

(1 Corinthians 12:1-6, NIV84)

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

The Greek word for "gift" is "charisma," and the root word for charisma is "charis," which we translate as "grace." The Greek word for "service" is "diakonia," from which we derive the word "deacon" or "servant." Diakonia can also be translated: "ministry." The Greek word for "working" is "energema" from which we derive the word "energy."

When we consider our calling as Christians, it is reassuring to know that each of us has been blessed by God with specific spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul talks about this in Romans: "If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully" (Romans 12:7-8).

We also have areas of service, or ministry. Perhaps you are accustomed to thinking of pastors or teachers when you think of ministry, but don't sell yourself short. You are precious in God's sight and have a key role in His grand plan. There, of course, are pastoral ministries and teaching ministries, but in each of our little corners of the world, God has put others into our lives whom we can "minister" to or serve, just as there are those who minister to us.

It doesn't matter how old you are, or how able-bodied you are. As beloved children of God, as long as you and I draw breath we have a God-given purpose. We are to be blessings to others. And what the Holy Spirit will accomplish through us, as we utilize His gifts in the various ministries He has placed us in, is entirely up to Him. And this is not a burden that He lays upon us, but rather an honor and a privilege that He bestows upon us.

This is why it is so essential that we be fed and empowered by God's Word so that we might do the work He has for us to do. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your gifts and then to use you powerfully to accomplish His will.

In Christ's service with you,
Pastor Golm

May 23

The Holy Ghost

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. 1 Corinthians 12:3

There is the ever-present danger that in our constant emphasis on Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we (without intending to do so) overlook the importance of the Holy Spirit in our Christian lives. Martin Luther has given us an eloquent description of the Holy Spirit's work in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. Let us read his words slowly and thoughtfully. He says:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

What a beautiful statement of faith! While it is true that Christ has won for us complete salvation through his substitutionary atonement on the cross, it is also true that we have come into personal possession of that salvation only through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in the text quoted above: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Working through the means of grace (the Gospel in Word and Sacraments) the Holy Spirit has enlightened and continues to enlighten our hearts so that we can see Christ as our personal Redeemer and can put our trust in him. And having enlightened us, he continues to enrich our lives with the abundance of spiritual gifts that Christ has won for us. Well might we pray:

Holy Ghost, with light divine, Shine upon this heart of mine;
Cast down every idol throne, Reign supreme, and reign alone.

(Devotion from: Daily Walk With God - Meditations for Every Day, by Herman W. Gockel)

