

Read 1 Corinthians 12 <http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-corinthians/12.html>

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Cor 12:27

“I like this church. It’s full of people *just like me*.”

“I like this church. There’s *so much diversity*.”

“I don’t want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member.” – Julius Henry Marx

For a couple of years, we lived in the Silicon Valley and attended a church perched literally on the edge of the Hayward Fault – right on the edge of the East Bay hills. The congregation was interesting, to say the least – an admixture of *very* straitlaced Midwestern engineers and *far* more down to earth *real* (native) Californians. One of the latter was a local rancher who looked like a little like Elvis and raised pigs up in the golden hills. Every year, he donated a *hog* to the church; folks in the church stuffed the *enormous* pig with pineapple and cherries and *roasted* it all night on a spit down at the local park. The next day, the congregation feasted on roast pig. The crusty ranchers, the pocket-protector engineers, and the space-case neo-Californians (duuuuude). Together.

The church is Christ’s body on earth. Contrary, I expect, to the traditional American vision of Jesus as a not-even-particularly Jewish-looking guy, He is a *mosaic*; black, white, old, young, male, female, rich and poor. Educated and hardscrabble. *We are* the church on earth. When we come together on Sunday for worship, or for Bible Study or even just a big potluck celebration, the socioeconomic differences that are *so important* to so many folks in “this life” are subsumed by one *big similarity* that binds us together: our love for, and faith in, the Triune God and in particular our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Pretty foppish language for today, right? One of the hallmarks of Christianity is the way God chooses to deal with *us*. Unlike “most religions” that force people to *do things* for their gods; to go to their gods, the Christian God comes to *us* – sometimes even if we don’t particularly *want* Him to! He comes to all kinds of folks; not just “our kind of people”. He invites them – us! – to communion; we become something very different than just a bunch of scientists and engineers and ranchers and laborers and what-have-you. We unite in faith. We become Jesus Himself, walking the earth and doing what we can (with God’s help) to “hold down the fort” until His literal return. “The Kingdom of God is in your midst”, Jesus said (*John 17:21b*). He used present tense, but he may not just have been referring to *Himself*. He was also referring to us; with His Advent, and His atoning sacrifice, we really *do* live in “Heaven on Earth”, grubby as it may seem sometimes. And that Heaven doesn’t *quite* look like the vision of John in *The Revelation*. At least, not yet.

Next time you’re in church, look around. Look at the *differences* in those people. Think of all the folks who *aren’t* in those pews. You know lots of them. Invite them in, whether they’re *the same* or *different*. As Paul put it (*Galatians 3:27-28*):

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

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