

Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity
Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Theme: Gifted to Give.

August 4, 2024

Opening: Grace be yours and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus and Savior, Christ. Amen. Our sermon text today is recorded in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 1-11:

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, you were deceived and somehow led away to mute idols. ³Therefore I am informing you that no one speaking by God's Spirit says, "A curse be upon Jesus," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are various kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of ministries, and yet the same Lord. ⁶There are various kinds of activity, but the same God, who produces all of them in everyone.

⁷Each person is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one person a message of wisdom is given by the Spirit; to another, a message of knowledge, as the same Spirit provides it; ⁹by the same Spirit, faith is given to someone else; and to another, the same Spirit gives healing gifts. ¹⁰Another is given powers to do miracles; another, the gift of prophecy; another, the evaluating of spirits; someone else, different kinds of tongues; and another, the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹One and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them to each one individually as he desires.

In Christ Jesus, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

When the Wise Men came to see the Baby Jesus they brought Him gifts. What did they do with the gifts? The account reads, "On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh."

It sounds like they laid their gifts before the little Lord Jesus. Did the Lord Jesus take them up in His own hands and thank the Magi for them? I rather doubt that since Jesus was still a newborn child, probably just a few months old. Even if He were a year old by the time they arrived, can a 1-year-old respond in such a way? No. So, I would assume that Mary and Joseph received the gifts out of the hands of the Magi and thanked them for the gifts.

Would the Wise Men have protested the parents' taking the gifts saying, "Now wait a minute, those gifts are for the child, not you!"? They were presented to Jesus, not Mary and Joseph. But I can't imagine the Wise Men protesting because they were giving gifts to honor God for the birth of His Son and to provide for the family's needs as they would soon be on their way to Egypt. In

the end they were gifts given to be used *for the common good* of the family.

In that you have an illustration of the way that God provides for the welfare of His people who believe in Him. He gives gifts, the Bible calls them spiritual gifts, for the family of faith. They are given to the whole Church, not just for the use of one person. They are intended to benefit the Church. Or, as Paul writes in our text, “Each person is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Gifts are given not just for personal use, but for the blessing of the whole.

So, as God has **gifted** you, and He has gifted everyone who believes, you have been **gifted to give** – not to hoard or use just for yourself, but to use...

I. ...for the common good of His Church.

But the devil puts temptations in front of us, especially in the area of the gifts God gives to His people. You see, the devil wants to keep the entire Church from benefiting from the good things God gives. So the devil strives to sidetrack us.

Among the Christians in Corinth he did that by creating misunderstanding, misuse, and envy regarding God's gifts to His people. It was such a big problem that Paul spent three chapters talking about it. Jealousy seemed to be a major part of the problem. So, Paul spent the first verses of our text reminding us that the greatest gift anyone could have and which we each have is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith in the Gospel. We share alike the one thing needed. No reason for jealousy here. But it was with the other gifts which God blesses His Church where the envy arose.

How sad because jealousy always causes problems. It leads to discontent. It produces quarreling, fighting, and does a whole lot of damage to people in their relationships. It was a major factor in the first murder in the Bible. Do you remember the story?

Cain and Abel were the first sons of Adam and Eve. One day they each brought an offering to the Lord. Abel came with a heart full of faith and gave God the best offering he could from his flock. Cain came with an angry, sullen heart and bad intentions (1Jn.3:12). When God showed that he was pleased with Abel's offering but not Cain's, Cain grew jealous. His envy led to anger and hatred as he attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Jealousy destroyed their relationship.

Within the Church jealousy still proves to be destructive. How does it come about? Let's take a look at the Corinthian Christians.

There was a time among the Corinthian Christians when they were ignorant of the best gift of all – faith in the Lord Jesus. Before the Holy Spirit brought them to faith, they foolishly followed

dumb idols that couldn't help them. The gods of their Greek culture neither spoke to them nor heard them. They couldn't because they didn't exist. How can a god who doesn't exist hear or speak to you? It can't. But then through the working of the Holy Spirit, He made them believers in Jesus. That Holy Spirit enabled those who believed to say, "**Jesus is Lord.**" What a gift the Spirit proved to be to all of them!

