

Unique and Gifted

[1 Corinthians 12:12-31](#), [Luke 4:14-21](#)

There was a movie out several years ago that was a remake of the Robin Hood theme called, “Robin Hood Prince of Thieves.” Morgan Freeman played the companion of Robin. Among the English portrayed in the movie, Freeman was the only black man who was a practicing Moor. In one scene, a little girl approaches Freeman and asks, “Did God paint you?” He laughs and says, “For certain, little one.” She asks, “Why?” He thinks for a second and responds, “Because Allah loves wondrous variety.” God loves wondrous variety.

If you pause to look around you will see tremendous variety even among this relatively small group gathered here today. What is it about our differences that can at times seem so wonderful and at times down-right threatening? Many wars have been fought over differences. Yet when we look beneath

the surface, perhaps there is a most wonderful harmony that God intends for all of God's children.

Our scripture lesson today talks about the body of Christ and how each part fits into the whole. It is interesting that Paul uses the body for an analogy of the way the church is to work together. There seems to be no question that when the parts are working together there is a healthy balance and function and harmony. Yet we know that the physical body is often not perfect or balanced or in harmony. How many of us glance in the mirror and think, "Wow, what a perfect body!" Not me, I can tell you that! Even Jesus, when he presided over the last supper with the disciples used the words we recite each communion Sunday, "Take, eat, this is my body, *broken* for you." His body was broken and scarred in many ways, yet perfect just the same.

Perhaps we too have been broken and scarred through the trials of life. Perhaps we have felt the sting of rejection or the pain of suffering that seems to be a part of life. Maybe we have had broken bones or physical scars from healed wounds that appear as a reminder of a difficult time for us. Our hands and feet sometimes show the wear and tear of overuse and exposure yet we look at these signs in a somewhat positive way. For those who work outdoors, I'm sure it is much easier to pull ropes or grasp tools for hard labor when our hands are calloused from being use to such treatment. Maybe our feet adjust to work boots or outdoor elements because they become more accustomed and have built up a resistance to the trying elements. As a body of Christ, perhaps we too have scars from difficult times but have come through those trials much stronger and more able to meet the next challenge.

Yet in spite of our scars and imperfections, God sees a body working together in perfect harmony. When we are in tune with our Maker, all things work together for good. Somehow the pains of life are eased. Somehow the suffering of the past is lessened in the presence of Almighty God. Somehow we are lifted out of the muck and the mire of everyday life to find peace and rest in God's loving arms, Amen?

There's a saying I've heard from a little boy who says something like, "I'm special 'cause God don't make junk!" God don't make junk. Remember that when you feel that God has forgotten you or abandoned you in your times of trial – God don't make junk. Maybe you feel at times that there is nothing you can contribute to the good of this body of Christ – God don't make junk. Maybe you are having trouble discerning your

spiritual gifts and feel you have nothing special to offer – God don't make junk.

Paul talks specifically about spiritual gifts in relation to us working together as a body of Christ. I think first we need to understand that we are part of this particular body of Christ as member of Mt. Tabor church, but also a part of the larger body of Christian believers. No matter what we do here to better our community and share God's love with our neighbors, we are also reaching out beyond our physical boundaries. Many have watched in horror as the events in Haiti continue to unfold. Yet God is at work with thousands of ministry groups from all denominations answering the call for help to a downtrodden nation. We are not physical neighbors with Haiti yet they are our neighbors none the less. Many are also contributing funds

and other aid which is no less diminished and most greatly appreciated.

I mentioned this in our Bible study last week concerning varying opinions of Americans in general. America as we know it was founded on Christian principles. We can no longer pray in our schools but prayer happens. We are bound by the principle of the separation of church and state, yet during times of crisis our leaders still look to God for guidance. Look at any currency and, although there is a push to alter this, you will still see the words, "In God we trust." Loving God and loving neighbor are so inbred in our society that despite efforts to move God out of our country those principles stand. America has yet to not answer the call for help when and wherever help is needed. Numerous Americans/Christians set their sights on Haiti with the sole purpose of helping their neighbors in need.

So we are a part of a local and a worldwide body of Christ. But what about those spiritual gifts? What is God calling each of us to do and be? Are you being called as an apostle? Are you being called as a prophet? Are you being called as a teacher? Are you being called to heal the sick? Spiritual gifts are in all of us.

Some may feel their gifts are not very important – maybe we see ourselves as inferior to others who are clearly leaders among us. 1 Corinthians 12:24-25 says, “But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.” Every gift is important. Yet those gifts that may seem more inferior are the ones shown the greatest honor. Think back to the analogy of the body. The eyes may be seen as very important,

yet there is rarely a mention of any protection given to the eyes. The feet may seem quite inferior, yet they are often protected and cared for showing just how important they are.

If we think in terms of analogies, it seems appropriate to talk football at this time of year. I'm not much of a fan, but I do know that a team has to work together with each member utilizing their special skills to their fullest potential. Rarely does the blocker cross the goal line, yet without them, no one else would cross the line either. A team full of quarterbacks would fail miserably every time.

I encourage each one of you to be in prayer as to what gifts God is bestowing on you and how to best use those gifts in this body of Christ. If you look at the bulletin you will see many things coming down the pike that could possibly use your unique and special gifts. None of us are exactly alike in what

God has gifted us. That's a good thing. God loves wondrous variety. Are we willing to listen for God's calling in our lives? Not everyone is called to the pulpit. Not everyone will have a Road to Damascus experience. But God has a way of sending a message that only each of us can receive. Are we listening and responding to God's call? May God grant each of us the will to discern what it is that we claim as our spiritual gifts and put those to work within this body of Christ. Amen.