

“Many Gifts, One Spirit”
1 Corinthians 12:1-13
Pollocksville Presbyterian Church
Sermon #58
Pentecost
12th Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic
5.31.20

12 Brothers and sisters, I don't want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts.**2** You know that when you were Gentiles you were often misled by false gods that can't even speak. **3** So I want to make it clear to you that no one says, “Jesus is cursed!” when speaking by God's Spirit, and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. **4** There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; **5** and there are different ministries and the same Lord;**6** and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. **7** A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good. **8** A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, **9** faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit,**10** performance of

miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues to another, and the interpretation of the tongues to another. **11** All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person.

12 Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. **13** We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

During February and early March, our congregation hosted four cottage meetings. We were supposed to have a fifth, but then COVID-19 had other plans. At the beginning of the cottage meetings, I led each group in a reading of Acts 2:14-21, which is part of the Pentecost story. In it, Peter is addressing the crowd and tells the very first members of the Church that the Spirit of the LORD was indeed upon them and that the children will prophesy, the young will see visions, and the elderly will dream dreams.

After the scripture was read several times, each group discussed what was seen and heard in the verses. Of course, we went back

to the children prophesying, the young seeing visions, and the old dreaming dreams because of God's Spirit being poured out on each of them. I asked something like this: Do these verses, which are rooted in the Old Testament book of Joel, point to God as one who is finished working? Or is God continuing to work today and tomorrow?

I imagine and hope as I ask this question now, we may wrestle with this question in a new way in light of the pandemic. Honestly, since this all came to the forefront over two months ago, I felt the wind knocked out of me as I'm sure it did for you. I had my pity party. And while pity parties are needed, we can't stay there forever. God's got work for us to do. But, I kept thinking about this Pentecost passage and wondering how the heck are we to navigate through this mess.

And then as I looked through the Lectionary and discovered today's scripture was included, I finally paid attention to something that I had heard all my life, but never experienced it until now: "Necessity is the mother of invention."

Throughout this difficult journey that we will be in for some time, the Holy Spirit has been moving in different ways in the Church. For many churches, including Pollocksville, we've had to make some major adjustments for safety and for proclamation. Of course, our adjustments look different than churches in denser areas. But, we have been and will continue to adapt through all this because the Spirit has been leading, nudging, forcing, and moving us to rethink how church is done. I am thankful for all the people whose various gifts have shined as we navigate through an uncharted map.

We've had to get creative and do it quickly.

In all these decisions, in all these experiments, in all the successes and failures, we've learned a lot. We've learned a lot about ourselves and we've learned a lot about the Spirit's power in these stressful times. And we will continue to learn.

As Presbyterians, we have a particular form of government that makes us distinct when compared to our Christian kinfolk in other denominations. Our congregations are connected to each other. Ministers don't have the ultimate authority. We do not have a hierarchy in the sense of bishops. While our siblings in other denominations have different approaches, when we are doing our due diligence as members of the PCUSA branch of the Reformed

movement of Christianity, our form of government reflects Paul's words to the Church in Corinth: There are many gifts and there is also one Spirit.

In our Baptism, God pours out the Spirit upon each of us. On each of us, God has given us unique gifts that are to be used for nothing else except God's glory. Some people have the gifts of preaching or teaching. Some have the gift of fervent prayer. Some have the gift of orchestrating a plan of attack during a crisis so we can all worship safely together. Some have the gift of encouragement. Some have the gift of telling jokes to remind you not to take things too seriously during these stressful times. Some have the gift of offering a hand to you so you can pick yourself back up when you've been knocked on your posterior.

It takes all types of gifts. In these decisions that have been and will be made as we move forward, I am so glad I didn't have to do it alone. I work with some phenomenal colleagues on the Session, in this chancel, in the office building, and in our presbytery. During COVID-19, I have been reminded not only through the way our Presbyterian form of government is set up, but through this word to us today from Paul, that it takes all types of gifts. At different moments, certain gifts, sometimes hidden for periods of time, will shine through the chaos because the Spirit has been poured on those people to help lead for such a time as this.

In the Corinthian Church, there were factions based on various Spiritual gifts. Yet, Paul declares that the unique gifts given to each person are equally important and have different functions, just like parts of the body. The spiritual gifts, while distinct, are from the same Spirit. Regardless of one's status in the church, Paul is

pointing out to us that God pours out the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon each Christian in Baptism and everyone is to use their gifts for God's glory.

As we continue moving forward in this new normal, I wonder what hidden spiritual gifts will start shining through. It will take an entrepreneurial mindset to see what sticks to the wall and adjust or perhaps abandon certain practices that used to work in the old normal. Regardless of what gifts God has given you, they are needed.....now more than ever. And some of your gifts will be used in different ways you never thought possible because God is up to something and is constantly doing a new thing.

Siblings, as we make this next step into an uncertain future, let us remember this: The Holy Spirit moves us. The Holy Spirit empowers us. The Holy Spirit has blazed the trail before us.

In the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer. Amen.