Spiritual Gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Corinthians gets its name from Corinth, which was a coastal city, Southeast of Athens. Being a coastal city, Corinth encountered a diverse array of cultures as goods from the East and Western Europe were being traded. Back then, they did not have eBay or UPS. With that influx of different cultures and people, it was difficult to really establish a sense of community, which Paul addresses throughout his letters in regards to the divisions within the church at Corinth.

Relative to the present, let’s look at the United States of America. For a long time, the US was considered a land of hope and prosperity; where anyone, if they worked hard enough, could live out the American dream. In the early days of the United States, news spread like wildfire all over the world, having immigrants migrate from all corners of the Earth, to strive for a better life in America. In fact, most of us are descendants of immigrants. Augustana itself celebrates its Norwegian heritage proudly, which I find truly wonderful. Unfortunately, Native Americans, the first Americans, were forced out of their lands, and today, ties with our Native American brothers and sisters have still not healed. Moving forward, the sense of community in the United States was quickly becoming a melting pot and some may refer it to as a salad where some cultures are more prevalent than others which get ignored or simply tolerated. Regardless, the all-around sense of community in America is difficult to define and identify.

Today, we face similar challenges of identifying and firmly establishing a cohesive community that Paul faced in Corinth, whether we deal with finding the identity of the Christian community, the Augustana community or the Sioux Falls community. Throughout my life, I have learned that history repeats itself. More specifically, humans are inclined to commit past mistakes and happenings, and somehow we just never learn. Maybe the fact that we never learn or are slowly making progress may be due to the interworking of the Spirit. Let me elaborate on that thought.

Paul states that “A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other,” and that “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.” My kindergarten teacher told us that we are all unique and special in our own way.

Going back to Paul, he lists examples as to how the Spirit gives each person certain spiritual gifts such as the ability to give wise advice, and to another, the message of special knowledge, etc. At this point in my life, I find that different people find their gifts at different points in their lives. That is why people go to college or go off on their own adventures to find themselves and their
spiritual gift, and sometimes, people are forced into situations where they find their spiritual gift or it is expressed. For example, being a first generation Hmong-American, I was forced to reconcile between two completely different communities: the Hmong community at home and in St. Paul and the white, suburban community at school. Most of my relatives and the Hmong people in Minnesota lived in St. Paul and my parents worked in St. Paul. We moved to the suburbs when I was four, which means I had to grow up well acquainted with both communities. Learning to integrate both communities into one was something that exposed me to what it means to participate in a community or be a part of a community, which an important part of being an active participant meant sharing your gifts with each other. This segways me to Paul’s message on spiritual gifts.

In the text, Paul refers to how the Spirit, alone, is the one who distributes all of our individual spiritual gifts. In that sense, we all have a specific gift that we are just naturally or inclined to being good at. In addition and most importantly, however, Paul doesn’t state that the Spirit gives us the gift to be very good at fishing, or getting good grades, but rather, Paul focuses on spiritual gifts that provide a means to establish a community.

For example, an important spiritual gift that Paul mentions, that relates the melting pot or salad of the United States, is the ability to speak in unknown languages and for another the ability to interpret what is being said. If Paul were alive today, he would need someone with the gift of interpreting unknown languages to interpret what we are saying about him! The community back then, both culturally and religiously, was completely different from what it is today. Relative to today, if you were to walk into an urbanizing area, you would encounter many different cultures and languages. Just walk about two blocks South East of campus and you will encounter Golden Bowl which of course is a Chinese restaurant. In this ethnically and socially growing community in Sioux Falls, the gift to communicate is essential. This kind of illustrates what it was kind of like between the Asian and Western European traders in Corinth sharing ideas and goods. I feel that the main point of Paul’s passage on spiritual gifts is that a spiritual gift is given so that we can give to each other. Giving gifts to each other, or sharing these gifts with one another, establishes the bonds of a community, not the divisions.

In a community that is increasingly diversifying, being able to discover and share our spiritual gifts with each other is essential. It is essential to share our gift with those who are newly introduced to our community. Instead of tolerating other religions and ethnicities, we should learn to embrace their gifts and share our gifts with them to build an overall encompassing community and to strengthen our bonds. If the Spirit alone distributes all of our spiritual gifts, then we all are connected. We all are connected to discover our gifts. Most importantly, we all are connected to share our gifts, and once we do, we can establish a community that instead of divisions, is composed of strengthening and encouraging bonds.

