

July 25 2021

Ephesians 4:1-16

**Children's message:** This morning's lesson is about the talents and gifts that God gives to each and everyone of us. I often wonder if it is easier to see the gifts and talents God has given to someone else of to see the talents He has given me? Yet we rarely talk about how to properly use the talents God has given us. We should think more about the motivation behind how we use our talents and gifts. Are my motivations driven by my own needs and ego? Or is it strictly for the help of others? More importantly do I use my gifts in a humble way?

I'll share a complicated story about gifts with you. Thirty years ago I was down in Auburn New York visiting a priest friend. He shared this story about the use of gifts with me that came from the parish he was currently serving.

There was an older gentleman who was born and raised in this parish. He was the priests right hand man. He helped with church services and around the church in general. He also loved to sing during the services on Sunday. He was not part of the official church choir but would sit close to them and sing. He didn't have the best voice nor the worst. Yet he shared his voice on Sunday.

There was a young man who returned to this church after his studies. He studied voice and choir in Eastern Europe and Greece. He had degrees to prove his work and accomplishments. He came back and

became the new choir director. The priest thought his parish was so blessed to have such a professionally trained choir director. Or so he thought. It was not too long before the trouble would start. The young choir director told the older man that his voice was terrible and not professional enough for the choir. The older gentleman was crushed. He even stopped singing during services on Sunday. The parish priest was at a loss in what to do.

Then I started to think hard about this situation. The older gentleman shared his voice freely on Sunday to praise God. He made a joyful noise to God with a humble heart. The young choir director was all about the perfect production of Sunday services. The choir he was directing had to be perfect. Well sometimes when you focus too much on the production; God gets forgotten. He is the reason you are there. There is a problem when the production becomes more important than praising God. The young choir director's ego drove the production and its perfection. He had to satisfy his ego and reputation. God got lost in the production.

Do not get me wrong, we should always strive for perfection. There will be days when we will fall short. Just know that God is reminding us who is actually in charge. He wants us to be perfect just as He is. Yet not at the expense of hurting people to satisfy our egos. This is why I always chuckle when things go not as planned at services. I realize that he is telling us that He has things under His care. This is to keep us humble when we are using our gifts and talents. I also told the priest to put on his big boy underoos and put the choir director in his place.

**Adult's message:** Last Sunday Paul spoke of the unity of the church. That in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles come together to form the Body of Christ. They make up the one Body of Christ called the church.

This Sunday Paul tells us how Christians are to act and behave. Verse 2, "With all lowliness, and gentleness with long suffering, bearing with one another in love." In short Paul is telling them to be humble. One truly has to have a high degree of genuine humility to be gentle and long suffering with people. Ask anyone who serves the public.

These basic characteristics of the Christian are to be the virtues that will contribute to church unity. These are the things that will hold the church community together. Paul tells us that there are many Christians, but we all share in one new nature. Though we are members of the Body of Christ, it is not really about us. It is about God. The unity of the Body of Christ is the work of God amongst us through the Holy Spirit. We participate and work with the Holy Spirit in the church. When we are humble, loving and long suffering it makes it easier for the Holy Spirit to work with us. Also for us to work with one another.

Keeping all of this in mind, we should get on with the task at hand. The building of the Kingdom here on earth. There really is no place for quarrelling and fighting in the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is not there. In the church we are to walk in solidarity and humility. Jesus told us that they will know you are My disciples by how you love. The Christian life and morality is not so much based upon ideas and keeping them in your head. It is based on living the reality. One's faith is best expressed by how one lives it in their daily life. We should be a living testimony to our faith daily.

In verse 11 Paul talks about the various gifts of leadership in the church. Apostles are sent to various places to share the good news. Prophets are to preach the word. Evangelists are there to record and write the accounts of the churches activities. Pastors are to be the local shepherds of the Christian flock. These gifts are for the unity and growth of the church. To give witness to the presence of God in the church. This work is to be carried out with love so that the church will grow.

We need to understand that the church is a growing organism. It receives its power from God the Father, its inspiration from God the Son and it is guided here on earth by God the Holy Spirit. It has not stopped growing in the past 2000 years. There have been times we thought its pace had slowed and other times its pace picked up. Yet it continues to grow. The Holy Spirit equips the leadership to ensure the church moves forward. Not only the church leadership, but you and I. We need only to humbly work with the Spirit. We just need to be willing and let the Spirit guide us. Our egos can make that difficult. Humility is a Godly virtue but it can be very hard for us at times to acquire. Prayer is the key.

God bless and take care, Pastor D