

“Gifts of the Spirit”
1 Corinthians 12:1-31
11.14.21

Good Morning, let us pray.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen

This morning’s reading comes from Paul’s first letter written to the Corinthians. This letter was written around AD 53 while Paul was in Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey. Paul received reports of quarreling among the people of Corinth. There was a growing division among the people and he believed it required swift action, so he wrote this letter before leaving Ephesus heading to Macedonia. Paul had spent about 18 months in Corinth on his 1st missionary journey and had left Apollos to preach and teach in his absence. The bases of this Epistle was to deal with the way the Corinthians were treating each other. They were carnally minded, they seemed only to be focused on the natural world and saw things in terms of the flesh. Paul used his theological views and understanding of what it meant to be a people of God living in a multicultural and pagan environment.

I am reading from the New American Standard Bible; Chapter 12 titled, “The Use of Spiritual Gifts” starting with the first verse:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be unaware. [2](#)You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. [3](#)Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

[4](#)Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. [5](#)And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. [6](#)There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. [7](#)But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [8](#)For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; [9](#)to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10](#)and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. [11](#)But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

The first 3 verses are giving a little perspective to this situation; Paul is reminding the people of Corinth that they were pagans and they have been brought away from that lifestyle. They are now able to exclaim Jesus is Lord, because they have received the Holy Spirit. He goes on to explain in verses 4, 5, and 6 there are diversities in the gifts,

which can manifest in different ministries and have different operations and these differences ultimately glorify God.

Verse 7 charges us to use them for the building of the Kingdom of God. In verses 8 to 10 he lists some of these Gifts. He clarifies in verse 11 that one and the same Spirit works all these things, and he distributes them as He wills.

Paul is trying to correct the confusion that has come about over the importance of the gifts. There has been growing dissension of the Corinthian people over their thoughts that the gifts are, let's say ranked, that when one receives a gift others may be envious. Seriously, if you were given the Gift of Faith yet your neighbor was given the Gift of Healing, would you not be a little jealous? When we find smart people who have defined the gifts, we can come to understand that none are better to have than the other. This is because they are of God, for God, and not to be thought of in any way to bolster us as individuals but an instrument of God.

The definition for the gift of healing says, "Healers are prayerful, and they help people understand that healing is in the hands of God. Often their task is to bring about such understanding more than it is to simply erase negative symptoms." While the definition for Faith explains, "Faith is characterized by an unshakable trust in God to deliver on God's promises, no matter what. The gift of faith inspires those who might be tempted to give up, to hold on. I want to be a member with brothers and sisters that share both of these gifts. Most of us have been in situations where a friend or family member was not healed, but the spirit gave the gift of Faith to someone close to you, they were tasked with keeping you built up until your faith can be restored.

As many of you know, both my parents have died. Both of them although 6 ½ years apart could have been healed. They were not, my mother died of complications from Ovarian cancer. She had surgery to remove the tumors and we got great news. The surgeon told us he was able to remove all the suspect tissue, but she would need chemotherapy. The day she went for her first chemo treatment, which was a Thursday the nursing staff noticed her legs were swollen. They sent her to the ER, and three days later as we gathered around her bed, we said our goodbyes. I am thankful my friends and family used the Gifts God had given them in my time of need.

Paul continues in verse 12-14 to say that the body is a unit and composed of many parts. Although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ, for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and no matter our background, we all received the same Spirit.

When we get to verse 15-18 in the Amplified version of the Bible Paul writes, "If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a *part* of the body," is it not on the contrary still a *part* of the body? [16](#)If the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a *part* of the body," is it not on the contrary still a *part* of the body? [17](#)If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? [18](#)But now as things really are, God has placed *and* arranged the

parts in the body, each one of them, just as He willed *and* saw fit with the best balance of function.

Some of you may know that I study Karate, while learning I have also had the opportunity to study some other Martial Arts, Ju Jitsu being one of those. During a class on hip throws one of the instructors began talking about balance and shifting your opponent's weight to relieve them of their balance so you could more easily lift them and toss them to the ground. While reading this scripture this memory popped back into my head. The instructor went on to say that humans really should not be able to stay standing. Real quick, has anyone ever tried to make something stand with only 2 points of contact with the ground? How did it work?

The Reader's Digest published an article titled, "How do humans stand and balance without falling over?" In the article it talks about our skeleton is built with two legs containing lockable knee joints and an upright spine providing a column of support, bearing the weight of the head, neck and trunk, allowing us to maintain an upright position. Balance is, however, due to a lot more than your bones. Your ears, eyes, brain, spinal cord, heart and muscles all work together to help you stand.

