



Many Gifts, One Spirit

The Power of God's Love

About the Story

Today is Pentecost Sunday! We end the season of Easter with a bang! Both readings today explore the role of the Holy Spirit in the early church. What is the Spirit “up to” among the disciples and the new converts?

Pentecost is the Greek word for the Jewish holy day of Shavuot. It fell 50 days after Passover, and celebrated Moses and the Israelite people receiving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. (For more information about Shavuot, check out this week's Bible Nuts and Bolts.)

Although the Jewish people were now scattered across the Mediterranean region, many made the pilgrimage back to Jerusalem to celebrate this holy day. In addition, many Jewish people living permanently in Jerusalem had been born and raised in other countries. Thus, the disciples' ability to communicate the good news of God during the festival of Pentecost was truly miraculous!

As a Christian holiday, Pentecost celebrates when the Spirit was given to the disciples in order to teach the whole world about God's deeds of power in Jesus. A mighty wind, full of fire, descended on the disciples as they were hidden away. The Spirit overcomes seemingly impossible barriers of language and culture, just as Jesus overcame the absolutely impossible barrier of death. God will go to any length to have the good news told!

So, too, is it with Paul's list of the Spirit's gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1-13. The church in Corinth was unsure who had gifts of the Spirit and who did not, and of what value each gift was. Paul insisted that everyone who was building up the body of Christ had a gift of the Spirit. There was no competition, no better or lesser gift; all gifts come from God. All receive their gifts by the Spirit, not through their worthiness (or unworthiness!) but entirely by the love and hope of God. God values the contributions of all, no matter how different they may be.

A diversity of gifts is necessary! The Spirit manifests in different ways for the common good of all. Paul continued this idea in his metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12:14-27, when he compared the Christian church to a physical body. Just as a physical body could not be all ear, or hand, or eye, each member of the body of Christ cannot have all gifts. We need each other, and each other's individual gifts through the Spirit, to make the body of Christ together.

The Point:

Each of us is given gifts by the Holy Spirit to serve others. The gifts of the Spirit are only useful when they are employed to build up the body of Christ. In love, we serve one another, and by doing so out of love, we are made whole.

Last Week/ Next Week

Last week, Paul defended the resurrection of Jesus. He emphasized the good news that death is not the final word. The final word is our victory over death through Jesus Christ. When we understand this, we can embrace the gifts that God brings us through the Holy Spirit. This week, we see the story of Pentecost and Paul describes the gifts of the Spirit. This is the final week of the Narrative Lectionary year! Have a good summer, and we will see you again when the Narrative Lectionary begins again with Genesis in September!

Opening Prayer

God of all nations, on Pentecost nearly 2000 years ago, your Spirit breathed new life and purpose into the disciples, instilling in them the mission to spread the good news with all people. Your spirit continues to move in us today. Send us out with courage, wisdom, and hope to overcome any barriers that separate people from experiencing your love. We pray this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Into the Story

Think of a time in your life where you had to overcome a barrier that stood in your way. Or, perhaps, you helped someone else overcome a barrier. What skills or gifts were you able to use to help problem solve in that situation? What did you learn from the experience? Go around the room and share your answers.

Learning the Story

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes to bring gifts. Paul reminds the Corinthians that there are a variety of gifts, but all come from one God, one Spirit. It takes all the gifts together to be the body of Christ.

Read Acts 2:1-4 – The Gift of the Holy Spirit

- 🔍 What do you know about the festival of Pentecost?
- 🔍 Why do you think the disciples were all in one place? Who do you think was there? (See Acts 1:13-14 and 1:26 for a couple options for who was present.)
- 🔍 When can fire be destructive? When is it helpful or even crucial?
- 🔍 Do you know a language other than English? How did you learn it? Was it difficult? What is the best thing about knowing more than one language? What is difficult about knowing more than one language?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-6 – Many Gifts, One Spirit

- 🔍 Why do you think this reading was paired with the one from Acts?
- 🔍 Knowing that Paul was responding to turmoil in the Corinthian Church, does this add any insight into what some of their disagreements were? Has your church or a community you are a part of ever had similar disagreements?
- 🔍 What are some of the gifts, services, and activities that happen in your faith community? What is one of the gifts, services, or activities your church offers that has meant a lot to you?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-13 – One Body

- ❓ How many kinds of gifts does Paul list?
- ❓ How do you understand each of the kinds of gifts?
- ❓ Who was the last person baptized into your faith community (or the newest member added)? What kinds of gifts do they bring? What gifts do you hope your community shares with them?

Bible Connections

- ✚ The Spirit of God is poured out upon the prophet Micah and all of Israel (Micah 3:5-8).
- ✚ We are all part of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16).
- ✚ There is no division in Christ, for we are all united in him (Galatians 3:23-29).

Living the Story: Fellowship

Last week, you planned a celebration for today. Have fun, enjoy the food and fellowship with one another! If you would like, you can go around the room and share some of your favorite moments from Small Group this year. What new things did you learn about God, the Bible, one another, and yourself? What goals do you have to continue the journey this summer?

At Home

God, thank you for a wonderful year of learning, growing together, and studying your Word. We pray that you watch and care for us over our break, trusting that you are always with us. We place all for whom we prayed into your never-ending mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, we pray. Amen!

At Home

- ✚ Keep in touch with your group over the summer. Keep them in prayer, and check-in with one another.
- ✚ Continue to find time for devotion and prayer every day, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- ✚ Remember that wherever you go, whether you travel for vacation or stay at home, God is with you!

Bible Nuts & Bolts: What Is Shavuot?

Shavuot is a Jewish festival that commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses. It is also known as the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. Shavuot takes place seven weeks, or 50 days, after Passover. Shavuot is one of three pilgrimage festivals, the other two being Pesach (the Passover) and Sukkot (The Festival of Booths). They are called pilgrimage festivals because participants were expected to journey to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate. The first Shavuot after the death and resurrection of Jesus has special importance among Christian traditions as it was the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in Jerusalem. Christian's traditions celebrate Pentecost as the birthday of the church and a celebration of the Holy Spirit.

Daily Readings

Sunday – Read I Corinthians 12:1-13

There are many gifts and one Spirit. What gifts has God given to you? How can you use them to help those in need?

Monday – Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

There is one body of Christ, and many members. What other metaphors can you think of for the church?

Tuesday – Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

We are all part of the body of Christ. Pray for the global church, that it may continue the work of God in the world and overcome division.

Wednesday – Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul gives thanksgiving for the community of believers. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for your own community of faith!

Thursday – Read Ephesians 2:1-10

We have been saved by God's grace in Christ Jesus! How can you celebrate God's grace in your life?

Friday – Read Ephesians 2:11-22

Divisions are healed in Christ. Think of someone you are holding a grudge against. Pray for God to help you heal your division.

Saturday – Read Ephesians 6:10-17

We put on the armor of God to stand against evil. How does God equip you to do ministry in the world?