

Varieties of Gifts But One Body! **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

A New Family Member

Since the first Sunday of 2022, many things have changed. First, we have returned to remote worship services for the month due to the contagious Covid Omicron variant. I believe this storm will pass, and we will be able to regather at the church safely soon, but until then, stay safe. Personally, Juhee and I adopted our first dog. As you know, I am more of a planner than a spontaneous person but of course, I am living with a person with an opposite personality. On the first day of our vacation, Juhee woke me up and said, “let’s go to Pennsylvania to see puppies,” so I said, “O.K.,” and drove about 6 hours. We saw several puppies and Juhee chose one. “Happy wife! Happy life!” We named him “Joy.” I know the name Joy is a little strange for a male dog, but Joy doesn’t know that, and his future animal friends will not tease him about his name, so we named him Joy and brought him home. Joy has brought many joys, but at the same time, Juhee and I were busy and tired our whole week of vacation because there were so many things to learn and do. Eventually, we settled into our new situation as a happy family. As I look back, if it wasn’t for Juhee’s spontaneous personality, I would never have adopted a puppy and known the joy of raising a dog. I might have thought about it but never gone for it.

Diversity is a blessing!

What I am saying is that we are all different from one another and our differences are a blessing. Some are more deliberate than spontaneous. Some are doers while others are thinkers. Some are gifted with music while others are gifted in decoration. God has given each one of us a variety of gifts. With those many gifts, we work together for God and the common good. Apostle Paul said, “God’s various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful!”

God has uniquely created each one of us and handed out various gifts to all people. Verse 7 especially touched my heart at this time. “Each person is given something to do that shows who God is!” It means that I can see God through each of you and I have something to do that shows who God is. Maybe my gift is proclamation through which I can show God. I know some of our church leaders have gifts of wise counsel and clear understanding. Of course, some surely have the gift of humor. Some have vibrant energy and creativity. All of our differences and different gifts have a common origin, God. Think of the gifts you have received from the Spirit and use them to show God to people around you.

Different Doesn't Mean Wrong; It Just Means Different

Different doesn't mean wrong. It just means different. However, people often forget this. We tend to understand these differences in terms of hierarchy or rank. It has been said, “From childhood sports competitions and spelling bees, to grade point averages and prom kings and queens, we learn early in life to view our social world in terms of who is better, smarter, or more favored than everyone else... Like monkeys, we tend to use certain cues like physical strength,

to make a status judgment.”¹ Let me ask you a question. “Is there any standard English accent?” No. There is no such thing as a standard English accent. Rhode Islanders love a “wicket good sangwidge” (wicked good sandwich) while people elsewhere love a “very good sandwich.” (If my Rhode Island accent didn’t sound like a Rhode Islander, teach me how to correctly pronounce “wicket good sangwidge” when we re-gathered at the church) Is ‘wicket good sangwidge’ better than ‘very good sandwich? Aren’t they the same?

There is no such thing as a standard English accent but people tend to favor a certain accent. Americans think British accents sound sexy and intelligent. According to a poll, 35 percent of American respondents find the British accent to be attractive. However, many immigrants from South America want to erase their accents especially, in a xenophobic atmosphere because they don’t want to draw unwanted attention from others.² Is a Bostonian accent better than a Korean English accent? They may sound familiar but there are no better or worse English accents, but people tend to think certain accents are better than others and thus put things in a hierarchical order.

Racists believe lighter skin color is better than darker skin color. Misogynists believe the male is better than the female. In a politically divided situation like ours today, democrats and republicans tend to assume they are better than the other. People need to overcome this superiority complex.

The variety is wonderful!

Corinthian Christians were not very different from us. God gave many spiritual gifts to their community. However, they didn’t perceive the various gifts as blessings but tried to compete with one another, claiming, “my spiritual gifts are better than yours!” Paul reminds them that all spiritual gifts come from God so there is no such a thing as a superior gift. Rather, everything is given for the common good or to build up the church. The church is to be a place in which people with various gifts come together and share their gifts with one another so that people in the church and beyond the church see and experience who God is.

Everyone has gifts to offer. Age doesn’t matter. Recall the mini-Christmas pageant we had last month? The children brought joy that no one else could bring. Even professional musicians could not have brought the kind of joy our kids brought us. I love to visit Carl Bishop Sr. and David Vacchina because of their gentle smiles and the deep understanding that comes from their maturity of faith. Age doesn’t matter when it comes to spiritual gifts. Everyone has gifts to offer because God has handed out all kinds of spiritual gifts to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful! So think about what spiritual gifts you have received and share them with one another. When you share your gifts, you may unknowingly reveal the light of Christ to others.

In my previous church, one year, I was invited for Thanksgiving dinner by one of my church members. Her hobby was collecting old oil lamps and her house was full of them. She told me that whenever she went to a yard sale or a big fair, she looked for old oil lamps. Many of them were covered with dirt and rust so she had to thoroughly clean and polish them. As she did, they became nice antique lamps. Without this process of cleaning and polishing, the light of the lamp could not reach any distance. I believe the church is like this, a place where we clean the dirt of sin away through repentance and polish various gifts we have received through spiritual

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5494206/>

² <https://www.wlrn.org/show/latin-america-report/2018-01-29/elocution-solution-more-immigrants-hope-to-erase-their-accent-in-the-trump-era>

practices of prayer, meditating on the Bible, through worship and communion and serving our neighbors. By using and refining our spiritual gifts, others can experience our God. So, as we move forward in this new year, bring your gifts and share them with your Asbury family. The variety is wonderful!

Also, if you know anyone who lives in a black and white or red and blue world, help them to see the diverse and beautiful colors God has created. It has been said, "Seeing the world in color means noting and appreciating the differences without letting them become walls between us." Let us start this practice at our church by loving and respecting differences as God's blessing. Amen.