

Online Worship 5/10/20 Fifth Sunday of Easter/Mother's Day

Piano

We continue through the Easter season heading toward Pentecost. We're looking to understand more about the Holy Spirit and to experience the reality of God's Spirit in our lives. God gives the gift of his Spirit to his people. Along with the gift of the Holy Spirit come gifts that equip us to live and serve as God's people.

Today is Mothers' Day. If we were all together, we'd recognize the moms. But we'll just take this moment to honor and thank all the women who are mothers and to bless all women because you're such a vital part of the church and our lives. We give thanks to God for you.

We will continue to worship online for a while. The word from our Annual Conference leadership is that they will send updated recommendations after May 17. Our church staff met on Friday to start planning how we will relaunch worship and other activities. In-person worship and other gatherings will be phased in when the time is right. When we do start gathering, we will maintain physical distance, various surfaces will be sanitized frequently, there will be no coffee and donuts for a while, and the offering will be placed in a stationary container instead of passing the plates. Staff and other leaders will meet the week of May 17 to continue planning. We will keep you posted.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your

faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:3-8)

Hymn

Shine, Jesus, Shine

Affirmation of Faith

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer

If you have a prayer request you'd like to share, you can email me: pastor@durantumc.org or go on the church website (www.durantumc.org) and click on the Prayer tab.

There's been no real change in my condition. I have two appointments this week: with a neurosurgeon to consult and with a spine surgeon for injections. My hope and prayer is that I'll see significant change in the next week or two. Thanks again for all your support and prayers.

Our world remains in a state of unease because of COVID-19. People are still infected and struggling. Others suffer financially due to loss of work. There's still confusion, frustration and fear.

Let's remember the family and friends of Ahmaud Arbery, a young African American man in Georgia who was shot and killed while jogging. That also reminds us to pray for all victims and perpetrators of violence, racism, and injustice. You've probably heard about people shooting employees at various places because of their anger at how businesses are either closed or require social distancing.

God is with us wherever we are. God hears us when we pray no matter where we are or what's going on. Let's keep reaching out to each other with reminders that we're praying, we care, we're still the body of Christ even though we're scattered.

Jesus, Remember Me #488

Lord, our God, as we worship you today we also struggle. We believe in you and affirm that you are good. At the same time, we're tired, we're frustrated, we're confused. Thank you that we can come to you with all those feelings and struggles and whatever else we're trying to deal with. Give us faith to see that you are so much bigger than our problems. Your grace is sufficient. You make your power known in our weakness. As we pray for each other and for all our church, all our community, our state, our nation and our world, we ask for your wisdom. We pray that you will strengthen and encourage everyone who's dealing with COVID-19. We ask you to guide and help all the leaders who make decisions that affect us all. We pray for your peace to prevail so we won't hurt each other, but help each other. Give us patience, forbearance, toward each other. Let your healing mercy flow. Empower us to walk in your ways. We thank you and praise you in Jesus' name and we join in the prayer he teaches his disciples:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Giving

You can give online: go to www.durantumc.org and click on Online Giving. You can give by text: Text FUMCDURANT to 73256. Of course, you can mail a check: First UMC, PO Box 518 Durant OK 74702. Thank you.

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 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.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 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. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

The Gift and the Gifts
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John Breon

We're continuing our series on "Encounter the Spirit." Jesus said that God the Father gives the Holy Spirit to us when we ask (Luke 11:13). This is the great gift of God's own powerful personal presence to us in the church and in each of our lives. Along with the gift of the Holy Spirit we experience the Spirit's life and work in the church through gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this passage Paul calls them "manifestations of the Spirit" (v. 7). The word manifestation speaks of disclosure, revelation, or announcement. A ship's manifest is a visible inventory of the unseen cargo deep in the hold. These gifts are a way that the invisible Spirit makes God's presence visible. Then we can say, or people seeing our life and worship as a church can say, "God is really among you!" (1 Cor 14:25).

A family of Greek words in the New Testament is important here. *Charis* means "grace." *Charisma* means "gift"; and *charismatic* is "one who has received a gift." So in an exact literal sense, every Christian is a charismatic because we have all received God's gifts of grace, salvation, and many other gifts to help us live God's way.

Fred Craddock, who taught preaching in seminaries for years, tells about one time when he was preaching in Oklahoma City. Just before he got up to speak, a woman came right up to the pulpit and said, "Before you talk, I need to know something." Fred said, "Yes, ma'am?" She asked, "Are you a knocked-down, killed in the Spirit, washed-clean, picked-up, Spirit-filled charismatic Christian?"

Fred said, "Well, I'm a Christian."

"That's not what I asked you."

So he said, "Well, what did you ask me?"

