

First United Methodist Church of Carson City
May 9, 2021
Sixth Sunday in Easter
Mother's Day

Prelude

Judy Monson

Welcome

Jes Houk

Threshold

Jes Houk

Since the beginnings of the early Christian church, people who follow in the Way of Jesus have learned certain spiritual practices that help them listen to God more closely and to serve others in the world. We too are called to learn practices that make our faith life-giving, vibrant and bold as we try to love and serve in all we say and do.

In the past month we have learned that followers in Jesus' way:
worship as a daily routine to catch a glimpse of God at work in our lives
practice hospitality or treating others as guests in God's family rather than strangers
study God's Word more deeply to hear what God is saying to us.
And intentionally place ourselves in the flow or path of God's grace so that the Presence of God in with us constantly throughout the day, every day.

Today we will concentrate on the practice of discerning how God has wired us to serve both in the church and in the world. By taking a look at our passions, our interests, our giftedness and our natural abilities, we will be able to discover ways God has already equipped us uniquely to respond to the needs of others. Our talents are God's gifts to us, what we do with them is our gift back to God.

Opening Hymn

We Are Called

Faith We Sing 2172

Opening Prayer

Creator God,
Maker of heaven and earth,
we gather together in Your name.

We come as living sacrifices,
to offer You our worship and thanksgiving,
our praise and our prayers.

Come among us, living Lord.
Through the power of Your Holy Spirit,
transform our hearts and minds
so that we may recognize Your presence,
hear Your voice,
know Your will,
and walk in Your way.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our Lord, Amen.

Children's Time

Rev. Maggie

An Ancient Word

In Paul's letter to the Romans, chapters 12 through 15 is Paul's exhortation on holy living. Chapter 12 deals with proper conduct within church gatherings. He begins with telling the early Christians not to brag about their role in the church or to lord their positions over one another. Let's listen.

Romans 12:3-8 New Revised Standard Version

For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Witness to the Word*Living as Jesus Intended... What's Your Shape?*

Did you know that college football teams can have up to 125 players on the roster? And every single one of those players is uniquely gifted, trained within that giftedness to fill a needed role, and valuable to the team in some defined way. And that's just the players! There is also a sizable staff of coaches, trainers, nutritionists, equipment managers, and even groundskeepers. They all have a job to do. And no team wins the game unless everyone does his or her assigned task with passion and commitment.

This is also true for Team Church! From soloists to pastors – the church is most effective at sharing God's love when everyone is fulfilling their roles.

Apparently, in the early church, according to Romans 12, some participants thought they were more important than others, because of certain gifts or skills or life experience they possessed.

Others who didn't have these admired qualities seemed to feel undervalued. Maybe they became discouraged or their enthusiasm waned. Maybe they felt so undervalued they simply walked away from the church. Good thing that doesn't happen anymore!

The Apostle Paul spends an entire chapter in the church at Corinth setting the record straight. In 1 Corinthians 12, he uses a brilliant metaphor to describe the relative values of the individual parts of the body of Christ. In fact, it's so distinct and so relatable, it's where that familiar phrase "body of Christ" originates: Hear these verses,

18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. Paul knows this metaphor works because we intimately understand the interconnected miracle of our own God-created bodies. God also created the church, and Paul is making an observation about how church is supposed to happen. This is the healthy, biblical model for how the church should function.

Of course, the church is filled with human beings who have built a worldwide institution in the centuries between then and now, so the church, like all human institutions has moved away from the characteristics laid out in scripture and

towards the characteristics of the world. That's how the church ended up with a 'consumerist' mind set.

The biblical model is a collaboration of co-equal ministry partners working together in perfect harmony toward common goals. The consumerist model is a church in which much of the work of ministry is assigned to clergy and professional staff. They are hired, specially trained, and resourced for this responsibility. They do the teaching, the preaching, leading the mission efforts, providing the programming, caring for the shut-ins, visiting the sick, connecting with the community, and even organizing the hospitality.

