

Ye Are the Body of Christ

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(Christ Walking on Water by Julius von Klever)

Over the past year, my son has been searching for a better understanding of Jesus and Christ, which I have encouraged him not to conflate. He recently asked me, “How can I know if all the things they say about Jesus are true?”

I empathize with him. As a young girl, I often questioned the stories of Jesus. Though they were quite beautiful narratives, I couldn’t reconcile them with what I knew of the natural world I live in. What miracles actually took place, if any? How did these miraculous events happen? Why don’t they happen today? If Jesus suffered for everyone how could he suffer for the pains and afflictions of women? If all His miracles weren’t real is there any value in what I was being taught from the scriptures?

Christmas can be particularly challenging when fellow believers bear testimonies of mystical, superstitious narratives that perpetuate escapist attitudes and relinquish our responsibilities as “joint-heirs with Christ.” Fellow congregates may bear testimonies of faith in Jesus, but their “faith without works is dead.” If our faith in a miraculous Jesus is without action on our part,

our faith becomes nihilistic. If Jesus suffered for all of us, broken the bands of death, and graciously gifted us immortality, what is our role as the body of Christ? To blindly comply to the latest authoritarian?

In 1st Corinthians 12, we are taught that we are all the body of Christ, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, and one body: so also is Christ. For the body is not one member, but many. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular."

These scriptures remind me of the song Christ Has No Body Now on Earth But Yours,

Christ has no body but yours;

No hands, no feet, on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on this world;

Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good;

Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, Yours and the feet;

Yours are the eyes; You are His body.

Christ has no body now but yours;

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on this world;

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Amen.

As members of the body of Christ all things are possible and events that seem unlikely or even impossible can be made true. We can suffer with humanity. We can reconcile with humanity. We can atone with humanity. We can rejoice with humanity. This is what it means to become the body of Christ—to join Jesus in atoning. Our doctrine mandates our participation. In a very real sense Christ's suffering and reconciliation, when engaged in more thoughtfully, is not limited to Jesus, but all humanity.

We take the sacrament every Sunday to remind us we are the body of Christ. Mark 14:22 says, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it: this is my body.'" We symbiotically take on the name of Christ each week in religious ritual. We do it "in remembrance" as a "witness" to participate in Christ by immersively taking upon the name of Jesus.

The body of Christ knows no gender, race, nationality, ability, or orientation. The body of Christ is unified not in homogenization, but in the commonality of our belief in the atonement. Just as a human body is composed of diverse cells that have various functions, each collectively works together in unison to produce a functional body. We are the cells of Christ.

The scriptures also suggest that all parts of the body of Christ are an important and valued member. 1st Corinthians 12 expands on the body of Christ, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But

now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.”

We may each subscribe differently to appeals of Jesus’ divinity, his miracles, or the particulars of his life, but I trust his example is worth following. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas time, it is also important we celebrate the birth of an idea. Christ. It is the idea that absolutely nothing is beyond reconciliation, even death. To be Christ we must immersively follow Jesus’ example, atone with humanity, and participate in the work of redemption in compassion and love.

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