But there was more. God makes us His children so we might live and serve as His children. In other words we are **gifted to give**. So He also gives us other gifts that we need to serve *for the common good of His Church*. Paul talked about some of the gifts that God had given the Corinthians .But He didn't give the same gifts in the same amounts or the same combination.

The same is true today. One person might have gifts in the area of understanding Biblical truths, another in teaching the Gospel, another in an unrelenting trust in God, another in being able to work in foreign languages, another in seeing through false teaching about God that others raise. Someone might even be gifted to do a number of things. What should we do with whatever He gives to each believer? Paul's answer would be "Put your gifts to use *for the common good*, whatever gift you have, knowing that the Holy Spirit and faith is the best gift of all."

But the devil has a way of striking Christians, like he did with Cain against Abel, with discontent, jealousy, even complaining: "Why can't I do this? Why can't I do that? Why doesn't God give me gifts like that?" But we gain nothing by wasting our time in idle dreaming about the talents we do not have. Rather, we are to do our very best with the talents we do have. We are **gifted to give** what we have, not what we don't have or wish we had.

Years ago there was a missionary who did much to bring the Gospel to the blind. He once addressed a large audience of blind people in England saying, "When I became blind as a young boy, people tried to comfort my mother because of the heavy cross with which I was afflicted. But they were wrong. God gave me blindness as a *talent* to be used for His glory. Without blindness I should never have been able to see the needs of the blind and help them." That man consecrated his talent of blindness to the Lord and published the Gospel in raised type in nearly 200 languages.

Can we say that we have no talents or that our talents are too small? Can we be jealous of others? All of God's dispensations are talents and we can be strengthened and comforted knowing that the best gift we have in like measure is the Holy Spirit and faith. He is *for the common good* and makes all things work *for the common good*. If He can even make blindness a talent, surely

there will be no want of talents in our lives if we will only recognize the opportunities He gives and consecrate them to God's glory...

II. ...as the Holy Spirit determines the gifts in service to the Word.

Notice how the emphasis is put on the Spirit giving. He give to this one; He gives to that one. The same Spirit gives. The unity and singleness of intent of that one Spirit leads Him to dole out the gifts in various ways to each one "just as He desires." And He *determines to give the gifts in service to the Word.*

One other problem in Corinth was that the gifts were being used to focus on the person with the gift. Even today the same thing happens. People focus on the person rather than on the Spirit who *determines the gifts* to work *for the common good in service to the Word.*

Furthermore, it appears that in His wisdom the Spirit doesn't give some of these gifts anymore. We shouldn't expect miracle workers or healers or babblers in tongues. And if people claim such gifts for themselves, we should be careful to assume that it is not a true gift by the Spirit. If the focus is on the person using the gifts, and not on Jesus and His saving Word, the focus is wrong and is quickly seen for what it is.

The story is told of a young seminary student who spent an hour with one of the more noted theologians of the past. As the young man rose and began to take leave of the professor, the man observed: "You are a gifted young man." Noticing the young man's embarrassment, the professor was quick to add, "I did not say you are a brilliant young man. I said you are gifted. God has given you remarkable talents. You will be responsible to Him for the way you use His gifts."

How needful that reminder is to each of us. If in moments we are tempted to parade our accomplishments or want to be noticed for what we can do, let us remember that we have nothing that was not given us. No matter what the talent is, all comes from God and is *determined by the Spirit to be used in service to the Word for the common good of His Church.*

Regarding such talents the Savior encouraged responsible activity when He said, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt.10:8). Or we might say - **Gifted to Give.**

Lord, help us each to use the gifts that You have given us, whatever they may be, to Your glory and the common good of all; for Jesus' sake.

Now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.