"Are you a charismatic?"

He replied, "Yes, ma'am, I am."

She was real pleased and smiled big and said, "What's your gift?"

Fred said, "Teaching."

And she said, "Oh," and she left. Fred comments, "I didn't think it was all that bad" (*Craddock Stories* 140-41).

It's easy to think that there are certain experiences or certain gifts—maybe only one or two—that everyone should have. If someone doesn't have the experience or gifts we have, we might look down on them and think they're not as spiritual as we are. Or, if we don't have certain experiences or gifts, we might think our faith is deficient or we're not spiritual enough.

As we encounter the Spirit, we discover that there's a wide range of experience and a great variety of gifts God gives in the church to make us effective in serving. We realize that we can learn from each other and from many different Christian traditions. Despite their problems, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches remind us that God is alive, God is present and active in the church and in the world, and God is changing lives and showing God's love and power in many ways. Other churches remind us that the Bible is the foundation for our understanding and teaching. Others help us see the value of history and how God has worked through different groups over the centuries. Others show us that order and discipline are vital.

What if we could bring together the strengths of various groups of Christians? What if we emphasized the Bible and good theology, and awareness of God's presence along with the expectation that God will make his presence known, and commitment to personal and social holiness, and the importance of a life of prayer, and appreciation for all of creation and all of life as belonging to God? (see Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water*). That'd be powerful. It would be what God intends the church to be.

Some, maybe most, of the Christians in Corinth seemed to emphasize one or two gifts. The big idea in the Corinthian church was that since they were "spiritual," they were somehow removed from physical reality and the responsibilities that go with it. Their super-spirituality led to pride about their wisdom and their knowledge of spiritual secrets. Their attitude produced divisions in the church. And, it seems, they saw the gift of tongues as *the* great gift of the Holy Spirit. It was the sign for them that they were spiritual and were already living some kind of heavenly existence.

So they emphasized and practiced speaking in tongues while ignoring many of the other gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This entire letter of Paul's is his response to some things the Corinthians had written asking him about, as well as some things he had heard from some folks at Corinth. Much of what he wants to correct is their attitude and behavior in worship.

The verses we've read are part of a section on worship. Chapters 12-14 all go together. They're a unit in which Paul deals with public worship and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

In this section Paul emphasizes diversity within unity. This diversity is rooted in God's nature. There are varieties of *gifts*/the same Spirit, varieties of *service*/the same Lord, varieties of *working*/the same God. Unity isn't uniformity. There are more gifts than the one or two favorites the Corinthians emphasized. The whole body is important. All the body parts are necessary. We each need the body. And the body needs each of its parts. There's no need for feelings of inferiority or superiority in the body of Christ.

As Paul instructs them about the proper exercise of spiritual gifts in these three chapters, he offers tests of whether the gifts are being properly expressed:

Does it exalt Jesus? (12:3)

Does it manifest love? (13:4-7)

Does it build up the body, the church? (14)

The Lordship of Jesus is the foundation. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were once pagans who worshiped "mute idols." Only the Lord God is God. Only the Lord God is the true and living God who speaks. Idols are mute. They can't tell us anything. They offer no guidance or instruction like the living God does. Of course, idols are not just statues of animals or people. Anything we put before the Lord, anything we center our lives around, anything we try to find ultimate security in, is our idol. Sometimes we make an idol of our self or another person or possessions or status—or,

you name it. Like the Corinthians, we can be led astray to worshipping such things.

But there's a different way to live. We can submit to and follow Jesus as Lord. Paul introduces this strange idea that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed." He probably uses that phrase for shock value and to get them agreeing with him. Hearing that, they'll think, "Well, of course; we know that." Then he wants them to recall and refocus on the basics: Jesus is Lord.

That was the earliest and most basic Christian confession and affirmation of faith. Jesus is God in the flesh, a real person who lived, taught, ministered, suffered, and died. This Jesus, who was crucified, is the one God raised from the dead and exalted. And he is Lord, ruler, the one in charge.

That's the basis of Christian life and faith and action. Jesus is Lord of all—and someday that will be made clear to everyone. Jesus is Lord of the church. We exist to serve and honor him. Jesus is Lord of our lives when we surrender to him. We seek to do all things for his glory.

Claiming Jesus as Lord and God sets his followers apart. We don't worship and serve the little gods that aren't God. In the time and place Paul and the Corinthians lived in, to say, "Jesus is Lord" implied saying, "And Caesar is not."

Paul says it's only by the Spirit of God that we can say Jesus is Lord. Of course, anybody can mouth those words. But to say it truthfully, to surrender to the Lord, to live under his lordship is not something we can do apart from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will always exalt and glorify Jesus.

