

Acts 4:32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

4:33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

4:34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

4:35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

4:36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

4:37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

[From today's sermon]

Last week, we learned from 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body.

"There is no division in the body, but all the members have their own functions and work together. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Christ loves this body—that is, us who have been led by grace to believe—and redeemed us with His precious life, making us a part of the true body of the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Head, the Lord, and support one another, lift one another up, help one another, and fulfill one another as one body. Is there any other community as wonderful as this?

"Lord, now... grant us boldness to speak your word. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. ... The apostles testified with great power about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was upon them all, and there was not a needy person among them."

In these words, we feel the life and vitality of the community connected to the Lord Jesus.

The famous words of 1 Corinthians 13 say,

"And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."

I desire to receive and pass on this love that endures forever.

Good morning, everyone.

After a few days of rain, the intense heat has returned. I hope you have all been well.

Last week, we learned from 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body.

"There is no division in the body, but all the members have their own functions. If one member

suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a member of it."

Christ loves this body—that is, us who have been led by grace to believe—and redeemed us with His precious life, making us a part of the holy body of the Lord. We give thanks to the Head, the Lord, and support, uplift, help, and fulfill one another as one body. Is there any other community as wonderful as this?

Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

1:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

1:18 And he is head over all things. He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

"Lord, now... grant us to speak your word with boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. ... The apostles testified with great power about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all, and there was not a needy person among them.

In these words, we feel the life and vitality of the community connected to the Lord Jesus.

4:32 The community of believers was united in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions were their own, but they shared everything they had.

4:33 The apostles testified powerfully about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

4:34 There was not a needy person among them.

Jesus' disciples were called to testify and perform powerful works and miracles through the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Our church also follows in that tradition. Though many of us do not abandon all our work to devote ourselves entirely to testifying about the Lord like Jesus' disciples, Paul worked in world missions while making tents.

Acts 18:1 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

18:2 There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, who had recently come from Italy because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

18:3 Paul went to their house and stayed there, working with them, for they were tentmakers by trade.

In Acts 6, we find these words:

6:1 Now in those days, as the number of disciples was increasing, the Greek-speaking Jews complained against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, saying that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.

6:2 So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

6:3 Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and we will entrust this task to them.

6:4 We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

6:5 The whole assembly agreed, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a convert from Antioch.

6:6 They stood before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

6:7 And the word of God continued to spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly, and many of the priests became believers.

6:8 Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

It is interesting to note that Stephen, who was chosen as a deacon to provide food for the apostles so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, went on to do remarkable missionary work.

In this way, Paul, who was called to devote himself to preaching, also worked as an example of how to work, as shown in 2 Thessalonians 3.

2 Thessalonians 3:7 You yourselves know how we lived among you. We did not live a life of idleness,

3:8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we might not be a burden to any of you.

3:9 We did this not because we had the right to do so, but because we wanted you to follow

our example.

Let us review last week's passage from 1 Corinthians 12 and continue reading the flow of the Bible story.

1 Corinthians 12:18 So God has placed the parts in the body, each of them as he has chosen.

12:19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?

12:20 But now there are many members, yet one body.

12:21 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."

12:22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

12:23 And the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. The parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,

12:24 and our presentable parts need no special treatment. God has so composed the body that there may be no division in it, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

12:25 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

12:26 If one member is in need, all are in need; if one member is honored, all are honored.

12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

12:28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then those with gifts of healing, those who help, those who administer, and various kinds of tongues.

12:29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

12:30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret tongues?

12:31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you a way to take the most excellent of them.

The analogy of the different parts of the body can be interpreted in this way.

That is, it describes the different types of work that Christians do.

However, in chapter 13, these differences are brought together and summarized in one direction.

13:1 Even if I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

13:2 Even if I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant

13:5 It does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, does not think evil.

13:6 It does not rejoice in injustice but rejoices in the truth.

13:7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

13:8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will be silenced; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will be silenced.

13:9 For our knowledge is partial, and our prophecy is partial.

13:10 When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

13:11 When we were children, we spoke as children, we thought as children, we reasoned as children. But when we became adults, we put away childish things.

13:12 Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part, but then I will know fully, even as I am fully known.

13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This means that love is what has value. No matter what gifts or remarkable works we have, no matter what miracles or heroic deeds we perform, without love, they are meaningless.

And today's passage speaks of love within the community.

4:32 The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of their possessions were their own, but they shared everything they had.

4:33 The apostles testified with great power about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

The community of believers shared their hearts, that is, their minds, wills, desires, intentions, and very lives—the deepest, most sincere parts of their hearts, their innermost beings, their convictions, and even their lives themselves. This was because they shared in the death and resurrection of Jesus and shared in His eternal life. To dwell in heaven forever. If we have received this grace and are experiencing the miracles of the Lord even in this life, what is there to fear or to bet on? Furthermore, we sincerely care for and support our families in faith, as one family, one body. Here was a powerful community.

4:34 There was not a needy person among them. Those who owned land or houses sold them,

brought the proceeds, and placed them at the apostles' feet.

4:35 Then it was distributed to each as any had need.

4:36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"),

4:37 sold his field, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

This was a community of love, and from it came a conviction and an irresistible urge to speak out.

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

It continues forever and moves forward with momentum. This is the love of Christ and our community of love.

Prayer: **Heavenly Father, we thank You for today's worship. Thank You for teaching us about the powerful community of Christ and its source, and that Christ's love covers everything. "Faith, hope, and love remain, but the greatest of these is love." For the sake of this love, please allow us to testify about Jesus again this week. Please lead all those who are suffering into God's salvation and peace. Bless our families and the people of our community. Use us. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**