Reflections for the week of July 22, 2024

**Unity Matters**

The body of Christ – his church – has been known to misbehave. The brain discounts the heart. (Academics discount worshippers.) The hands criticize the knees. (People of action criticize people of prayer.) The eyes refuse to partner with the feet. (Visionary thinkers will not work with steady laborers.)

A clear case of mutiny on the body.

 *If the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. I Corinthians 12: 15-18.*

The early Christians surely chuckled at these word pictures. What if the whole body were an eye? If you were a collection of eyeballs, how would you function? “The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you” (V 21). We cannot say, “I have no need of you.” The megachurch needs the smaller church. The liberal needs the conservative. The pastor needs the missionary. Cooperation is more than a good idea; it is a command (Ephesians 4:3). There is “one flock and one shepherd.” John 10:16

**Unity matters to God.**

A reflection by: Max Lucado

People say my handwriting is hard to decipher, and I admit it has probably gotten worse over the years. But compared to the great novelist Charles Dickens my scrawl looks like calligraphy. That is because Dickens wrote many of his notes in personal shorthand based on an obscure eighteenth-century style of stenography he learned as a young court reporter and then modified over the years. One of his notes for a letter itself has been lost – had famously remained undeciphered by intrepid but baffled Dickens scholars for 163 years until the University of Leicester posted it online recently and offered a small cash prize for anyone who could make sense of it.
Someone did. Not a scholar. Not a linguist. Not even an amateur Dickens buff. No, the man who broke the cipher had never read a Dickens novel in his life and had only made Cs in literature. He was a computer technical support specialist from California. The runner-up was a twenty-year old cognitive science major at the University of Virginia. The subject matter of the note was mundane – Dickens protesting the newspaper publisher’s refusal to run an ad. But these non-literato types cracking the code was rich with irony . . .until I thought about it.

Wasn’t it more about the different gifts God gives people? This time they were used to decipher an obscure note from a famous author. But imagine the problems we can solve when we all share our unique talents and work together.

A reflection by: Edward Grinnan

**Thank you, Father, for the gifts You give us. Let us be generous enough to share them.**

**Prayers for Sunday July 21 AND Wednesday July 24, 2024**

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

God of Strength comfort all who live in fear and with threats of violence. For those trapped in violent domestic households may they find the courage to leave and seek shelter. For those in the grip of substance addiction, give them the courage to seek help. For the abuser guide them to seek help to manage their anger.

**Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation: Hear our Prayer**

God of Compassion, watch over all caregivers. Continue to give them strength as they care for relatives, serve the sick, minister to the homeless, and visit the homebound. May they bring comfort, and support to all in their care. Today we especially pray for Brayden, Brianna, Darla, Dave, Denise, Jackie, James O., Jerome, Jerry, Jerry, Kristy, Larry, Lee, Nancy, Nathan, Oliver, Pat, Rachel, Tracy, Scott, Will and all those we hold in our hearts.

**Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation: Hear our prayer**

Father of us All, we need to reach outside the walls of this building. Guide us to where we can make a difference. May we tell your story in our words and actions towards others.

 **Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation: Hear our Prayer**

God of Compassion how sad that each day people are going to bed hungry, cold, and wanting for the necessities of life. Open our hearts to share our bounty with those in need, not judging why but extending a helping hand.

 **Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation: Hear our Prayer**

Help us realize God, that too often when we want to be “doing something” and not just praying **that talking to you** **is the “doing something**” that really matters.

 **Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation: Hear our Prayer**

Loving Father, as we approach a new week, may we daily appreciate our loved ones. Help us to be kind when we are patient, listen when we are tired, forgive when we need to, and offer a smile to someone who could use one.

**Leader- God of Grace**

**Congregation: Hear our Prayer**

**With everlasting thanks and joy for your love and forgiveness we ask you to be with us till we meet again. This week help us to take every opportunity to be thankful for the blessings of each day. Help us to pay attention to how best we can be a gift to others. May we approach each day with SOUL – serving others, uplifting lives! We ask all in the name of Your Dear Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.**