

First Reading: Numbers 11:16-17; 24-30

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

Today's second reading comes from Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, chapter 12, verses 3 through 13. Listen for God's word to you this day:

No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

This is the word of God for the people of God...thanks be to God.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. The Spirit of God comes in many forms, offering many different gifts: wisdom, prophecy, healing, discernment, ability to speak to others and be heard, ability to hear others who may not otherwise be heard. And all of these gifts allow us to be one body, whole, and united by the Spirit of God so that the common good can be manifested for all. Not for me, not for you, but for all. It sounds so lovely, truly an idealistic version of life, a vision of God's kingdom for us to hold onto, but it seems we have lost sight of the calling to this vision. It is not merely for holding onto for some future realization, it is for us to help manifest here and now.

This is what the community of faith should look like, this is what we should be working toward among ourselves, and in the world. Somewhere along the way, we have gotten derailed from this vision of Christianity and focused on our own self-interest in Christianity.

I hate to burst anyone's bubble, but Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was never about one person. This is something much of modern American consumer Christianity has gotten wrong, personal salvation is killing Christianity, it is killing God's call for us to recognize and foster the Spirit of God residing in each human being, striving for the common good, and living as one body, inviting the gifts of each person to join us at the table for the common good, for God's kingdom to be brought to fruition. It is causing us to deny our neighbors in the most egregious and offensive ways.

If Jesus' purpose had been solely for the individual there would have been no need for the Holy Spirit. Pentecost would have never happened because God's mission

would have been complete through those who gave witness first hand to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection but we believe that on that day of Pentecost, God gave to each person the gift of the Spirit so that God's work could be realized for generations and generations, even unto us.

This wasn't anything new, in Numbers God gave to the seventy elders parts of God's spirit so that they too may share God's vision for a more perfect world with their people, so the people could be united. God has always wanted God's people to care for one another, to build up the whole, to unite for the common good. Apparently, the other thing that is not new is us not getting it, us losing sight of God's will, God's leading; and making ourselves greater than that which resides within us. Making ourselves greater than the person sitting next to us, or the person down the street, or the person across the globe.

Rector and Dean Mary Hinkle Shore says of this text: Individuals receive gifts from the Spirit, yet each gift is for the body as a whole. This implies that if a gift cannot be shared, and shared for the good of others, it is not from the Spirit. It also implies that any attempt to rank individuals according to their possession of "better" gifts would be at odds with each gift's common purpose for the good of all.<sup>1</sup>

Self-interest and self-serving motivations cannot be shared for the good of others, therefore it is not from the Spirit. You are not better than me, I am not better than

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Hinkle Shore, Rector and Dean, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org), June 4, 2017

you, we have different gifts that we offer to the whole of the body, the body of Grace First, and the communal body of the world. We have equal value, and any sort of distortion of that is of our own making, not of the making of God.

In this time when we are trying to discern the best way to move forward, and most of us want to snap our fingers and get back to life as it was, we have the opportunity to be led more fervently by the Spirit than by our own ambitions. It would be much easier for me, and for David, and more satisfying quite frankly, if you all were sitting here in this sanctuary looking at us giving us nods of agreement and quizzical looks of curiosity. But, as the body of Christ, valuing each and every member of this body, it is crucial that we consider the well-being of all, not because being separated from you is what I want but it is what is for the common good. Self-interest cannot continue to be prioritized over faith.

In this time when there is more division in our country than ever before, and it seems to continue to divide more and more each day. It would be easy to ignore our responsibility for one another, for all God's children. This week as I watched George Floyd be murdered by a man pinning him down I cried, because the Spirit of God resides in both those men, both of those men have equal value in God's kingdom, and yet one took the life of the other. The Spirit of God was harmed in each of us from that act, as it is time and time again, every time a life is taken.

As the body of Christ, as God's child, gifted with God's living Spirit, looking at the face of another of God's child, also gifted with God's Spirit, it is paramount that we fight for the well-being of all, it's not easy but it is for the common good. Racism cannot continue to be prioritized over faith.

It is a privilege to make sweeping claims of disinterest. It is a privilege to not have to face the problems others face. And more than a privilege I would say it's a tragedy. It's a loss of the fullness of life that is possible for you, the fullness of life that we are offered as members of the body of Christ, as part of a larger whole.

Because it turns out: You don't have to be worried for yourself to care for others, you don't have to be concerned for your safety to fight for the safety and security for others, you don't have to believe harm will come to you to not want harm to befall another person. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. The Spirit is within each of us, calling us to extend love, care, concern, justice, compassion, mercy to that same Spirit in each and every person in our lives.

As you think this week about wearing a mask in public or not. As you think this week about speaking out about racism in this country and violence against people of color. As you think this week about hatred that is spewed from people's mouths when they disagree with someone or aren't getting their way: don't shut out your faith, don't fall prey to the American consumer Christianity that would tell you that salvation on this cross is for you alone. It is not.

You do not get to claim any sort of salvation that you believe comes from Jesus' death on a cross if you continue to deny the Spirit of God within yourself and within every other human being.

God's Spirit is within you, allow it to fuel you, allow it to change you, allow it to propel you forward into the world so that the common good can be manifest in and through the people of God. So that God's kingdom is not merely a vision for the future but is a reality for today. So that God's kingdom is experienced equally by all. God is at work, God is calling you to join in that work, how will you respond?