Today we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a man who had a dream, who strove beyond adversity and intolerance to create an American community where all men
and women are treated equally. He shared his gift of oration, powered by his faith in the Spirit to unite us all, to create a better community. I feel that Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a day where we should remember what community is, which is not defined by our divisions, but the bonds that we share with each other through our spiritual gifts.

So, you may ask, what do we do or how should we start? It occurs to me that starting small is a great start. Establishing those bonds by sharing our spiritual gifts with one another in the Augie community will help spread our bonds into the Sioux Falls community and from then on, spread like growing neurons in our brains if we really care about what being a part of a community is. Let’s not look at community as the tolerable divisions within, but the bonds of shared spiritual gifts. Let’s remember that yes, there are many different communities out there, but the Spirit alone distributes these spiritual gifts which in all means that we all are connected as one community, and that we must share our spiritual gifts with each other. I also figure if the Spirit gives us all spiritual gifts, then giving and sharing our spiritual gifts with one another will seem as though a gift to the Spirit as well.
MORNING WORSHIP
Monday, January 21, 2013
The Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., renewer of society.

Prelude
Welcome/Announcements
 Invocation

Prayer
Hymn  “Let us Build a House”  ELW #641
Scripture  I Corinthians 12: 1-11
Sermon  Tony Yang
          Major: Biology
          Hometown: Hugo, MN

Hymn  “This is My Song”  ELW #887

Prayers
Lord’s Prayer
Benediction
Postlude

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

VISITING PASTOR speaking on Wed. in chapel -
Pr. Timothee Sodea has been an ordained pastor in the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon for 16 years and holds
a ministry degree from Meiganga Lutheran Seminary. He serves a
parish of 7 congregations near Meiganga. He has a family of 7
children ranging in age from 1-20 years. His wife's name is
Mancini. He farms and has a strong interest in farming. His
interests in the ministry include youth, ministry among women,
music and evangelism. English is his fifth language. He has been
looking forward to this visit to South Dakota for over a year. He
will be in South Dakota until the end of January, 2013.

GRIEF SPEAKER - Catholics in Action is sponsoring a speaker on
suffering and grief. Dr. Marcie Moran will be presenting in the 3-1 room
on Thurs., Jan. 24th from 6-9 pm. Everyone is welcome

PRISON WORSHIP - Campus Ministry is sponsoring another worship
If you are interested in attending, please see Carol in the Chapel office
for the clearance forms. The forms need to be turned back into the
chapel by Jan. 24.

TAIZE IN SOUTH DAKOTA - May 24-27, 2012 - A pilgrimage of
trust and solidarity for young adults, 18-25, from around the world at
Red Shirt, SD - a beautiful mesa on Pine Ridge between the Badlands
and Black Hills - http://www.taize.fr/en_article14640.html -
Cost $50 (scholarships available). To register: see Pr. Paul or Pr. Ann

FAITH FEST is an overnight retreat event at Augustana for area middle
schoolers, February 23-24. Are you interested in helping with this
fun-filled, faith-filled event??? Email Jenna Hyde to sign-up or for more
information. jahyde11@ole.augie.edu

Are you on an Outreach Team? Do you love Bible Camp? Come to a
PIZZA PARTY on Sunday night, February 17, 8-10pm in the Back
Alley. We'll visit with camp directors from across the country about
opportunities to work at summer camp. Outreach team members will
stick around after pizza for a workshop that helps us brush-up on our
ministry skills.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday chapel will be held between the block classes at 11:45 am on
Mon, Wed. and Fri. during Interim, returning to 10 am for 2nd Semester.

Wednesday, 1-23  Holy Communion, 11:45 am - Pr. Timothee Sodeo;
              Sam Sorgaag, Sp. Music
Friday, 1-25     Morning Worship, 11:45 am - Matt Garred, Sr. Spkr
Sunday, 1-27    Morning Worship, 11 am - Prism Outreach Team
Monday, 1-28    Morning Worship, 11:45 am - John Detlie, Sr. Spkr.
Wednesday, 1-30 Holy Communion, 11:45 am - Tom Meyer, Bs. Off.;
              KayLa Gerlach/Joslyn Bialas special music
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