order to deal with our deficits – suffering and dying for us on a cross --- and *reclaiming life*, on the third day. The *presence* of the living Christ, among us, is experienced in the broken bread and the shared wine of the Holy Eucharist. And – after we are blessed – we are sent out into the world to be the *Presence of God* to *each other* - and to the *multitudes* who are battered by the storms of life – in the world. Please join me in asking God to help us *all* - to be ever more mindful of the importance of our *presence* in the *plan* - and our hoped for *involvement* in the *process* of loving and caring for *all* people. Let’s all join Mary and say: *OK...*”

No matter what the grammarians might say - *We are One*. “We are the Body of Christ – *and individual members of it!*” Each of us is a unique and vital part of the Body of Christ – designed to do our individual part - in the vital activity of the Body – in the world. Each of us is challenged to do our individual part in the *process* – because each of us is a vital part of the *presence*. And – *we are one*.

(sing it) ☺ “*We are one in the Spirit – we are one in the Lord ... (repeat) ... and we pray that all unity will one day be restored. And, they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.*” Amen, i.e. “may it be so”, for us.

