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Epiphany 3C; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31b

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This sermon is indebted to Amy Krouse Rosenthal's children's book Spoon.

This is Spoon (small spoon). Spoon has a lot of family (ladle, serving spoon, slotted serving spoon, soup spoon, measuring spoon). She also has lots of friends who are in some ways like she is and in some ways different than she is.

One day, Spoon says to her mom, “Mom, all my friends have it so much better than I do! Wouldn't it be great to be **knife**? Knife is so lucky! He gets to **cut**! He gets to **spread**. **I only get to cut or spread if someone can't find knife**. That's not fair.” Mom smiles and says, “Knife is great, isn't he?”

Then Spoon said, “Wouldn't it be great to be **Fork**? Fork gets to go everywhere—on the **grill**, in **spaghetti**, in **cake**, if there's food involved, fork's probably there, at least in our neck of the woods!” Mom smiles and says, “Fork is great, aren't they?”

“Wouldn't it be great to be **Chopsticks**? Chopsticks are so cool, and people get excited to use them since we don't use them every day in our house. **No one ever gets excited about using a spoon**.” Mom smiles and says, “Chopsticks are fun, aren't they?”

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the cutlery drawer, Knife is talking to his dad, saying, “Wouldn't it be great to be Spoon? Everyone is always so serious with me! **Be careful with Knife! Don't cut yourself with Knife!** No one says that about Spoon—they'll even give Spoon to babies! I want to play with babies!”

And **Fork** is mumbling to themselves, “Wouldn't it be great to be Spoon? **Spoon gets to measure things.** Without Spoon, baked goods don't come out right! I want to be that important!”

And Chopsticks, are whispering to one another: “**Wouldn't it be great to be Spoon? She can go places by herself. We always have to go everywhere together—all the time.**”

In today's Epistle reading, Paul addresses the church in Corinth, a city in modern day Greece. This community is not appreciating each other's differences. Paul uses this famous metaphor of the body to talk about the gift and the necessity of difference.

If anyone knows about the difference— it's a port city. Corinth is not a port city. It is THE port city. All ships trading in the Mediterranean went through Corinth. EVERYONE in this part of the world went through it.

Paul writes, “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?” Paul continues, “The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” Paul says we need difference not because it's cute or politically correct or mandated training. Difference is a gift from God and a necessity.

The gift of difference is more than individuals in a particular time. The body of the Christ is the whole communion of saints, past, present, and yet to come. The body of Christ extends across generations, across time periods with seminal events and amazing people.

Wouldn't it be great to be alive during Genesis, when God interacted with people on a personal basis? During the building of the first temple under King Solomon, during Jesus' lifetime, to actually see him, experience him first hand? During the very early church, to meet the apostles? During the Middle Ages, to hear firsthand from Francis of Assisi, who

inspires us still, to be one of the first to read Julian of Norwich, the first woman to publish in the English language, to witness Michaelangelo paint the Sistine Chapel?

Wouldn't it be great to be alive when The Rev. Dr Martin Luther King inspired a country to live up to its stated ideals? Some of us were. When Mother Teresa asked us and herself how to do our best anyway? Even more of us were alive then. **Wouldn't it be great?**

I'm not saying it's all good. That's a lie. Disadvantages and challenges abound. There are also advantages and opportunities, too.

What if we could ask God to help us lean into the gift of the now instead of the gifts people in other time periods seemed to have had?

We might not be the part of the body that we wish we were. We might not be the part of the body that we were even twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years ago. As a church or as a nation. Some time periods, the gifts are more obvious. Some less so. What we ask God to help us become more aware of what we are now, of who we are now, to see the good now more clearly, and to embrace the now more fully. To nurture the now more intentionally?

What if we asked God to fan a spirit of Yes instead of a spirit of Ugh? And what God helps us make that tiny little flame of yes grow into a beacon of love, and mercy, and justice? Could we dream a different dream instead of romanticizing the past? Could we sing a new song– finite number of notes and finite number of words in the English– infinite combinations–exponential ways remain to inspire? Could we hope a new hope unbound by our, quite frankly, limited imaginations?

Later that day, Spoon's mom says, "Spoon, I've been thinking. Knife, Fork, and Chopsticks are great. And Knife, Fork, and Chopsticks have no idea what it's like to **dive headfirst into a big bowl of ice cream**. They don't know what it's like to **snuggle up in a cup with tea or hot chocolate**. None of them will probably ever know the **quiet joy of clinking against the side of the cereal bowl**. 'You're right, Spoon. Knife, Fork, and Chopsticks are great. You are great too.'" **Amen.**