This is not the way God designed things, according to Paul. He suggests a model where every follower is called for ministry through baptism, gifted for ministry through the Holy Spirit, and empowered for that ministry by God's grace. The ministry of every follower is essential for the work God has called the church to do.

And the role of the pastor and staff is not to do it all, but to equip the followers for the Kingdom work they are empowered to carry forward.

The problem with the consumer model for church ministry is that it limits the impact of the church to the time and energy of hired staff. The Biblical model is designed to exponentially multiply God's grace. If the good work of the Gospel is only carried out by a handful of experts, that multiplication can't happen.

For Paul, everybody has a role to play, and everyone working together continues multiplying with no limits, expanding the impact of the church to transform lives and the world. So, the question is "how do we decide what to do to support this work of exponential impact?"

There are two fairly common approaches at work in churches to answer this question. First is that we simply take people with specific job skills and put them to work doing the same thing they do for a living. For example, a teller at the bank might be encouraged to serve on the Finance Committee, or an elementary school teacher might be pressured to serve in the Children's Ministry.

This is a popular approach, and it's not a bad approach, it just doesn't take into consideration an individual's gifts and passions. Just because someone is a business manager, for example, doesn't mean they will be gifted to lead a church into God's preferred vision.

A second approach is to have people take a spiritual gifts inventory and then encourage them to engage in a ministry that utilizes those gifts. Again, this is not a

bad approach. It is just limiting. We are more than the narrow listing of spiritual gifts, as by sometimes-hard-to-connect with language like gifts of prophesy, or wisdom, or encouragement. We are a complete package that includes those God-given gifts in combination with our life experience, skill set, natural talents, interests, and training.

Take my friend Chris for example. She has a graduate degree in Creative Writing and teaches creative writing at a local college in Indiana. As a member of the Creative Worship Design Team at her church, Chris was the go-to person for writing skits and litanies and responsive readings and prayers to support worship experiences. She is really good at this. But it's not her passion. She really comes alive when she is decorating the sanctuary, the worship space, or the Communion Table.

She loves to create beautiful and rich Table settings using fabric and candle holders, and color as a way to praise God through beauty. She loves thinking up ways to baptize or serve communion, or add dance to the order of worship. She also loves to include all age groups when decorating and often does the decorating with a group as part of the Opening Prayer. This is not a resume skill.

Our passions are a great place to start when discerning how God has wired us to serve. It's pretty much a given that we don't all have the same passions. For instance,

- If you enjoy preparing meals for groups, raise your hand. But If you prefer eating meals provided by others, then keep your hand down
- If you love putting together budget spreadsheets – if that's your favorite way to spend a Saturday morning – raise your hand. If that sounds like torture to you, keep your hand down.
- If visiting people in the hospital or the nursing home makes you feel useful, productive, and happy to that you have personally connected, raise your hand. If visiting folks in an institutional setting gives you anxiety, keep your hand down.
- If repairing a leaky faucet in the church kitchen sink makes you feel happy and confident, raise your hand If repairing or plumbing seems like it could end up with the whole building flooded, keep your hand down
- This little exercise makes it pretty clear that we do not have the same passions or gifts or life experiences or talents. We each have our own unique context. And that's exactly how God intended it.
- When we understand the strengths of our unique context, and when we work within the gift set that God has provided for us, we make a far greater Kingdom impact and we experience a far greater blessing. That blessing part

is important, too, because too often churches have been complicit in badgering people into filling ministry slots for which those people have no passion and no skills, and that's what leads to disillusionment, frustration, and burnout.

- God has not called you to burnout. God has called you to “abundant life,” and the path to abundant, fulfilling life is understanding how God has uniquely wired you for ministry.

Your discipleship challenge this week is to take a next step in discerning how God has wired you for ministry. On the Questions page are some questions to seriously ponder as you think about your own giftedness. The multiplication of God's Kingdom can't reach its potential unless you are part of the equation. Let's see where your gifts and skills can best be utilized in the work of ministry.

