Pentecost a Pastor M. Weigand 5.28.23

Yes, you have the Spirit! But What Does That Mean?

I Corinthians 12:3-11

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

So, take out the little quiz I gave during the reading of the first Bible lesson this morning. I had asked you to write down which of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was the biggest miracle. Here are some of the choices: 1. The sound of a rushing wind when there was no wind. 2. Tongues of fire appearing over the heads of the disciples. 3. The disciples were able to immediately and perfectly speak in languages they had never learned. Do you know what the answer actually is? It's none of the above, because to get to the biggest miracle, the most amazing gift of the Holy Spirit on that day, you have to read a little farther. At the end of the chapter, we read: **38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.** What am I getting at? The biggest, most amazing gift that the Holy Spirit gave on that day is the 3,000 plus who started the day without knowing forgiveness and without a future in heaven, but ended that day baptized believers, absolved of all sin, and assured of life after death in heaven forever.

The sound of the wind eventually went away. The tongues of fire went away. The Bible never tells us that the disciples were able to continue to speak in these other languages, we assume they did not. Were those amazing gifts? Would that have been incredible to witness? Undoubtedly. But the gift that lasted was the Spirit's gift of faith – the changes of all those hearts from unbelief to faith – the changes of their futures from hell to heaven. Those 3,000 plus are still enjoying that gift today, and that will continue forever. Why do I bring this up today?

Have you ever been asked the question, "Do you have the Holy Spirit?" Or has anyone ever said to you, "I have the Holy Spirit in me?" Does it make you uncomfortable talking like that? I'll share with you that I have had both happen, and in the context, it made me a little bit uncomfortable. I'll tell you why – the implication in most of these situations was that "having the Holy Spirit" means that you have had some sort of supernatural direct emotional connection with God's Holy Spirit, you had a sort of euphoria where you felt the Spirit in your heart, or you were able to do a miraculous action, or have a miraculous premonition or revelation about a future event. Now, can I rule out the possibility of direct experience or revelation from God? No. Yet in so many of these circumstances, the individuals involved look to these experiences as proof of their Christianity – and conversely, for me, someone who hasn't had this kind of experience – the implication was that I should maybe wonder if I even had faith, if I am a Christian. That's why I posed the question regarding the greatest miracle of Pentecost. It wasn't the fire, it wasn't the sound of the wind, it wasn't the languages – it was simply the change of heart worked by the Holy Spirit through the tools of his message spoken by Peter and the other disciples, and baptism. You could rightly say that each of those 3,000 plus has the Holy Spirit. And by that measure what about you and me? We can say the same thing! We have the Holy Spirt – meaning, we have come to faith, we believe in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life. We don't have to worry whether or not we are truly saved if we haven't had some sort of ecstatic experience or revelation from God. These were exceedingly rare even during Bible times. But to the question, are there other gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to all of us? The answer is yes. God gives us a beautiful summary of what the Holy Spirit does – both the primary gift of faith, and the others gifts he gives to all Christians in the verses before us today from I Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:3-11 3 Therefore I want you to know 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. 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

God makes it clear in verses three and four that anyone who believes in Jesus, "who says Jesus is Lord", has the Holy Spirit. They couldn't utter these words if he had not worked in their hearts. Now it's not that a person couldn't speak the syllables "Je-sus-is-Lord" without the Holy Spirit. But to say them and believe them – that is a miracle of epic proportion. Why? Let's dig a little deeper and examine that three-word sentence. What does it mean to call someone Lord? It means we acknowledge that we are lower than they are. "You are Lord" also implies "I am your servant." Calling someone Lord also

means we look to them to supply a need. Why is it a miracle to say "Jesus is my master, and I need what he has to offer"? Who does human nature say is Lord? Or to put it another way, who does the voice inside me want to say is lord? It's "me." I am lord – I don't need anyone else. I have it under control. I don't want someone to rescue me. I'm just fine! Even those who follow so-called gods other than Jesus, in the end they too look to themselves as lord because all of these manmade religions still rely on the individual person to do the work of saving themselves, or pleasing the deity – Islam, Hindu, Shinto, Humanism, Animism – they all look to the power of self to please the deity. "I am lord!" To actually admit "I deserve to be punished in hell, I need someone to recuse me" is incredibly humbling, it goes against human nature – the little voice inside screams NO. To utter that one little sentence "Jesus is Lord!" is the greatest miracle that has happened in each of our lives! Through baptism, through his message preached and read, God's Holy Spirit has changed your heart and mine. Heaven is in our future; we are right with God. We don't need a special revelation or an ecstatic feeling or sign from heaven to prove it. We DO have the Holy Spirit!

