

Pentecost 2019

Gifts Within the Body

St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, Or

By Fr. Bill Baker

1 Corinthians 12:4-14 / St. Luke 11:9-13

Sunday before last was Rogation Sunday and we read the same Gospel words on that day as we read today; *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”* What is it that we are looking for that impels us to ask? What need do we have that causes us to seek? What urgency do we feel that compels us to knock? Interesting questions that would have no answers if it were not for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit where deep calleth unto deep.

Today we are here to reflect upon Pentecost...the final gift of God and it's eternal significance. Pentecost comes from the Jewish Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks. Like Rogation Sunday it is a celebration where prayers are said for the crops and a good harvest. But it also commemorates the anniversary when God gave the Torah (the law) to the nation of Israel when they were assembled at Mt. Sinai. Pentecost became a day of celebration that would bring Jews together in a significant way. And it was on this day of the celebration of Shavuot, Pentecost, that Jesus would fulfill his promise of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. I think it significant to draw the two together where we see God uniting a people unto himself by the giving of the Torah and now uniting the fullness of his kingdom together by the giving of the Holy Spirit. May we Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

So, Pentecost, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit...why is this important? What does it mean for you and me? What does it have to do with the questions I have presented? St. Paul tells us through his letter to the Corinthians that *“no man speaking by the spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* The evidence explained here illustrates to us that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit separates the Children of God from the world by bringing those who ask, those who seek and those who knock into the Body of Christ.

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” It is here, in the body of Christ, with the gifts imparted to us, that we are enabled to act in unison with our Heavenly Father, sacrificing our worldly desires for the Kingdom of His grace and mercy.

I want to read to you a passage of scripture from the Gospel of St. Luke. In these Gospel words there is a strong relationship exposed between ourselves and our Father in Heaven that could only be possible by the love and guidance of the Holy Spirit...

“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (St. Luke 12:27-31).

“Seek ye the Kingdom of God!” Ask, seek, and knock and the Holy Spirit will answer, expose and open our hearts and minds to the truth. That is what the Holy Spirit has done for us! Through Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit has united us to the Father in a very real way! We ask, we seek and we knock and are made heirs to the kingdom and members of the body of Christ. *“How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”*

“For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”

And what are we to do with such a gift once we have received, once we have found and once we have walked through the open door? Following Jesus in faith may not add up to what we envision. We read the scriptures and see the great miracles of the Apostles and we even hear of great marvels and wonders in our day pertaining to the work of God.

What expectations do we impose on ourselves? Do we spin and toil or do we lay our burdens at the Cross and rest in faith?

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” If you have felt compelled to ask, if you have felt the need to seek, if you have the urge to knock, then it is time to enter in and let the Holy Ghost take you away. You see, each of us who find ourselves within the Body of Christ posse’s God-given gifts to be used for the building up of the whole church. Your gifts are important and necessary to all your brothers and sisters of the Faith no matter how little you may feel you have to offer.

Entering into the body of Christ does not resemble worldly aspirations where you have to work your way up the ladder. God gives you the fullness of your gifts to use as the spirit calls. You may not even know what your gift is. It may be unrecognizable to you, but be encouraged what God sends out will complete its work and bear fruit. Following Jesus in faith, we can be confident that we are fulfilling our obligations to the gifts we have been entrusted with. *“For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; to another faith by the same spirit; to another gifts of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy...”* We are the very vessels of God through whom the homeless guy on the corner may begin to understand that God loves him, or the mother carrying an unwanted child may begin to seek another way or a cancer patient may begin to question end of life and knock upon the door.

What is it that we are looking for that impels us to ask? What need do we have that causes us to seek? What urgency do we feel that compels us to knock? Gifts! Our desire is for more than what this world has to offer. The gifts that God endows us with are proof that there is something greater waiting for us, our sacrifice to use those gifts prove that we have entered in and have found our resting place.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” If you have not asked Jesus into your heart do so

today; accept the gifts he has for you and find peace knowing that your eternal life has begun.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.