After reminding the Corinthian Christians of these basics, Paul moves on to emphasize the diversity of gifts in the Church. He wants to get the Corinthians thinking about gifts other than their favorites, so he lists several spiritual gifts. These are illustrations from Paul's experience among the early churches. But they are illustrations. This isn't the definitive list of Holy Spirit gifts. It's a random list to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit works in more than one way in the Church. The Spirit manifests God's presence and power and love in many ways. There are several lists of gifts in the NT, most in

Paul's letters. They're not all alike, though there are some gifts that show up in most of them.

This group in 1 Cor 12 includes *speaking gifts*: speaking wisdom, speaking knowledge, prophecy, tongues, and interpretation. The Corinthians were all excited about possessing superior spiritual wisdom and knowledge. But Paul says that the wisdom the Holy Spirit gives is grounded in the cross of Jesus. The *message of wisdom* is essentially the message of the cross, the gospel of Jesus, who is the wisdom and power of God (see 1 Cor 1:18-2:16). Paul warns them that knowledge "puffs up" with pride while love "builds up" the body of Christ (8:1). *Speaking knowledge* here could mean teaching, or it could refer to God making known something about a person or situation that would be helpful in ministry. Sometimes we know what to pray for someone and they're surprised we knew their need. As with all the gifts, the message of knowledge is rooted in Jesus, crucified and risen, who is Lord. *Prophecy* in this context means speaking what God makes known and bringing God's message to bear on the present situation. *Tongues* here is speaking in a language you haven't learned as the Holy Spirit enables you. Where prophecy is a public message, tongues seems to be private prayer and praise. When the gift of tongues is used publicly, Paul says it must be interpreted so everyone can understand what is being said. Paul perhaps lists tongues and *interpretation* last to emphasize to the Corinthians that there are many other gifts and that tongues is not the only one or the most important one.

This group of gifts also includes demonstrations of power, or miracles. All Christians have faith in some sense. *Faith* as a gift of the Spirit likely refers to special faith that confidently expects God to do great things. The phrase *gifts of healings* refers to God's healing power for a variety of ills—physical, spiritual, emotional, relational. *Workings of miracles* includes other miraculous demonstrations of God's power in and through the Church.

I once heard from a friend about a couple who were not in worship at their UMC because they had gone to a Pentecostal church so the husband could get prayer for healing of a condition he had just been diagnosed with. United Methodists shouldn't have to go somewhere else to get

prayed for and to experience healing. God heals in a lot of different ways, but one way God has told us to look for healing is through prayer and anointing with oil. The UM Book of Worship includes services for healing and wholeness. We've had times of anointing with oil and praying for healing here. We'll do that again.

I've been praying for healing for myself for weeks. And I know many of you have been praying for me. So far, God hasn't instantly healed me. Some of you have a similar experience as you've been praying and we've been praying for you. Some of you may have been healed of something in a moment. It seems that a lot of the time God works through a process of healing that includes prayer and medical treatment. It can be hard to remain patient during that process. There's a temptation to give up, to think God's not listening or doesn't care. At least, I've felt that temptation. But we keep on, we keep trusting, we believe God is with us no matter what. Gifts of healing will come in God's way and in God's timing.

Paul includes a great gift called *distinguishing between spirits, or discernment*. If there is one gift every Christian needs, it may be this one. In discernment the Holy Spirit enables us to determine if someone is really speaking for God or not. It may have related primarily to people who claimed to be prophets. Through the gift of discernment a person could tell if someone was inspired by the Holy Spirit or some other spirit when they gave their message. Through this gift God helps us evaluate teaching and other messages that people give from God so we won't be led astray but will stay close to the truth God has already revealed. That's also a good word for us in terms of evaluating news, online posts, and, especially, conspiracy theories.

The main emphasis in this Scripture is on the Holy Spirit's variety, active work, and sovereignty in distributing the gifts or manifesting the Spirit's presence. The gifts are expressions of the Spirit's own sovereign action in each of our lives and in the church as a whole.

When the Holy Spirit manifests or expresses himself in ways that exalt Jesus, that manifest love, and that build up the body of Christ, we can say, and those who see us will say, "God is really among you!"

God is here. God is where you are. He's calling each of us to yield to him, to surrender to Jesus as Lord, and to receive what he wants to give us. The first gift God wants to give is himself. If you need to receive Christ, to be filled with the Holy Spirit in a fresh way, or to experience one or more of these gifts, ask God for what you need now. Open your heart and mind to our gracious God who gives generously. In our encounter with the Spirit, let's be willing to serve where God calls us and with the power and abilities God gives us.

Hymn *Amazing Grace* (1, 2, 3, 6) #378

Benediction

Go Now in Peace #665