

Epiphany 3, 2010  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
I Corinthians 12: 21

St Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 12. “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Nor can the head say to the feet, I have no need of you.”

The Word of God. And we pray:

Heavenly Father, every single day we seem to think we can make it alone, and every single day we find that we are wrong. We need you, we need each other, forgive us the pride that says we do not, and teach us to love and cherish the people around us, the way you love and cherish us. And we lift this prayer, trusting in the name of Jesus who died and rose again, AMEN.

“I have, no need of you.” Do you think it’s possible to find words, any meaner than these? If we tried, really really hard—could we find anything nastier to say than, “I have no need of you”? We all remember junior high and high school, the kinds of soap operas that play out in the lunch room every single day. Every single day, somebody’s child is the target of gossip, or is the butt of a joke, or is cut from a team, or is not invited to a party, or is told in some way by some body, “I have no need of you,” every single day! And it’s devastating. To those of you who are young now, just as an aside, When it is your turn to be told “I have no need of you,” and it will be from time to time. When it’s your turn to hear that, hang in there, have faith, look to Jesus for help. And remember what it feels like. Remember what it feels like to be told “I have no need of you,” and make sure you *never* say

that, to someone else.

“I have no need of you,” there are other examples of this sort of unkindness and they’re easy to find, what after all is so crushing about losing your job? Huh? Is it just the money? I don’t think so. Money matters of course, but the real pain is that you take pride in your work, you make sacrifices for your job, you do your very best each day just to be told “We have no need of you”? You can always retool your job skills, but how are you supposed to retool your spirit?

And why do we all dread living in a nursing home so much? Why do we dread the nursing home, are that we much in fear of death? Are we that alarmed by the physical discomforts of our later years? No. Rather we know, that after a lifetime of giving going doing, for me to live in a nursing home means that the world, no longer has need of me. How many times have I heard folks in the nursing home say exactly that, “What am I still doing in this world? I’m not good for anything anymore.” That’s what hurts about this last stage of life, a world that seems to be saying, I have no need of you.

In the Bible, our lesson for today. In the Bible St Paul had quite a church in Corinth, these were Christian people, *Christian people* who made a habit of saying to each other, I have no need of you. They would bicker with each other and take sides against one another and of course would always claim to

be doing the Lord's will the whole time; and then they would end the little spat by coming out and saying in plain Greek, "I'm right and I don't need you, there's the door!" They'd say that! So Paul went to great lengths in the letter we know as First Corinthians to ask them, first of all, Are you serious? I mean it's bad enough when the world says to us, I have no need of you—but when in our pride and in our anger we say that to each other, are you serious? And do you not remember, says Paul, that you are a Body? Don't you know you are in fact the very Body of Christ, we all belong to Jesus who died and rose again and therefore we also belong to each other; and we need each other! God made it so! How then can we say, how can we imply to anyone, I have no need of you?

And we do, imply that, many times and many ways. Junior High students. You want to be popular with this group here, ok, but what does that mean about this person here? To be popular here, do you have to be mean here? Do you? For the sake of your own popularity and your place in the group are you really willing to say to this person here, I have no need of you? Adults, when you argue, with a friend, or with your spouse, I don't care what the subject is; when you argue. What are you saying? You're saying "I'm right. I'm right, and I'd rather be right and take a chance on offending you and damaging our relationship, maybe forever, I'd rather be right—than keep

you as a friend. I'd rather be right—than swallow some pride and admit I might be wrong, I'd rather be right than worry about our relationship.”

That's what we say every time we argue. Is that what we mean to say? Is that, what we really want?

And churches. Let's keep this easy and just say that over the years, we've fallen into some patterns, ways we like to do things. It works for us, and God hasn't objected at least not that I know of, so ok, fine. But what about people out there, people who have not heard the Good News of Jesus Christ? What about trying to welcome them in? Can we do anything different for their sake? Are we willing to? Or are we basically happy the way things are, and if folks out there don't want to adapt to us, well, I guess we really had no need of them anyway.

And then there's our relationship with God. What is sin, what is sin except us saying to God Himself, I have no need of you? “I can do this alone, you've been God for a long time and you've done ok, but I think I can handle it from here on out, thanks anyway Big Guy.” That's exactly what Adam and Eve said as they bit into the apple; that's exactly what we say too, every time we disregard the word the will of God in our own lives, and go off on our merry way. Eventually you'd think we'd learn, and maybe we do here; but here, where habits dwell, we still like to think and act as though we

really did not need God, and we do so every day.

But, you know, turns out we do need God—for life and breath. For home and family. For forgiveness, and rebirth, and the hope of a place in heaven, we need God for all of that, and more. And here's the kicker. Get this, says St. Paul, here's the Gospel. God needs you. God needs you, and God is not afraid or embarrassed to admit it. God needs you, not like I need a vacation or we both need food, rather God needs you the way any loving Father needs His child. God loves you, His heart aches for you—He's right about your sin of course and He's been right all along, but *He doesn't want to just be right*. He wants you! And He would never dream of saying “I have no need of you”—instead God said and did just the opposite. Jesus died on the cross for you, meaning that Jesus would rather let go of His own pride and dignity than let go of you. He would rather let go of His own *life*, than let go of you! That's how much He wants and needs you, more than His own life! He didn't send you away then, when it meant a cross, He hasn't sent you away today and He won't tomorrow either. Whatever the world may say or do to you, whatever you may hear from others, Jesus who died and rose again for you will keep on saying, You are wanted here. You are needed and loved. And you will be forever.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.