

Pentecost 2012
I Corinthians 12:1-13

Sermon

Ross, May 27th, 2012

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Scripture Readings:

I Corinthians 12:1-13

Spiritual Gifts

¹2 Now, dear brothers and sisters,^{*} regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this. ²You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshipping speechless idols. ³So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

⁷A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice^{*}; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.^{*} ⁹The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing.

¹⁰He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,^{*} while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

¹²The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles,^{*} some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.^{*1}

^{*} Greek *brothers*.

^{*} Or *gives a word of wisdom*.

^{*} Or *gives a word of knowledge*.

^{*} Or *in various tongues*; also in 12:28, 30.

^{*} Greek *some are Greeks*.

^{*} Greek *we were all given one Spirit to drink*.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (1 Co 12:1-13). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

I. TODAY WE CELEBRATE PENTECOST, OR WHITSUNDAY

A. IT IS TOGETHER WITH JESUS CRUCIFIXION THE ONLY DAY WE HAVE CELEBRATED CONSISTENTLY DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS

1. It has always been a wonderfully celebratory day, and rightly so

S.P.S:

A. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT SOME OF THE IMPORTANT THINGS PENTECOST REMINDS US OF, AND WHICH WE ARE SO THANKFUL FOR

1. In particular we are going to focus on the Holy Spirit
 - a) Who or what is the Holy Spirit?
 - b) What role does the Holy Spirit play?
2. And in doing so we will learn much about our calling to be the church, the congregation of Jesus' adopted children

B. PRAYER

BODY:

A. PAUL WROTE TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH AROUND 55AD

1. As we discussed when we looked at 2 Corinthians last year, I Corinthians is actually Paul's third letter to the church in Corinth.

- a) They, under the influence of false teachers, had reacted emotionally and negatively to Paul's teachings and corrections
- b) They had a wrong idea of the Christian life, valuing appearance, ability, success and one's place in society as the important values
- c) They thought Paul was weak and lacking true spiritual wisdom, strength and abilities

2. As Gordon Fee, says in his highly respected book on the Holy Spirit,

Their conflicting understandings of the Spirit and his activity seem to lie at the heart of things.

At issue throughout the letter, therefore in most of its various parts, is a basic conflict over what it means to be the people of the Spirit.

They consider themselves to have already arrived at the ultimate spiritual existence.

In contrast to them, being [Spirit People] means to live empowered by the Spirit in contradiction to the (merely human) wisdom they are now advocating; it means to understand the cross as God's power at work in the world (1:18-25; 2:6-16).²

B. LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT WHAT PAUL SAYS TO THEM ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE TRUE SPIRIT LED LIFE IN I CORINTHIANS 12

1. The beginning of the most substantial section in Paul's writings on the Holy Spirit

C. WE WILL TALK ABOUT WHAT PAUL SAYS

1. Then finish up by discussing some more about the nature and role of the Holy Spirit, and what it all means for our lives and the church today
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² Gordon Fee, "God's Empowering Presence-The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul", Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p.83.

II. I CORINTHIANS 12:

12 Now, dear brothers and sisters,* regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this.

A. THIS IS PROBABLY BEST TRANSLATED;

Now about the things of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant.³

B. ONE OF THE MAIN DISPUTES WAS OVER "TONGUES"

1. The Corinthians made a big deal of them, because they gave them prestige and made them feel empowered and spiritually important
 - a) They felt they had already entered into a new spiritual plane, almost on the level of angels
 - b) But it was a very individualistic "spirituality", one that denied and looked down on weakness, suffering and sacrificial living that characterised Paul's life and teaching
 - c) In I Corinthians 13 and 14 Paul shows that all spiritual gifts must be used in love
 - d) Here in ch. 12 Paul shows that all spiritual gifts should be used for the building up of the church

C. IN 12:2 STARTS BY FOCUSING ON ONE OF THE MAJOR ROLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

²You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshipping speechless idols.

1. This was something they weren't ignorant about
 - a) They knew what they had been involved in before with paganism, which probably involved pagan spiritual experiences, perhaps some sort of ecstatic speech, like speaking in tongues
 - b) The point being that it is not the *ability* to make such utterances that is spiritual, but the content and meaning of what is said

* Greek *brothers*.

³ Gordon Fee, p.151

2. This seems to fit with verse 3 about speaking words cursing Jesus

³ So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

D. THIS SOUNDS A BIT CRYPTIC BUT IS A KEY POINT

1. In contrast to pagan spiritual experiences, the Corinthians would have to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit would **never** inspire them to curse Jesus, but **would** inspire them to speak and proclaim the ultimate truth, that ***Jesus is Lord***.

