

YOU ARE GIFTED.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹ Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

The Corinthian congregation might be considered a modern congregation. Sadly it would not be a good example of a modern Christian congregation. We deal with a lot of division in our society. They did too. We see a lot of racial tension. They did too. We hear a lot about class distinction. They did too. Of course the reasons for the problems were different from ours, but the problems were the same. The rich and the poor formed two cliques. The Jews and the gentiles were another couple of cliques. The end result was a lot of division just like we see sadly in our own society. Add to that an emphasis on what I have that you don't. In other words, I have gifts and you don't. My gifts are better and more important than yours. Wow!

Paul spent three chapters in this epistle of 16 chapters, nearly 20 percent, talking about gifts and how to use them. What he shows us is a lesson for us because we have gifts too. **YOU ARE GIFTED.** Your gifts are different, but they all have one thing in common. Your gifts are yours to serve other people with and your gifts are God-given to serve God's purposes.

1. The Corinthians were almost obsessed with the gifts that the people in the congregation had. There were common gifts and there special gifts. Paul began by reminding them of the greatest gift of all. It's a gift they didn't think much about and sometimes we don't either. They had been idol worshipers, worshiping things that only existed in their minds and maybe as a piece of rock or wood or metal in a temple. The greatest gift of all is the faith that God the Holy Spirit worked that enabled them to trust the Lord Jesus as their Savior and realize that God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. We, like the Corinthians can sometimes think more about the gifts we have or want to have instead of thinking about the One who gives the gifts. **YOU ARE GIFTED.** That means that someone gave you the gifts you have and that someone is the Living God, the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As the Corinthians argued about the quantity and quality of the gifts various people had, they forgot what united them. Two important things united them in their congregational lives and ours. First, it is the One true God who gives the gifts and the One true God that we serve with those gifts as we put them to work in service to one another. **YOU ARE GIFTED.** We have gifted musicians leading our worship. We have gifted teachers in our Sunday School and in our Concord Lutheran Academy. We have gifted volunteers who serve in more ways than we can think of. We have gifted people beautifying our church and our worship services. We have gifted leaders to guide us through this difficult period as we wait and pray for God to answer our prayers for a fulltime pastor to serve God as he serves us. We have gifted people who may not have thought about the gifts they have and the way they can use them. The gifts are different, but they all have a place and a purpose. That's what Paul means when he says that the gifts we have are

manifestations of the Spirit. We can't see the Holy Spirit, but as Jesus told Nicodemus, you can see what the Spirit is doing. You can see what the Spirit is doing by watching God's people use the gifts God gave them.

2. There were people in the Corinthian congregation who had gifts that we don't often see or even need. For example, there were people who had the gift of healing. We do too. We call them medical workers. There were people who could speak God's Word and maybe in some cases actually speak about the future. There were people who were able to speak in unknown tongues and others who could interpret them. That was a big deal with the Corinthians, but Paul reminded them that the gift is only valuable if it serves other people. The sad thing is that they thought about what I have and you don't instead of what God has enabled you and me to do together.

Like the Corinthians we need to get clear on what our understanding of the gifts God gives and how to use them. First, ask yourself what your gift is. **YOU ARE GIFTED.** Don't say that you don't have any gifts, because you do. You just need to find them and then use them. A lady in a nursing home once told me that she was good for nothing because she was confined to a wheel chair, could hardly see anymore, and her hearing was failing too. She said all I can do is pray, and I pray for you all the time. What a gift she had. What a gift she used to benefit people. A pastor told me about a man in his congregation in a small town where he served. This man was not the sharpest knife in the drawer. He was kind of slow and seemed to have very little to offer anyone. He often talked about himself as Zeke. That was his name. One day he talked to a friend who had stopped going to church for some reason. "Zeke is sad. Zeke is worried." "What are you worried about?" "Zeke is afraid he is losing a good friend and Jesus is losing a good friend too." Zeke didn't even know that he was speaking from one heart to another and Jesus was using him to do it. Then God the Holy Spirit went to work because Zeke used a gift he didn't even know he had. He didn't think he had any gifts and some others didn't either. They were wrong.

We're going to be talking about the gifts God has given and the gifts he has given to Christ the Vine members in particular in the weeks to come. Right now the one thing we want to get into our minds and into our hearts is that God gives us gifts in the way he wants so that we can use them together to serve him and one another. That's what we mean when we remind ourselves that we can all say to ourselves, **YOU ARE GIFTED.** Take the time to think about the gifts you have. Think about the God who gave them to you. Think about the way you can use those gifts in any circumstance, but particularly here at Christ the Vine. Think about what we want to accomplish as a congregation of Christians and where you can fit in to help accomplish those things. Like the lady in the nursing home, pray for Christ the Vine, its members, its workers and those we want to serve. Like Zeke talk to one another. Encourage one another. Show your concern for one another. Grow in God's Word with the opportunities we have to worship and study together. Then look once again for those special gifts that God gave just for you. How can you use that gift or those gifts to show that the Holy Spirit is working with them. Most of all remember and believe it, **YOU ARE GIFTED.**