

Calling All Gifts: It Takes a Village

1 Cor. 12: 4 - 14

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

If you've watched the *Queen's Gambit* on Netflix, it is a wonderful story about an orphan girl who falls in love with playing chess. She gets mentored by the orphanage's janitor, begins playing competitions. She ends up competing at the highest level, depending solely on her own skills and talents, but can't seem to beat the Russian chess master, Borgov. We drop in on the finals where she is face-to-face with Borgov. After a few moves into the match Borgov calls a pause in the game to think about his strategy and they are to resume the game later. Here is what happens next. [scene found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN5ORMHDy5Y>]

If you have watched the show, what is so powerful about the scene is the realization when she discovers that no matter how gifted and skillful she is, she can't achieve her goals alone. It turns out not even chess is a lone wolf sport.

St. Paul knows this. He reminds us we need each other. And each one of us has Spirit-infused talents to help bring a bit more love and justice into the world. And the gift of living in community is we can take one another farther than we can ever get on our own.

So start by thinking of a gift you have. Maybe if you were a superhero, it would be your superpower. Or it's the thing that comes naturally to you. Or a passion which gives you energy. It may have changed as you aged or been something seasonal. [solicit gifts] Now think of a moment when you needed someone else's gift because what you needed was NOT your gift. It's how we were made. We all have gifts and we all have limitations. In the beginning God said it was all good. The only thing God said was not good was for humanity to not be alone. It's part of the divine design. We need each other. I mean, think about where we would be without plumbers or electricians? Without eye doctors or medical specialists, or fire fighters or artists or the techies who created Zoom or Wordle? We all have gifts and limitations. At our last session meeting, I confessed (again) I am not a detail-oriented person—perhaps that is an understatement. So I am thankful for the gifts of the detail people in my life, even though it reminds me of where I consistently struggle. So think of a time when you were reminded that we need each other.

Of course, the problem is that we are in a time of disconnection. Since the pandemic began it seems we may have lost touch with anyone outside of our own circles. Two years of being apart has waned on our spirits and it's been hard to draw the welcome circle wider. And while we have had energizing moments of being together, it's clearly not the same. Then there are other reminders of our disconnection as a fertilizer plant disproportionately impacts communities of color. And then the wind changes direction and we are aware that what impacts one part of the community impacts all of us. While we may have hoped that Covid at least allows us to see how we are all connected, it has clearly only tugged us farther apart.

But St. Paul reminds us: We are a body of people who have gifts that God uses to build something bigger than ourselves. It's like we are all Lego bricks, shaped differently with different functions, which alone might not do much, but together we can co-create something powerful. If, and here is a big IF, we stop comparing ourselves to someone else. You see, the gifts God gives us aren't about being in rivalry, which makes us say "I'm only an elbow," or "I'm just a pinky tow" or "I am just an old lady," or, "I'm just a kid" "I'm just [fill in the blank]. St. Paul says that's rubbish. There is no "just" in the Body of Christ and there is no "less-than" gift in God's community. We do what we can. It's not meant to stress us out. It is meant to bring us in.

At Parker Maddrey's funeral, our deacons did a wonderful job. Laura organized, Alice decorated, Catherine door greeted, and Tom set up snacks and hung out in the kitchen. And each one contributed in a way that lifted up the community and the family. There were no "less than" gifts. Each one was important, each did their part; and it took a village. Come to think of it, every Christian ritual we do whether it be baptism or communion or prayer or liturgy is a solo event. It's about all of us, because it's not good for humanity to be alone.

An old African Proverb says, "We will always travel faster alone, but we will always travel farther with others."

So now go back to the gift you named for yourself at the beginning. And think about how you can use that gift to help bring life to the church or the wider community. If you're on Zoom or Facebook live chat the gift you thought of, and if you are in person and feeling brave, safely find someone after the service and share what your gift is. There is no "less than" gift in God's community. Trinity is a place full of amazing gifts. We are a village. Each is essential, which is a truth that we can no longer take for granted. Amen.