You might not think you need your eyes to stay upright, cause after all we can stand in a dark room, but if you were to spin around with your eyes closed vs. being opened you would notice that it took you longer to regain your sense of balance when you tried it with your eyes closed.

Your ears, are they needed for balance? Has anyone ever experienced vertigo? The ears contain fluid filled canals with tiny stones, as those roll around, the nerves send that info back to the brain to keep us upright.

When you stand up, gravity causes the blood to pool in our legs which drops our blood pressure. God gave us baroreceptors to monitor those changes and when that happens our heart rate increases to counter act the drop in pressure.

I believe most people would be able to guess that our muscles, brain and spinal cord play an important part in maintaining balance. It is remarkable how the different body systems work together to allow us to get out of bed in the morning. Balance becomes even more brilliant when you consider that the different parts can compensate for each other in case of injury or loss. But who has ever been on crutches? You can still function; you can still get from place to place. Were you tired at the end of the day? When you came off the crutches it was much easier to do your job and your stamina was better right? Now how do you think your brother or sister in Christ feels when he or she is having to carry you, to be your crutch? Yes, they can do their job, saving souls for

Jesus, but they get tired quicker, can not get the rest they need and can easily become burnt out.

19-26 comes from the Message, But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a *part* of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes *no* difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full head of hair?

25-26 The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one-part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one-part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

27-31 You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his "body":

- apostles
- prophets
- teachers
- miracle workers
- healers
- helpers
- organizers
- those who pray in tongues.

But it's obvious by now, isn't it, that Christ's church is a complete Body and not a gigantic, unidimensional Part? It's not all Apostle, not all Prophet, not all Miracle Worker, not all Healer, not all Prayer in Tongues, not all Interpreter of Tongues. And yet some of you keep competing for so-called "important" parts.

But now I want to lay out a far better way for you. I also think that if your top 3 or 4 gifts don't include: Apostleship; the spreading of the gospel to other cultures and to foreign

lands, Evangelism; the ability to share the gospel with those who have not heard it or not accepted Jesus as their savior, Prophecy; the gift of speaking the word of God clearly and faithfully. Prophets allow God to speak through them to communicate the message that people most need to hear, Teaching; the gift of bringing scriptural and spiritual truths to others. More than just teaching Christian education classes, teachers witness to the truth of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways, and they help others to understand the complex realities of the Christian faith, or Wisdom; the gift of translating life experience into spiritual truth and of seeing the application of scriptural truth to daily living. That does not mean you are not responsible for spreading the Word. If your top gift is Knowledge, Administration, Shepherding, Faith, Miracles, Leadership, Giving, Compassion, Healing, Discernment, Helping, Servanthood, Exhortation, Tongues, or Interpretation of Tongues, You still play a vital role in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. We are all members of the Body of Christ and are gifts are given to us to help make disciples of Christ.

I would like to take this time and thank Pastor Johnathon for giving me the opportunity to bring the message to you this morning. Two different time in my life I thought God was calling me to preach. Once during my Freshman year of college and the other was this past summer. At first, I believed God was calling me to be a preacher, after reflecting, I am pretty sure that God is only calling me to bring the message as needed. A little over three weeks ago I finished a Lay Servant class, one of the things we did was to take a spiritual gifts survey. My top 3 gifts were Prophecy, Knowledge and Teaching. I was a little surprised at the results, but I am very excited to see how God uses me. I do encourage everyone to take a Spiritual Gifts Survey and begin to understand what part you are in the Body of Christ.

Jesus came and spoke to the eleven when they had joined him on the mountain, saying "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. That was from Mathew 28:18-20.

Claire has been learning to play the flute for 2 ½ years, Toni played the flute when she was in High School, I can blow and make one note on the flute, Martha Hinchman, Craig's mother, I don't know how long she has been playing but she is very talented when it come to playing the flute. One may say she has a gift. I am definitely the weakest flutist in this group, yet if I was told that my neighbor would die unless I could make one note on the flute. I could and would do that. So why do we not make one note to save our neighbors from eternal death? Why do we not use what gift the spirit gives us to tell our neighbors about Jesus?

Romans 10 verse 14; How then can they call on the One in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?

Wesleyan Covenant Prayer:

*"I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low by you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious
and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine, and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."*

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. When do you set up your Christmas tree? When do you take it down?
2. As you reflect on this week's message, what one thought stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?
3. Which of the gifts of the Spirit resonate with you? What gifts do you identify in others?
4. How have you witnessed God at work in your life recently?
5. How can we pray for you?