2. In other words they are told what the Holy Spirit will and will not do

a) the Holy Spirit will never lead us to go against Jesus

b) only by the Holy Spirit can we know and proclaim Jesus' true nature and role as our Lord

3. Of course, anyone can say the words "Jesus is Lord"

a) But this signified more than just a casual statement, it was the fundamental Christian confession of early Christians

b) Gordon Fee,

...this became the earliest Christian confession, tied in particular to Jesus' having been raised from the dead and therefore having become the exalted One. ...Lord (of all the universe). As in 2:10-13, only one who has the Spirit can truly make such a confession, because only the Spirit can reveal its reality.⁴

4. This is a fundamental role of the Holy Spirit;

a) Revealing Jesus

b) And enabling us to actually know him as Lord, the Son of God

5. The exaltation of Jesus, and our knowledge of him, our life and relationship in and through, him is what the Spirit's gifts are all about

⁴ Fee, p.157

- a) Not impressive abilities and manifestations
- 6. The problem then, and today, is that the presence of outward “gifts” such as tongues, healing, visions etc. is taken to be evidence of God’s presence and approval,
 - a) and to be the essence, the be all and end all, of the Christian life and message.
- 7. The personhood and relationship aspect of the Holy Spirit gets lost.
- 8. The new life lived in relationship with Jesus gets lost.
- 9. T. David Matsuo talks about this problem of how the Holy Spirit gets ignored and misunderstood

his person and function in the Trinity tends to be minimized and often functionally ignored. When given attention, what tends to be paid attention to are various functions related to the Spirit without the person. This reduces both the Spirit as an integral person in the Trinity and thus the Spirit’s involvement as person in relationship together with the Father and the Son. The functional repercussion, if not theological conclusion, from this is a binitarian view of God focused on the Son alone with the Father.⁵

E. IT IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM WHEN WE VIEW THE SPIRIT AS AN IMPERSONAL POWER OR FORCE

- 1. As merely a mechanized distributor of miraculous abilities,
- 2. Because it pushes aside the fact that the Holy Spirit is an integral member of the Godhead who brings us into an intimate, intensely personal relationship with God

F. THE OTHER PROBLEM IS FOCUSING ON THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT IN A WRONG WAY

- 1. Gordon Fee as a Pentecostal writes a warning to those who focus on power and gifts as the essential issue;

The presence of the Spirit in power and gifts makes it easy for God’s people to consider the power and gifts as the real evidence of [the] Spirit’s presence. Not so for Paul. The ultimate criterion of the Spirit’s activity is

⁵ T. Dave Matsuo, Sanctified Christology: A Theological & Functional Study of the Whole of Jesus, <http://4x12.org/SLP-ch.9.htm>

the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself.⁶

2. This is what was happening in Corinth, and is a great temptation today in our consumer, self-focused, self-improvement, lifestyle and experience oriented society

a) It is a real temptation for churches to cater to this popular desire and to lose focus on what the Spirit and gifts are really about

G. PAUL GOES ON TO TALK MORE ABOUT THE TRUE ROLE AND ACTIVITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRIT GIVEN GIFTS

1. V 4-7

⁴ There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.

2. Spiritual gifts are gifts given by the Holy Spirit

a) They aren't all the same for everyone, in fact there is a great variety

b) Why?

(1) This is explained next...

⁵ There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶ God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

3. The Holy Spirit works in all sorts of ways, but all of it is focused on serving our Lord Jesus Christ

4. The whole purpose of gifts is that we might participate in the life and work of God

⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

5. Put simply and most profoundly, the Holy Spirit works in each of us so we can help each other.

a) Which is what God, Father, Son and Spirit are all about

⁶ Fee, p.158

H. NOTICE THAT FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT ARE ALL INVOLVED IN V.4-5

1. What are we told about each of them here?

- a) v 4. Different kinds of spiritual gifts – the same **Spirit** is the source
 - b) v.5 Different kinds of service – the same **Lord** is the object of them all.
 - c) v. 5 Different kinds of work – the same **God** is the one who does all the work in all of us
2. Everything, all of the great diversity of activities, originates, has its purpose and end result in God the Father.
 3. Everything that is done, is done to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, who has lived and died and lives on for us at God's right hand
 4. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit to empower us in serving Jesus, being part of his ongoing work, which is to fulfil the purposes of the Father

