

SUNDAY, January 19, 2025 EPIPHANY2 "Gifts of the Spirit"

Isaiah 62:1-5 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 John 2:1-11

It has been a few weeks now since many of us received and shared in gift giving/receiving as part of our Christmas celebrations. Do you remember what you received for Christmas this year- other than the traditional socks, underwear, chocolate or food items? Was there any specific gift received that stood out as unique, special or holds a special sentiment for you even 3 weeks later?

Sometimes this is what happens when gift giving occurs. We often have the obligation to give to others and the message of why we give is lost. But what about a change in our understanding of even the word gift itself. In recent times 'gift' has been used as a verb ie to gift something to someone. A linguist, Arika Okrent, states that at least since the 1500s you can go back and find examples of an earl gifting a church the town council house. So gift has been around as a verb for a long time, but there is something about it that seems new. This is because it is the types of people that are using it or the domains of use. That is from our understanding of 'gifts from God' or spiritual gifts to what is known estate planning and that kind of thing. You gift something to another person when you pass away.

But now it's shifted to just giving gifts, giving presents which seems casual. Some of you might recall the TV show "Seinfeld" which introduced "regifter". Elaine opens up a gift she received and states, "I think this is the same one I gave him. He recycled this gift." He's a regifter."

But why are we talking about gifts? Because Paul writes to the church at Corinth about the varieties of gifts given by the Spirit; and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who activates all of them to everyone. Spiritual gifts are given by God's spirit, to people-- and there are a variety of gifts-- Paul lists them as: wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, another prophecy, another the discern of spirits, various kinds of tongues (languages), interpreters of tongues- all activated and give by God's spirit. And those who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is who have truly experienced God's Spirit come upon them, receive these abilities- or gifts!

The question from this is have you received the Holy Spirit upon you? How do you know? What is your experience? AT UCW this week we spoke about this briefly but it is

important to understand that it is the Spirit of God-- that is one person of the Trinity which bestows these gifts.

Last week we talked about Jesus' baptism in the moment when Jesus emerges from the water. The heavens open up, a dove descends upon Him, and God's voice speaks-- IN those moments the Trinity is present- God acknowledges Jesus as His Son, the spirit flies upon Him and Jesus receives the gift of God as a human being with the Spirit in him. And in that moment those watching were astonished, in awe, wonder and they hear God's voice-- this is my Son whom I love; in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.

As people of faith, we come together to discern what God's Spirit is saying to us as individuals and as a church family. The Spirit gives a variety of gifts and not everyone receives the same. Just like not everyone has blue eyes/ or brown hair-- each person is unique and wonderfully created by God's hand. So too the Spirit blesses individuals with specific gifts. The question that arises for individuals is with what gifts are you blessed by the Spirit? Have you discerned them -lately? For when we reflect on the Spiritual gifts people receive they are varied and numerous; taking on not only the what comes through genetic or biological means or what is termed naturally, to those gifts which may be enhanced by the Spirit's anointing or blessing. Many people however receive the spiritual gifts but never act on them or use them, or even abuse them to the detriment of others. This is unfortunate for when the Spirit offers blessings good things happen!

Such is the case in the story of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding of Cana read from John 2. Jesus and the disciples are invited to a wedding involving a relative or very close friend. Jesus' mother, Mary is there and she plays a key role in the party planning of this more than one day event. There is a lot of joy and laughter when Mary goes to Jesus and says, they've run out of wine. Jesus asks her, what is that concern for you or i? My hour has not yet come. What did Jesus mean by this? Did Mary know something about when Jesus would begin his ministry amongst his people before Jesus? It is possible, because God and Mary were very close!

Mary tells the servants to listen to whatever he tells them to do. They agree. For some reason Jesus leaves the table with his disciples and goes to where the servants are and also where there are large water jars. HE tells the servants to fill up these large jars to the brim. And what is Jesus doing as they fill up the water jars? The text does not tell us but he prays because this is what Jesus has been taught to do. HE prays quietly and waits. HE then tells the servants to draw some out and take some to the chief steward or the banquet master. The chief steward

tries some and then goes to the bridegroom and tells him how it is that most people serve the good wine first and after a while the cheaper wine. But in this instance the bridegroom acknowledges the steward's discovery. But who knew what had really happened? Only the servants and Jesus?

This miracle story helps us to see some of Jesus' spiritual gifts. HE told his mother it wasn't yet time. Yet by faith she tells the servants to do what he asks. Did Mary know what he could do? How? How could she explain it/ or Jesus? Jesus was just beginning his travels when the wedding invitation was received. Did Mary know that this was the time for Jesus?

Jesus told her not yet. How many times have we wanted to put off what we are called to do by the spirit? Jesus said not yet. HE was having a great time with the disciples. Not yet-but... they've run out of wine. What to do? Let the wedding end or use a spiritual gift he has received from God the father?

As the servants are filling up the water jars, Jesus prays, I hope this works out ok; I can't mess this up my existence is on the line as he begins. But it is the Spirit which acts- Jesus doesn't touch the water jars. HE doesn't even try the wine. But the servants know what has happened. And they probably did not keep it to themselves for how was this message of a miracle known? Yes John was there but did he see what occurred or just the results?

Jesus not only is filled with the Spirit by the creator, he has begun discerning his gifts of how to reach people; how to get them to listen and see; how to get them to look at and wonder and how to turn their eyes from themselves and seek God. Jesus' gift of performing miracles is just that as God's Son he could do anything but he starts with what was every day importance-wine. He transforms a common substance into the better wine at the wedding banquet. Jesus takes the ordinary and makes it supra great! He takes the good water and wine is present for the banquet to go on. IT is the Trinity of god- Father son and spirit which enables this miracle to occur. But what gifts are being seen and acknowledged?

The gifts are from God and they will impact your life. Isaiah's prophecy tells us that those who believe in God will be called by a new name, they will be a crown of beauty and God will rejoice over them! As we consider the gifts of the Spirit, just what are the gifts God calls you to discern for yourself. What is ordinary in you that the spirit can make extraordinary and good?

We may never make water into wine, but we have the ability to enable lives to be changed because of and through God as we tell others the message of hope found in Jesus

Christ. AS we are the hands and feet of Jesus on earth in 2025, we have been blessed by the Sprit to act, say and do what God calls us to do. How might we learn what this means for us? We do what Jesus did near those water jars. Pray. Pray that the Spirits gifts in you are used to their fullest; that what the Spirit blesses you with you will use to your best ability. And that you will not give up. For we must remember Jesus did not give up on us and it is through his death and resurrection that we have the promise of eternal life.

The gifts of the Spirit upon you are yours to discover and use for all to grow as the body of Christ. But you must pray about what you are called to do now.. not what you did 20, 10, or even 5 years ago. But now- now is the day to rejoice because God's Spirit is upon you and Christ is calling you to serve him. God does not re-gift but the Spirit is calling you now.

Let us pray.

GOD in these moments of prayer we ask for your blessing and guidance and the ability to see you and the movement of your spirit upon each of us and all of us. Help us to remember the words of the covenant to serve you in faith now and always. Amen.