

**Corpus Christi**  
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**Sunday, June 23, 2019**

**(Gen 14:18-20: 1 Cor 11:23-26; Luke 9:11-17)**

Your body – what do you feel about it? What do you feel about living in your body? My feelings about my body are complex. Even though I was blessed with a sunny childhood, I still got complicated messages about my body.

Learning to like and accept my body has provided some of the funnier and the more distressing and definitely the most embarrassing moments in my life.

Most of us have muddled feelings about our bodies. Sometimes we feel great about them – when we are feeling healthy and happy; when we are dancing or walking pain free. At other times we wish we could get rid of our bodies – when they cause us pain, when we are embarrassed by how they look, when they fall in love with someone we have been told we shouldn't.

It is no wonder that many philosophies and religions have offered ways to escape connection to our bodies. During the time of the writing of the New Testament, philosophies prescribed the secret to the happy life as being the transcending of our bodies. There was a Greek saying, soma sema – the body is a grave.

'There is no future for the body, the only part of us that has a future is our soul. So, concentrate on our inner beings; forget our bodies. Therein lies happiness.'

I have wondered whether our current internet culture is based on a similar desire for disembodiment. I can relate my thoughts without you seeing me or me seeing you/ without you touching me or me you. My body is invisible, maybe it is unimportant. Maybe the way to happiness is to forget it.

Today is Pride Sunday, when we celebrate a better understanding of our bodies. In the church calendar today is Corpus Christi – not the city in Texas – but Corpus Christi – Latin for the body of Christ. Today we recognize again that disembodiment is not what Jesus Christ is about or what the church should be about.

Today, after weeks of celebrating Christ's resurrection and then the coming of the Holy Spirit among us, and then the revelation that God is God, Christ and the Holy Spirit – today we come down from the glorious heights of these concepts of resurrection, ascension, the coming of the

Holy Spirit and God as Trinity – we come to the body of Christ. Or maybe better put, today we are asked to see the body of Christ as part of these glorious concepts; Surrounded by glory.

The body of Christ: Christ's physical body which breathed, and walked and worked and taught and loved and was tortured and died and was raised. A body of flesh and of blood. Christ's body of flesh and blood which is the bread and the wine that we are so privileged to eat and drink every week.

It is one of the most distinctive things about the Christian religion – that we have a ritual in which we eat the body and drink the blood of the one we believe lived as a human body, was raised from the dead and now lives among us now as God.

It is easy to see how Christianity could have had a much different trajectory.

Christ is raised from the dead and lives now with God; Christ is now the glorious exalted one we worship – so let's lose that part about him having been a human body which was executed.

“Let's focus on his spiritual presence and have rituals where we celebrate his Spirit among us and his glorious status at God's right hand; and let's celebrate that we are the special people who are connected to the risen Christ.”

Well we do do some of that. We did that two weeks ago when we celebrated Pentecost.

But we also have today. We have Corpus Christi – the body and blood of Christ. A ritual in which we eat Christ's body in remembrance of him; and drink from the cup which Christ said – and said it on the night his body was going to be handed over to torture and execution – which Christ said was the new covenant in his blood. Today we celebrate the Eucharist, which St. Paul says is how we broadcast Christ's death until Christ comes again.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia. And yet we still regularly proclaim and emphasize Christ's bodily being; we regularly take into our bodies his body. So that we will not forget. So that we will not forget his body – and in the process, so that we will not forget our own bodies.

The night that Jesus was betrayed he took a loaf of bread, gave thanks and broke it. Jesus had done something similar at a happier time in his life; when he was a sought after rabbi. Today we heard Luke's account of Jesus' famous feeding of a huge number of people. Jesus responds to his disciples' concern about the bodily needs of the five thousand men and presumably lots of additional women and children.

Jesus takes five loaves and two fish, gives thanks, breaks them and gives them to disciples who give them to the people. There was more than enough to satisfy everyone. In fact, there were twelve baskets left over. Jesus took care of the bodies of those surrounding him. The crowd could go home with nourished bodies.