I. WE SHOULDN'T ARTIFICIALLY DIVIDE WHAT EACH OF THEM DOES

1. They all work together as One

- a) They are all the source of the gifts
 - b) All service is to them all
 - c) All are at work in all of us
 - (1) **But these designations are still helpful, is showing that while each works inseparably and in total agreement with the others, they each still play particular roles**
 - (2) **Just as with the variety and diversity of gifts given, and their unity of source, service and purpose, there is unity and diversity in the Godhead**
2. This encourages us to realise that the Spirit works with each of us uniquely and individually, to serve the unique needs of those around us, with the particular life and gifts God has given us.

a) But we work together in one body, for the same godly purpose of loving and serving each other, and bringing glory and worship to God

3. Kathryn Tanner writes about this;

the Holy Spirit unites us in Christ even as the Holy Spirit encourages the uniqueness of our persons by a diversity of gifts of the Spirit.⁷

J. MICHAEL JINKINS ADDS:

In isolation we were incomplete, unable to be everything (to ourselves or others) that we needed and wanted to be. But in union with Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and in communion with one other members of the body of Christ, we discover that our particular and singular individuality is complemented by that of others, and that specifically in those ways in which we felt fragmented, we now know ourselves to be whole, in relationship to Christ and with others.

Now we discover that the essence of our human life consists not in being all things in and of ourselves but in being in relationship, in enjoying the giftedness of others and in exercising our own gifts in the reciprocal communion of our uniqueness, under the guidance of the Spirit of God.⁸

K. V7-12 GOES ON TO SPELL THIS OUT CLEARLY

⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice^{*}; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.^{*} ⁹ The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰ He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,^{*} while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

1. The clear emphasis here is on the activity of the Holy Spirit.

⁷ Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, Fortress Press, 2001, p.83

⁸ Michael Jinkins, *Invitation to Theology*, 2001, InterVarsity Press, p. 218

^{*} Or gives a word of wisdom.

^{*} Or gives a word of knowledge.

^{*} Or in various tongues; also in 12:28, 30.

2. That these are not just “gifts” in isolation, but that they are all activities of the Holy Spirit

a) This is what the Holy Spirit does and is doing amongst God’s people for the building up of the entire community, not primarily for the individual

¹² The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles,* some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.*

3. The Holy Spirit places us in the body of Christ, makes us one with God and one another as the Church

L. YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE REST OF THE CHAPTER,

1. which continues to emphasise that we are all part of Christ’s body, all put together to take care of each other, especially the weaker parts.

2. The problem with the Corinthians, and a problem that many of us can be vulnerable to today;

a) Is to see spiritual activities, the work of the Spirit in a selfish way

b) As personal experiences and activities that make us feel better, more spiritual, closer to God, more fulfilled, more important, wiser etc.

3. It is vital not to forget who the Holy Spirit is, and remember the big picture of what he as a divine member of the very godhead, is doing alongside the Father and the Son

a) It is not just about us as individuals, but about the whole church, and all of creation

M. KATHRYN TANNER SUMS UP THE WAY THE CHURCH IS ENABLED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK OF CHRIST

* Greek *some are Greeks*.

* Greek *we were all given one Spirit to drink*.

As Jesus' own, assumed by him, we are enabled through the gift of the Spirit to work as Jesus did, for the communication of God's gifts to ourselves and others, in a struggle against sin in ourselves and others, the sins that impede such communication.

Indwelling us, becoming ours, because we have become Christ's, the Spirit of Christ communicates the gifts of divinity to our own humanity, in much the same way the Word communicated them to Jesus' own humanity, through the Spirit of anointing. Our humanity is thereby cleansed and perfected and shares in the distribution of the same goods of God to other people and the world.

Feeling the effects of a communication of divinity to humanity like that found in Jesus' own life, we, in short, are sanctified and serve the ends of trinitarian love.

Human beings become in this way the administrative center of cosmic-wide service.⁹

N. THIS IS QUITE AMAZING!

1. We are gifted uniquely, to more completely be the people God made us to be
2. We are gifted by the Spirit to know and receive Jesus as the Lord of our lives
3. To receive his life and love, and the life and love of the Father
4. As a body, with all of our gifts working together as the Father, Son and Spirit work together
5. The Spirit empowers us to communicate and share what God has given us, which is his trinitarian life of love
 - a) To be at the center of operations, at the coal-face, participating in God's cosmic wide service, receiving and sharing God's goods for the blessing of all.

⁹ Tanner, p. 61

CONCLUSION:

O. PENTECOST REMINDS US OF HOW THIS ALL BEGAN

1. Why it began
2. And what it all means for us and our lives today, as members of the Spirit led, Father worshipping, body of Christ
3. Let us continue as congregations to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, so we can be evermore effectively participating in the work of Christ, our Father's business.

P. PRAYER
