**Life in the Body**

**The Word**

Read together Genesis 1:1-10 and Revelation 21:1-5

**The Big Idea**

The Bible gives us a very affirming view of the body and a very integrated picture of human beings as creatures who are embodied spirits.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. How have you thought about your relationship with your own body through the years? For example, have you simply not thought about it much, have you seen your body as a gift, an enemy, a source of pain, a source of power, etc.?

2. On Sunday we discussed two views that influence many Christians’ perspective on their bodies: ancient Greek philosophy and modern secular evolutionary science. How have you seen those playing out in your own thinking about your body or in the thinking of other Christians you encounter?

3. What from Sunday’s message was a new idea for you? What questions are raised in your mind from what was discussed on Sunday?

4. On Sunday we were encouraged to have a “sensual” experience this week. What specifically do you plan to do this week? What embodied experiences are most enjoyable and meaningful to you?

**Digging Deeper**

Read Genesis 3:14-19. Sunday’s overview covered creation, Christ, and final consummation, but it didn’t cover the fall. Discuss how the fall has impacted our bodily existence according to those verses, and discuss what you think God was up to in issuing those specific consequences.

**Sermon Outline**

I. Two sources that have influenced our view of the body

A. Ancient Greek Philosophy

1. The eternal realm of pure idea (”Forms”) is timeless, changeless, perfect

2. The physical world of bodies is inferior and subject to change and decay

3. In some ancient philosophies (Gnosticism) saw that soul as an immortal thing trapped temporarily in a fallen body with the goal being to escape the body and return to timeless bodiless existence.

4. So it’s a disintegrated view of the person and a low view of the body

= The real me is not my body but it’s inside (=my soul/spirit)

B. Secular Atheistic Evolutionary Science

1. There is no soul or spirit there is only body

2. But the body is not the product of a creative and purposive designer; it’s simply the result of an undesigned, random process over billions of years

3. The body has no “teleological purpose”; it’s just a clump of matter without meaning. So the body doesn’t tell me anything about how I have to live

4. There are no moral “oughts” contained in the body’s design, so I can use my body however I want. “Fate, not God, has given us this flesh. We have absolute claim to our bodies and may do with them as we see fit.” - Camille Paglia

5. So it’s also a disintegrated view of the person and a low view of the body

= the real me is not my body but inside (=my identity/inner truth/etc)

II. A Biblical Overview of the Body

A. Creation

1. Genesis 1: The created material order is not an accident or the result of something gone wrong. Rather, it is the “good” and beautiful design of a loving God.

2. Genesis 2:7-8: Man is dust (“adam” is formed from the “adamah”) that God breathes life into. He is not some prior perfect immortal soul that gets trapped in an inferior body. Rather, man is an integrated embodied spirit.

3. Genesis 2:21-22: Likewise, the creation of woman is a very earthy and embodied experience.

4. Genesis 1:27: These embodied humans are God’s image bearers. They are a physical/embodied representation of a spiritual being (God). The image of God is “a declaration that God intended to create human persons to be the physical means through which he would manifest his own divine presence in the world.”

B. The Life of Christ

1. The incarnation (John 1:1-14). While the Greek philosophers couldn’t imagine the eternal God, taking on flesh, God dignifies the body (and humanity) by sending his son in the flesh. Jesus takes on in every way a life in the body and his ministry is carried out through his body. See Colossians 2:9.

2. The crucifixion (1 Peter 2:24). While our problems are certainly spiritual, God’s solution is a very physical act of his son’s body taking on our sins on the cross. It’s all very earthy and physical, not merely a metaphor or symbol.

3. Resurrection (Luke 24:36-43). Jesus is raised bodily with a resurrection body that is both continuous with his old body yet also transformed and made new and indestructible. Jesus doesn’t enter a human body for 33 years only to leave it at the end of his time on earth; he is now forever embodied in a resurrected human body.

C. The consummation of all things

1. Revelation 21:1-5: In the beginning God made the “heavens and earth” and in the end he will make a “new heavens and new earth.” The final move is not “up” to heaven but rather the heavenly city coming “down” to a new earth and God’s dwelling place now being with humanity and living with them. It is a very embodied experience; a garden city with the beauty of Eden but also redeemed human culture and society.

2. Philippians 3:20-21: we will be given resurrection bodies that are like the resurrection body Jesus now has.

III. Conclusion

A. Matter matters to God. Our bodies matter to God. We are called to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice recognizing that they are temples of the Holy Spirit.

B. This week, go have a sensual experience (an embodied experience in one of your five senses).