Yet, while that change of heart is the Spirit's greatest gift, we also see that the Holy Spirit gives other gifts. Paul lists wisdom, knowledge, healing, miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues or different languages (like the disciples), interpreting. This isn't a complete list – the Bible lists many other gifts – kindness, compassion, love, encouragement, ability to teach, and I could go on and on. At their heart, the gifts that the Spirit gives are tantamount to what we often call our talents and abilities. Yes, some supernatural ones are mentioned on this list, but it would seem most of those have ceased since the time of the apostles – the Bible actually said this would be the case. Most of the gifts the Bible lists are simply the talents and abilities God gives are used for the purpose he intended – serving the common good, the nurturing of fellow Christians, and reaching out to the lost. The point is emphasized here and other places in the Bible that each of us has different gifts.

So, let's follow the progression here. The first, and greatest gift of the Spirit is faith in Jesus. Anyone who confesses Jesus has that gift of the Spirit. For those who believe in Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit blesses them with talents and abilities that they can use to serve Jesus – their Lord. So, how has God gifted you? Do you realize that he HAS gifted you? I think it can be easy to look at church and church life and conclude, "Well, I'll go to church, but I'm not great talking to people; I don't really have the ability to serve as an elder. I'm not really a leader of small groups, so I really don't have the gifts to serve." Nothing could be further from the truth. Let me use the example of just one weekend service cycle here at Faith. I'll use the example of last week. It took four different people helping to have communion set up and taken down for each service. Three different keyboard players. A choir with 30 different members. A duet. Four accompanists. About 14 handbell players, a pastor, 12 ushers, one pastor, one person running the streaming equipment, four slide advancers in the AV booth, and I'm sure I'm still missing some people. And those are formal, scheduled things. But what about all the other things that happened during the week? I had a number of people just come and extend thanks and give personal encouragement – that's a gift of the Spirit. I had a couple of people ask how this or that member was doing, knowing they were wrestling with health problems. We had numerous volunteers show up for school-related events and trips – yes, those too are gifts of the Spirit. We had members mow the grass, plant and maintain flower beds, repair damaged drywall – yup those too are gifts of the Spirit all given towards the common good of nurturing Christians and reaching the lost.

In my office maybe you've seen the scroll saw-carved name on my desk. A man by the name of John Stege made it. To me it is much more than my name in a wood carving – it is a constant reminder of someone using their gifts for God's purposes. John was handy – could fix things, loved landscape work, building repair. He was semiretired. At least once a week he would come over to the little church building in Holiday, Florida, and without being asked, just looked for whatever repair work or clean up or beautification needed doing. And when my son was around, he often found time to show him what he was doing and explain it with patience and a big smile on his face. In fact, "Mr. Stege" was one of the first names of someone outside our family that my son learned to say. That's a man using his gifts from the Spirit! An example I will never forget.

So, what are your gifts? What talents and abilities has God has given you? Are you a quiet person, a type "A"? They are both gifts from God's Spirit. Are you a person who can fix things, someone who can sing? Do you notice when others are struggling and reach out to ask how's it going? Do you enjoy writing cards of encouragement? Are you a good student, an athlete? Are you good at teaching? Are you good at teaching life skills and lessons? Are you good with numbers? Are you good with people? Do you realize that every single one of these and countless more are gifts from God's Holy Spirit? Gifts that he intends us to use for the common good in response to his big gift – faith in Jesus.

We have the Holy Spirit – that's what it means! AMEN.