



+ Today at Magdalen Road Church as we continued our series in being created in Gods image, we were considering the importance of other people and the epidemic of loneliness that is currently sweeping our society.

In previous weeks we've noted how fundamentally because of our Judaeo Christian heritage society has historically valued and assigned dignity to individuals. But we noted this should not be to the extent of an individualism that disregards our need for others. God made as social beings - created to care for one another (and be cared for by one another). It's good to be a burden!

We noted how in church history it is more often than not Christians who drive the agenda to care for the vulnerable lower strata of society.

We noted that fundamentally this balance between the individual and yet with community is founded upon the nature of God himself. Because he is one and yet, as scripture develops this becomes clearer, made of 3 persons. A unity and diversity that is seen in his body the church.

1 Cor 12v4-13: A God of unity and diversity.

We noted how the 3 members of the godhead are involved. The Spirit who distributes gifts, the Lord (Jesus) whom we serve and God who is at work in his people. And so his Spirit gives different gifts, there are different ways of serving the one Lord and God is at work in different ways. A diversity of gifts but a unity of purpose.

God gives diverse gifts but the singular purpose of growing the body.

V14-20... But I'm not needed.

We cannot opt out because we don't feel we fit in. If we don't have the trendy desired gift of the time - that doesn't give us license to slip off. God has arranged his body deliberately -

he needs you!

V21-26... But they're not needed.

We cannot get rid of people because we think they are redundant! God arranges his body as he sees fit - we are not to be like society in casting out those who don't quite fit in. We need all kinds of other people. We must not look down on those whom everyone else does. Everyone is vital!

Some questions - as always tweak for your group and your context.

How do you see fragmentation and isolation in society? Do you ever feel lonely? Why?

What do you notice from v4-6 as to how Paul describes God? Why does he do this? How does he then develop this as he comes to talk about the church body?

What's the objection in v14-20? What would the modern day equivalent be in our church culture? What about other churches?

What does Paul say to those who feel like this? Why?

How would you help someone who felt like this?

What's the objection in v21-26?

What is Paul's response?

Do we ever feel like this? Why?

How should a body of Christ function? How do we see the world challenging a healthy church body?