

McCabe United Methodist Church

August 18 & 19, 2018

“One Spirit, Many Gifts”

Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

Good Morning Church!

Last week we approached the thought that sometimes we need to change our hearts and sometimes we need to change our minds. Ultimately, the reason behind this is so we can faithfully ask ourselves: Who am I to hinder God? This week let's keep going. We ask: Who am I to hinder God by NOT using the gifts God has given me?

Let's pray:

Holy and mighty God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each of our hearts, may they be acceptable in your sight. You are our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

There's a guy who makes short videos. He calls himself The Shallow Christian. Instead of challenging us to dig deeper, he tries to argue for a shallow Christianity. One of his videos recently has a tongue in cheek, maybe even a little sarcastic tone to it, but the intent of the video drives home a faithful spiritual point.

The video says: You know, God has blessed each of us with special gifts and talents. In fact, there are as many different kinds of gifts as there are people. It's important for us to use the gifts, the talents, God has given us.

So far it makes sense. I'm comfortable with where this is going, but then he turns a corner, then he pulls the rug out saying: God has given us gifts or talents, but make sure you keep these gifts hidden. Make sure you use these gifts and talents somehow, somewhere, where no one can see you.

After all, if someone sees you using your talent, they might think it was YOUR talent and not God's. You don't want to lead someone astray, so only use your talent where no one can see you.

So if you're a singer, never sing in public. Only sing at home, alone.

If you're a teacher, make sure you don't teach Sunday School, or any school. Only teach imaginary lessons when you're home alone.

It's so absurd it's almost funny...

The Shallow Christian is telling us to hide our God-given gifts. He's telling us to hide our witness under a bush instead of letting our light shine. And to this I say: O NO!!!

Friends, I couldn't in good faith show the video because it made me cringe. Yet the point is well taken, isn't it?

Remember this song... This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

God didn't give us our unique gifts to hide them under a bush, o no. We are to let them shine.

In this morning's Scripture the Apostle Paul was writing to the church in Corinth. There was division in the Corinthian church when he wrote this letter. People were using their God given gifts for selfish purposes.

Paul started with words of spiritual unity. He said: Together we confess the same Lord, One God. We're not chasing idols and false gods. We are united in the Spirit. We belong to the LIVING God.

We may have different gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of all of our gifts, and together we minister to the same body. We have received the gifts and talents we've been given for the good of the whole church. They're not just for hoarding or self-gratification. We've been given these gifts to use and to share and to make a difference.

The Corinthians needed the reminder that the gifts we've been given aren't for self-promotion. Instead, we're supposed to use our spiritual gifts to promote unity, to promote the mission and purpose of Jesus and His church.

Warren Wiersbe uses child development to make the point. Babies, early on, have little or no self-awareness. They just make noises when they're hungry or cold or need changing. They don't really think about it.

But over time, they start to figure things out. They begin to grow in maturity. A baby starts exploring by sucking his toes. Then the little one learns to roll over, and then to crawl, and then to take those first steps.

These are signs of growing self-awareness and motor maturity.

At first a child is fed by someone else. Then they start to experiment with getting food in their mouths by themselves, and then kids can feed themselves.

This actually parallels our spiritual life doesn't it?

Our spiritual gifts, our talents, are gifts from God, aren't they?

As we mature in Christ, we grow in our understanding of the church.

We grow in our understanding of Christ's body and how we fit into it.

As we mature in Christ, we become more aware of our spiritual gifts.

We become more aware of God's nudging to use these gifts for the greater Kingdom of God. As we use the gifts God has given us, we uncover them. We don't hide them under a bush. We begin to find a growing excitement in using these gifts. We find excitement in being part of the Jesus movement we call the church.

Do you know the song Many Gifts, One Spirit?

Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways.

One Spirit. We have our unique abilities, yet we're operating under the power of the same One True Spirit. One love known in many ways. In our difference, we all have different gifts, in our difference is blessing and from this diversity we cry out in praise.

Friends there's one Giver.

There's one Lord.

There's one Word. It's known in many ways. It's hallowing our days, or, the more connected we are with our God-given gifts, the more God's image reflects through us, so for the Giver, and for the gifts, we praise, praise, praise.

Many gifts, One Spirit. Verse 1 begins with: God of CHANGE and glory. Last week in worship, we wrestled with this idea that sometimes if we're trying to be faithful, sometimes we have to change or adapt our thinking. Our hearts may need to soften and maybe even change because at the end of the day, when push comes to shove, when the rubber hits the road, we just might have to choose between adjusting our perspective, or hindering God. The first words of the hymn Many Gifts, One Spirit, say: God of CHANGE and God of glory... If and when we fear change and the future, God give us the gift of your grace. Even when things are changing give us the grace to praise, praise, praise.

And this, in large part, is what we're talking about this morning. Being receptive to the gifts God has given us because together we've been given our gifts for God's glory, and in the process, if we're using our God given gifts, there's the possibility that we'll need to change. There's the possibility that we'll need to chance how we use our time or the things we do. We're talking about using our gifts for God's Kingdom, for God's glory. We're talking about NOT hindering God by hiding our gifts or by using our talents only for self-promotion.

Friends, we are worshiping and serving under the power of the One True Spirit.

On Thursday we had 30 people from McCabe serving at the Banquet. We have servants who mow and greet and usher and sing and put together the newsletter and so forth. People using the gifts God has given them.

You may have seen these inserts in the bulletin over the past few weeks... Next week, during the time of offering, there will be a card in the bulletin inviting you to offer your gifts in another way too. This is an invitation to wrestle with how and where God might be nudging you to use your gifts giving 2 hours each month in service and ministry. Many are already offering two hours of service a month. If that's your situation, is there a next step, or how is God nudging you. Next week, we'll have an intentional time of offering, to come to the rail and make a commitment to serve in mission and ministry.

Let's pray:

You, God, are the God of many gifts, yet one Spirit. God may we acknowledge the gifts you've given us, may we receive the gifts you've given us, may we use the gifts you've given us in ways that are faithful and authentic. Please God, may we use the special presents, talents, and gifts you've given us for the work you are calling us to. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.