Special Music *Shout to the Lord*

Joyful Noise Praise Band

Praises and Prayers

Jes Houk and Rev. Maggie

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Maggie

Action Steps (formerly announcements)

Jes Houk

1. We are on track to re-open two worship services on June 6th, indoors and in person. One service will be at 9 am and the other will be at 11am. The 11 am service will also be livestreamed so that if you are uncomfortable attending worship in person, you can watch on your device, just at a later hour. We still have to wear masks according to the protocols. Changes are coming at us quickly and as we know those changes, we will announce those to you on Thursdays and Sundays. This is all we know for now. Watch the news and you'll learn more as we do.

2. We are still looking for readers and ushers for both services. Please sign up on the website or call Maggie to volunteer.

3. Bingo will be held tonight at 6 pm.

Closing Song *Many Gifts, One Spirit*

UMH 114

Blessing

Rev. Maggie

Eternal God, grant us the grace to see your vision of blessings for all your children;

Give us the hope to make your vision real in your world;

Provide us with love that knows no limits, least of all the boundaries of poverty, sickness or death;

And may our lives reflect your vision in ways beyond our imagining, all in Jesus' name

Passing of the Peace

Rev. Maggie

Postlude

114 Many Gifts, One Spirit

1. God of change and glo - ry, God of time and space,
2. God of man - y col - ors, God of man - y signs,
3. Fresh-ness of the morn - ing, new-ness of each night,
when we fear the fu - ture, give to us your grace.
you have made us dif - ferent, bless-ing man - y kinds.
you are still cre - at - ing end-less love and light.
In the midst of chang-ing ways give us still the grace to praise.
As the old ways dis-ap-pear, let your love cast out our fear.
This we see, as shad-ows part, man-y gifts from one great heart.
Man - y gifts, one Spir - it, one love known in man - y ways.
In our dif-fer - ence is bless-ing, from di-ver-si - ty we praise one Giv-er,
one Lord, one Spir - it, one Word known in man - y ways,
hal-low-ing our days. For the Giv-er, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!

We Are Called

SOCIAL HOLINESS

2172



1. Come! Live in the light! _____
 2. Come! O - pen your heart! _____ Shine with the
 3. Sing! Sing a new song! _____ Show your
 Sing of that



joy and the love of the Lord! We are called _____ to be
 mer - cy to all those in fear! We are called _____ to be
 great day when all will be one! God will reign, _____ and we'll



light for the king-dom, to live in the free-dom of the
 hope for the hope-less so all ha-tred and blind-ness will
 walk with each oth-er as sis-ters and broth-ers u -



Refrain

cit-y of God! _____
 be no more! _____ We are called to act with
 nit-ed in love! _____



jus-tice, _____ we are called to love ten-der - ly, _____



— we are called to serve one an - oth-er, _____ to



walk hum-bly with God! _____

WORDS: David Haas (Mic. 6:8)
 MUSIC: David Haas

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WE ARE CALLED
 Irregular with Refrain

Questions for Reflection
Alone, with a Friend, or in a Small Group
May 16, 2021

1. Empty your pockets or purse.
 - a. How does what is in your wallet, purse, pockets illustrate your values?
2. Read Matthew 25:34-40 (The Common English Version)
 - a. What is one thought or idea from this scripture especially intrigued, provoked, disturbed, challenge, encouraged, warmed, warned, helped, or surprised you?
 - b. Notice that when the King is deciding who has done the will of God, that he describes this in terms of actions and not beliefs.
 - i. What kind of implication does that have for following in the Way of Jesus?
3. What is your understanding of the spiritual practice of generosity?
 - a. Is it an obligation to God?
 - b. Or does it flow from being blessed by God?
4. Why do you think some of us are uncomfortable with the concept of generosity and how we use our financial resources in the world?
5. How can we build more spiritual accountability for how we use our financial gifts in the world?
6. Discuss with your family how much you want to give to others beyond your family.
7. Discuss with your small group how your family came to its decision—what were the factors that contributed to this decision?
8. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, believed that we could follow all of Jesus' teachings if we remembered these three simple rules:
 - a. Do No Harm
 - b. Do all the good you can
 - c. Stay in love with God
 - i. How have you practiced living by these rules in the last week?