



Bible Study

January 25, 2017

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

John 10:9-16

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (NKJV) -

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

John 10:9-16 (NKJV) - The Lord said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Commentary -

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. As Christians, we must never forget that the God whom we worship is the one who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them, the great, and mighty, and awesome God who judges truly and accepts no bribe. We must never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ is returning, and soon, to judge the living and the dead, and that when He does, each of us will stand before Him, without excuse, to give an account for every word we have spoken and everything which we have done, or left undone, in this life. These truths remind us to come before the Lord with reverence, and to continue to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Nevertheless, we must also never forget, as Christians, that the character of our God has been revealed to us in the person of Jesus of Christ, and that He has chosen to reveal Himself in His vast love for us. Critics of Christianity and of the Scriptures, since the very beginning, have tried to drive a wedge between these two truths, by opposing the Old Testament to the New, God the Father to His Son, or simply arguing that there is so much contradiction that the whole is made unintelligible and should just be set aside as so much irrational religious blather.

Over and over again, the Holy Scriptures speak to us in metaphors and parables that seek to show us the unity of God's authority and His love. We see Him as a Father who both loves His children, and disciplines and corrects them. We see Him as the Good Shepherd, who loves His sheep so much He will lay down His life for them, but must also use the rod to correct and guide them. In today's Gospel reading He is the Door, who both makes a place of peace for His sheep, and protects them from harm. In today's epistle reading, we see Him as the great High Priest, who both rules over the worship of God, who leads it and structures it, but who also intercedes continually on our behalf out of His intense love and concern.

In truth, we have difficulty understanding these analogies because in our own experience, power and authority on the one hand, and love on the other, are so often poorly united. Our own human fathers and mothers, priests and teachers, bosses and supervisors had their failings, but moreso we ourselves as fathers and mothers, leaders, employers, and caretakers have failed so often to bring these two realities together. Either we err on the side that we think is love, by being permissive and indulgent and failing to utilize the authority that God has delegated to us as leaders, on the one hand, or on the other, we wield power and authority without love, as those of this world wield it, even over our own loved ones, our fellow Christians, and in our churches.

The fact, however, that we have failed, no matter how badly or how often, and that those whom we have loved, respected, and looked to for comfort and guidance have failed us, does not mean that God has failed us, nor that He cannot do what we have failed to accomplish. It is in the person of Jesus Christ that we see the Love of God on full display; His love for the universe which He has created and governs, and for the individual men, women, and children who dwell within it. Jesus Christ, God Himself, came into this world not to be served, but to serve. The One who created the galaxies of stars in the heavens washed the feet of His disciples. The One who keeps the Earth in its orbit, giving us the four seasons, allowed Himself to be beaten and mocked by men whom He had fashioned. The same one who will ultimately be judging each one of us according to our deeds is also the One who was willing to suffer and die for us so that we might not face condemnation. The truth is, as the Apostle points out in today's epistle reading, Christ did not only offer Himself for us once, but He does so continually in Heaven, remembering us before the Father and pleading the case of our forgiveness.

Most importantly, as today's reading from the Gospel According to St. John teaches us, Christ, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth have been given, is also the same One who loved us enough to give up His life for us. The one who is returning to judge us is the one who continually intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary. This means that the pasture in which we find ourselves, this whole world which now belongs to Christ, is now a protected and safe place for us. No matter what harm those of this world may try to do to us, no matter how badly we may fail, nothing can separate us from the Love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, while we fear the Lord, giving to Him all of our worship and adoration and holding Him in awe and reverence, we are not afraid of Him, because we know His incredible Love for us that surpasses all understanding. Further, because of His love for us, we have nothing else to fear in this life from any who might want to come and harm us, or who might want to condemn or convict us. This world is His, and He has given it to us, His sheep, for our pasture, to be a place of peace and safety for us, living under His authority and care.

Further, let us all seek, in so far as we receive authority delegated from Christ Himself, in our families, in our offices and workplaces, in our schools, among our friends and loved ones, and most

especially in the church, to exercise that authority following His own example. Let us always wield authority and power with love, kindness, and gentleness, looking toward the well-being and salvation of those we oversee. Let us most of all seek to be the servant of everyone, so that by serving one another we may truly serve the Lord, and so that our love for one another may be complete.

Questions to Ponder -

- 1) Christ tells us in our Gospel reading for the day that He is the door through which we can find salvation. He then describes salvation as we, being sheep, being able to come in and our and find pasture. Salvation is here described as peace, safety, and security in Christ. Does your life show this peace and security in Christ as shepherd to care for you? Or are you constantly afraid or worried about many things? Are you still trying to do things on your own and go your own way, or have you found the peace and joy that come from being one of Christ's sheep, and following Him?
- 2) In today's epistle reading, St. Paul speaks to us concerning the variety of gifts given to those of us in the Church by the Holy Spirit. In addition to giving back monetarily from the blessings which God has given to you, do you also give of your talents and abilities? Do you seek ways that you can contribute to the life of the Church, and to the progress of Christ's Kingdom in the world through the abilities which God has given to you? Do you give freely of your time and abilities to others, or do you use them only to enrich or enjoy yourself?
- 3) Also in today's Gospel, Christ compares two different types of leaders. One type, whom Christ exemplifies in His own leadership, being willing to lay down His life for those whom He leads. The other type is a hireling, someone who is there doing the job for the money and rewards involved. When the chips are down and threats come and the community is in danger, Christ is willing to sacrifice Himself if necessary for the sake of the flock, while those just in it for the money and reward flee at the first sign of trouble. How do you approach being a leader in your community, both in and outside the church, in your family and career? Are you in it for the recognition and reward, or the power, or are you a servant to everyone whom it has been given to you to lead? Do you actively seek ways that you can serve, regardless of reward or lack thereof? Or do you enjoy having others serve you and do what you want?

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