

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany  
January 16th, 2022

“Our Triune God’s master spiritual gift plan” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany is from the Epistle reading for today,

**“4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all Lord.”**

Here ends our text.

There are differences of gifts and diversities of ministries and activities but it is always the same Triune God who is united in His giving of His gifts. He has the plan, the master plan for His church. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are on the same page and it is always for the good of His church, for the profit of all.

In these next 5 weeks we will be proceeding through chapters 12-15 of 1 Corinthians in our epistle readings. The same God will teach us as He taught the Corinthians that, above all, there is but one message from an undivided God who is absolutely on the same page –the Gospel message.

**“I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.**

**3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)**

First of all, of the greatest importance, is the saving knowledge of Christ so that one can say by the Spirit's power, **“Jesus is Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:3)**

But, as we heard last week from Romans 5-6, our old Adam in us tries to turn things upside down. Instead of a message about Christ, the Corinthians were on an ego trip. It was all about themselves. The gifts that were given them for the good of all were being used to divide the church by comparing the gifts and making some feel less important if they didn't have the same gifts.

Paul had his hands full. There were different factions in the Corinthian church as Paul says right away in the first chapter.

**“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” 13 Is Christ divided?”**

Yes, it makes sense why Paul continued to emphasize the unity and sameness of God who is the giver of different gifts. For it is for the profit of all. Next week we'll hear how everybody can't be an ear, or a hand, or a foot because then the body couldn't function. There are different parts, but the same body of Christ, His church. As God pleases, He gave to the Corinthians and to each of us His good gifts according to His plan.

So, God calls on us to put aside our egos and faithfully serve Him and each other with the gifts He has given. And above all, we'll hear in chapter 13:1 that everything that one does should be done with love or we're just loud clanging cymbals.

God wants His church to play in unison in a symphony of love. One word especially summarizes this from our text. It is the word “ministries” or “services”.

Paul says, **“There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.”**

This word, “ministries” literally means “the service of waiting on tables”. The Greek word is “diakonos”, from which we get the word “deacon”. Paul is saying that we are all servants for the greater good of God's church. It's not about serving self, but about serving each other!

Phillip and Peter ran into this problem of self service and self-aggrandizement in Acts 8 as the church was growing in Samaria. A man named Simon was there doing some sorcery, and he basically had everyone believing that he was the greatest.

**“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.” (Acts 8:9-10)**

Well, as Jesus Christ was preached by Phillip, Simon also believed and was baptized. But, he was amazed at the miracles that Phillip did, because they were not tricks like he had been doing. And, his ego prompted him to ask for these gifts. He even offered Peter and John money for them. **“Give me this power also”**, he said. Peter’s answer?

**““Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”**

And Simon repented. So also God calls us to put away our egos and use the gifts He has given each of us in service of all. He calls us to be table waiting deacons. We are to trust that God has a master plan that we cannot ever fully understand. But God has given each of us different gifts for the good of all. **“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”**

Again, we’ll learn next week that not everyone is a foot, or a hand or an ear because then the body couldn’t function.

But, we’ll hear Paul repeat next week, **“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”**

**“Just as He pleased”**. God does this so that gift of the saving wisdom of Christ Crucified may be preached. He does this so that this saving wisdom may be applied with the gift of skillful knowledge to hurting souls in many and various needs. These are the chief gifts of dividing Law and Gospel and applying it many different circumstances. Yes, we wait on tables of men, women and children’s

souls as we lead them to repentance like Simon and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins!

This week many remembered the “Full House” TV star Bob Saget. He was loved by many and it came as a shock that he died at age 65 seemingly with so much more to do in comedy.

Just a week before his death, Betty White died at age 99. Bob had especially looked up to her in his career. And he made this comment, “I don’t know what happens when we die, but if Betty says you get to be with the love of your life, then I happily defer to Betty on this,”

Bob sadly didn’t know what happens when you die. He didn’t base his beliefs on God’s word but on Betty’s word. How many people are like Bob and don’t have the Spirit’s wisdom of faith in Jesus to say that He is my Lord? The church has much to do in using God’s gifts to reach out to those that we know are not believers. The same Lord who converted Simon in Samaria, will use your gifts to save lost souls.

As a child, I didn’t watch “Full House”, but I remember my brother and I rushing to our house from playing outside each day to watch our favorite program - the old Batman super hero series with Adam West. We’d repeat to each other the same theme that we heard every day as we’d run home, “Same bat time, same bat channel”. And though the villains would differ from week to week, the stories always had the same good ending. Batman and Robin would somehow escape and save the day.

Yes, that’s all fun fiction and nowadays Spiderman is all the rage. The young people of today got their tickets weeks in advance for the opening premier of the latest Spiderman movie.

The wisdom and knowledge that is given to us is not fiction, of course. But it is for the saving of real lost souls. The same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God is on the same page to save the lost. Look how Paul emphasizes each person of the Trinity in our text as They are united in the same work of imparting gifts, services, and activities for the profit of all.

It’s all about “service”, putting aside our egos, and “diaconizing”. It’s about waiting on the tables of men’s hearts with God’s love. As Jesus Himself said in Matthew 20,

**“27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave (servant)— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served (diaconized), but to serve (diaconize) , and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:27-28)**

Jesus served us with His very life to pay the world’s ransom of sin. He served us on the cross by His death and then His resurrection. Oh, yes, we will hear about His resurrection in chapter 15 especially. For if Jesus didn’t rise again, our message would be in vain. But He did and so you too will rise again. And that’s what makes your life’s work so important as you use the gifts God has given you in service of your Lord and in service of others. Amen.

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**