

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany Jan. 15, 1989

^{Jim} He was remembering, outloud. I was privileged to be able to listen in that day. This is one thing I heard:

I remember when I must have been 14 or 15. My father wasn't very happy with me then. He wanted me out shoveling sidewalks and mowing lawns, to be going, going, going. One day after he had hollered at me about something, I don't remember what, he said to me, Jimmy, what ever happeded to the littèe boy I used to know. When you were three you were all go, a bouncing bundle of energy. Where did that boy go?

You know, Jim said to me, "I didn't say anything to my father then, but I wanted to cry out You killed him. With all your rules, with all your expectations, with all your grow up and aet your age. You killed him, the little boy in me. Why couldn't you love me just hhe way I was, run and jump and bounce with me?

Now I had known that man's father, knew him to be a man who would never want to hurt or harm anyone. Cetatainly not his own son. I'm sure he was only trying to prepare his son for axwarkxmaixmush serving God in this world full of wars and rumors of wars, and the poor, and the hungry, this world demanding responsibility, and accountability and integrity. But in trying to mold his son, he squeezed the spirit right out of him.

~~Now if I were a man I would say that I was a young pastor, I went to all the meetings, spoke with enthusiasm, believed that I would be heard. I beleived that God had poured his spirit into me in order to use me in his church. But the church did not seem to need what the spirit poured into my heart.~~

Once I was a three year old in the church. A young pastor, I went to all the meetings, spoke with enthusiasm, believed that I would be heard. I beleived that God had poured his spirit into me in order to use me in his church. But the church did not seem to need what the spirit poured into my heart.

I remember my first lesson in this: There was a cluster meeting, ten or twelve churches in the area gatheredat Goodrich, where I was pastor. The American Lutheran church had just been reorganized. We were gathered to decide

what we would do as a cluster. I gave my opinion, my wisdom, for no one else seemed to have any ideas. Immediately the bishop took the floor. What I had suggested was not how things were going to be done. The three year old, became a fifteen year old. Power and authority and structures, constitutions and rules and committees, these rule the church, I learned then, have learned continually since. How hard for the spirit not to be squeezed right out.

~~But what is that preliminary what we must really look at today~~

New faces walk through those doors. The first time they come just to look. To see, will this be a place for me. Hopefully, already that first morning what were just new faces will become for some of us people. They return again, and again and again. They ask to become part of this community of faith, this family. They have great hopes and expectations as to what they will find here. They are received into membership. Infants in this community of faith, three year olds.

I wonder, how many would have the same story to tell about me? Of how they came bubbling, full of enthusiasm, ready to give and ~~share~~ share what God has poured into their hearts. And how I for the sake of order and rules and doing things in a proper way squeezed the spirit right out of them. They came with ideas, I ~~saw~~ said, talk to the committee about it, they came with a contribution to make, I said, stand in line and wait your turn. They came with a faith to share and ~~a~~ said, that's not the Lutheran way. And when they went away I said, they were like the seed that fell on the ^{soil} ~~path~~, springing up quickly, then dying out,

~~today and in the coming weeks we will be looking~~

St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians is writing to a congregation ^{of Synville,} ~~called~~ with the spirit. They all have gifts to share, contributions to make. This is what ~~St~~ Paul writes: ~~Now the variousities of gifts but the same spirit and their variousities of~~ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to dumb idols, however you may have been moved. ~~Therefore~~

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the spirit of God ever says, Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

First Paul makes clear that feeling is not the guide for truth. Because I feel something strongly does not mean it is from God.

Then Paul continues: Now there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit, and there are varieties of service but the same Lord, and there are varieties of working but ^{it is} the same God who inspires them all in every one, To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. All are inspired by ~~the same spirit~~ the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

I hear what Paul writes and I know that it is God's will for us that his gifts be put to use. You each have been given a gift, not the same gifts, but variety. One serves coffee, another sings, another visits a lonely person. One greets visitors, another reads, yet there are varieties of gifts but one Spirit, varieties of service but one Lord, varieties of working but the same God who inspires them all in every one.

I get excited when I think about it, God seeing that his gifts are used in this community of faith for the common good.

Not for self glorification. Not so that others may see what great gifts I bring, but for the common good. Not all is to be bouncing and spirit, God does intend some molding to be done: For the common Good. There must be order, and rules for the common good, there must be room for the spirit and life.

A great challenge stands before us right now. There are so many gifts being offered in this community of faith, so much that needs to be used. The challenge is to see that what the Holy Spirit has supplied is not squeezed out, shoked out. ~~That~~ That all of us will continually mature full of the spirit, working for the common Good, this is our Father's will.

There are varieties of gifts, of service of working. Paul is declaring that this is not a mistake, but God's intention. The Holy Spirit has called us together here, each of us different, each seeing the world from a different angle, a different perspective. The Holy Spirit has granted to us different gifts, different contributions which we can make. Yet all of these gifts are given not that ~~that~~ that you or I might be glorified, but that they might be used for the common good.

~~xxxxxxxxxxxxgatheredxx~~

Now for a good German like me, all of this seems a little dangerous. I like order, where ~~everything~~ everyone marches in step. I'd like to be able to hold up a clay model and say, this is what a Christian looks like, then spend my days shaping you all to conform. But instead the Holy Spirit has poured out his gifts, not according to any order or pattern that I can discern, ^{but} as Paul writes, to each one individually as the Spirit wills. We are called to let the gifts be used for the common good.

Our congregation faces a particular challenge in this area at this time. New people with ~~new~~ gifts come here to be among us, like me, the new pastor out in Western North Dakota. Always it is easy to say to them, we have a place for a square peg over here, be a square peg and we can use you.

For those who are new it is easy to say, Now in my old church this is the way we did things, Be like my old church and you shall be right.

We all like what we know, we are comfortable with what is familiar, But God has called us together here not to repeat the past, but to do a new thing, to be his continually new creation. Not simply we as individuals being made new, transformed, but the church itself being forgiven and renewed.

All so that we can declare Jesus is Lord. Lord of my life, Lord of the Church. He is a Lord who delights in variety, birds of every color, animals of every shape and size, and his people, each given a manifestation of the spirit for the common good.