The night he was betrayed, Jesus also distributed bread to his disciples. Bread that nourishes not only our souls, but our bodies. His body into our bodies.

The Lord's Supper is a profound affirmation of the value and goodness of our bodily life. It signals that our bodily lives are understood and validated and loved by God in Christ.

The Eucharist is a proclamation of Christ's death until he comes – Paul says. The Lord's supper broadcasts the body of Christ – his mortal body/his death and his spiritual body/the body he has now which will be visible to us when he comes again.

The Eucharist is not only a sign of what was – Christ's death; but of what will be - Christ's bodily return. Christ's coming again in a body – a different kind of body, of course; in what Paul calls a spiritual body; the kind of body Paul believes we too will have.

Though not all Biblical interpreters and theologians would agree, I stand with those who think that God loves God's creation (and humanity is part of creation) so much that creation will always be. Christ's return (what we think about during Advent) will not mean the destruction of creation but the transformation of creation. Creation will be transformed into a kind of bodily existence free from the troubles of our current bodily life.

In the Eucharist, by imbibing Christ's body and blood, our bodies are nourished with both Christ's incarnation and his resurrection. Corpus Christi changes us. It changes us into Christ's body.

Taking the Lord's Supper is not only a beautiful private moment between us and God/between us and Christ. The Eucharist is a proclamation. It is an announcement to us and to our world that God in Christ showed us that our bodily life is critical and that it is profoundly loved.

God became a human body. God showed us what humans will do to bodies – torture and murder. And God showed us that love can heal the worst that we do to each other's bodies.

By taking the body of Christ we become the body of Christ for the sake of God's world. And for the sake of each other.

Our beloved Redeemer does a lot of good work offering healing for people's bodies; caring for people we serve in our outreach ministries. I wonder if we have more work to do in learning how to do this for the person sitting next to us in the pew.

We Anglicans – and it is one of the reasons this denomination works for me – we Anglicans typically have a culture of being reserved with each other. I am an introvert, so it is comfortable for me to be in this church culture where I can go quietly to the front to take the Lord's Supper, come back and sit quietly, and then at the end of the service talk to a few people and leave satisfied.

But, I know that that is not enough. That that is not really proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. The Eucharist nourishes us so that we become the body of Christ. So that I get to know you and you get to know me in my bodily life; so we can weep with each other, dance with each other, talk openly with each other.

Right before Paul passes on the instructions about the Eucharist that we heard read this morning, he chastises his hearers because they are celebrating the Lord's supper without caring for each other. Some are hungry, they are being less than kind to each other and so on. Paul says that kind of community dysfunction means that it is not actually the Lord's supper that they are eating.

It is only caring for each other that broadcasts the Lord's death until he comes. Caring for each other's bodily lives is what the eucharist nourishes us to do.

When we live a solo Christian life – privately taking the Eucharist, going home to our private lives; even though we might do a great deal to help those in need who come to the door of the church or our home – we do diminish the power of the church's proclamation.

I am speaking to myself out loud in front of you; as much as I am speaking to you.

The Eucharist nourishes us to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. To proclaim the love that meant that God became a human body. It nourishes us to broadcast that God's love transformed a dead body into a risen one, to proclaim that bodies matter; to proclaim the victory of love; to proclaim embodied love; to proclaim that our task is to love each other so that we can love those who need us.

The first people who believed that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead were a scorned curiosity because they were thought to be cannibals. After all, they were eating Jesus' body and blood.

But the first believers were also a curiosity because they loved each other so much. How could a group of socially disparate people call each other brothers and sisters and share their wealth with each other and give their hearts to each other? How could they love each other so much?

The body of Christ in the bread and wine has the power to transform us – collectively – into the body of Christ – a collection of bodies, yours and mine, that rely on each other for care and kindness and understanding.

Corpus Christi nourishes us to love each other in all the joys and challenges of our bodily lives; this proclaims the Lord's death until he comes.