

Shared Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:12; Numbers 11:24-30

Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction: a story about the delivery person

I'd like to begin with a story about a delivery person, and I will explain why in just a minute. The story goes as follows:

"Around 2004/2005, I lived alone in New Jersey without a car. I ordered from the local pizza place pretty much every other night. Delivery was usually done by someone in a beaten up car, or at best, a few year old sedan. One night, I placed an order for delivery right before closing. About an hour later, a dark car crept up the driveway. As it got closer, I notice the design was unlike anything I'd ever seen before. I could faintly make out a logo: two R's stacked on top of each other. I didn't know much about cars, but I did know that anything made by said car manufacturer cost more than most luxury homes.

The driver's door opened and a man in an expensive suit who looked like he just stepped off the set of *James Bond* got out. He suavely reached into the car and pulled out my pizza. At this point, my mouth was opening and closing but no words were coming out. I immediately started fumbling with the damp, sweaty dollars I had in my fist trying to count out a tip, but he shook his head. He told me to enjoy my pizza and have a good night, got back in his car, and drove off into the night."

*<https://www.buzzfeed.com/angelicaamartinez/fast-food-delivery-workers-stories>

I found this fitting because I tend to think of the Holy Spirit using people for deliveries. It is an imperfect image, I admit, but I think it makes a point that when the Holy Spirit gives someone a gift-whatever that gift may be-the gift is not for them. It is for the benefit of other people. The person who has the gift is the delivery person.

- Set the stage and review briefly the gifts mentioned

The gifts are evidence that the Holy Spirit likes to work through people and not treat us as a series of individuals. Looking at our passage for today, the Apostle Paul noted a few of the gifts, involving knowledge, the wisdom to use that knowledge well, healing, encouragement from the Holy Spirit and gifts that put our faculty of speech-the most unruly part of us according to James 3-under subjection. There is much more to the subject, but suffice it to say today that the Holy Spirit has a gift for everyone, and everyone is to use their gift for the benefit of all.

- Main Point: Our participation in the body of Christ requires us to be invested in each other's lives.

Here's the main point; our participation in the body of Christ requires us to be invested in each other's lives. The Holy Spirit chooses to use people to benefit people. His

preference is to work through community and relationships. To ignore them is to risk missing blessing and leaving need unanswered, for others and ultimately for us.

- Application: Be concerned. Be invested.

The application is to be aware that God's answer to someone's prayer maybe given to you to deliver. The Holy Spirit uses people to invest in the lives of another, so relationships, community and the needs of others should be a top priority for you. Consider prayerfully the needs of those around you and what you can do about it. To do so is to invite the presence and activity of that Spirit.

“Parts”

The word translated, “members”, as in “we are all members of the body,” can also be translated “parts,” each designed to work with the other. In fact, they lose purpose or utility if they are not part of the whole. I once read an interesting book called Tuck Everlasting, the late Natalie Babbitt, about a young girl who befriends a family that had stumbled upon the fountain of youth and had not aged a day in years. They had reached immortality, and it turned out to be a curse for them. We would think immortality to be a great blessing, but they considered this world not designed for immortality and for them, mortality was the great blessing. At one point in the book, a member of the family explained their feelings this way; he imagined a wheel (maybe like a Ferris wheel) and a part of the wheel broke off and fell by the riverbank. It didn't wear out, but it no longer had a purpose, nor did it play its part in the workings of the great wheel. We are like those parts, and our purpose is to play a role in the blessings and aid to the other parts for the honor of the Creator of the wheel. To be used by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole is part of why we are here in this world at this time.

- Conclusion

To conclude, we may never deliver pizzas in a Rolls Royce, but we are delivery people just the same. In the wisdom of God, the Holy Spirit works often by giving a person grace, a gift that is meant to be shared for the benefit of all. He answers prayers often by using people. While there is much to discuss about the gifts themselves, for today we focus on the importance of being aware of each other and treating the needs of others as important as our own. We are each part of the whole body of Christ, and we are meant to share our gifts, and to help each other out along the way.