

NORTH MAIN SERMON JANUARY 19, 2025 - HUMAN RELATIONS SUNDAY

Concerning Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12: 1-11 -- Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b] ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

John 2:1-11

Jesus Changes Water Into Wine

2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”

⁴ “Woman,^[a] why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”

⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.^[b]

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”

They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Unlocking our Spiritual Gifts.

Human Relations Day is a special Sunday across our denomination, focused on fostering better relationships and supporting community and youth outreach. On the Sunday before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. The Sundays after Epiphany are good days to celebrate the ways God is revealed to us either through speaking to us, calling to us or giving us signs. We see the phrase “This is what the LORD says” over 350 times in the books of prophecy. They were not out there giving the people their own ideas. They were speaking God’s words. Prophets reminded the people that they were in a Covenant with God and that they should be at peace with each other. We would like to think that we can recognize God’s messenger by the content of the message, but that’s rarely so. All too often we judge things through our own desires or fears. Hindsight is always better than foresight.

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” Jesus asks his very first disciples, “What are you looking for?” When they give an awkward answer, he invites them to “Come and see...Share in the adventure that is before you. God calls his people to be more than servants—He calls us to be a light to the nations. So, as chosen people we have been called, we are confronted with the enormous burden that comes with the call: to be a light to the nations, so that God’s salvation may reach to the end of the earth. Even to the

people of Israel, who thought that they only were the chosen nation, God makes it clear that salvation is not something to be hoarded selfishly but is given only that it may be shared with everyone.

Paul is more aware than anyone else of the glory and responsibility of being called by God. At the beginning of his first letter to the Corinthians he is convinced beyond any doubt that he is called to be an apostle—to bring the good news of God— to the gentiles. He offers them his loving greetings because he knows that despite all their faults they are sanctified and joined with others as they call on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us to examine our spiritual gifts. We are all called to be different and to each of us different gifts are given. Jesus was given all gifts. Maybe in the beginning he did not know what gifts he had. The Wedding at Cana is a biblical story from the Gospel of John that describes the first miracle performed by Jesus. The story takes place at a wedding in Cana, Galilee, where Jesus, his mother Mary, and his disciples were invited. The story of the Wedding at Cana is only found in the Gospel of John..

The Jews attached great importance to the high moments of life. Thus a wedding was not just a brief ceremony, but an experience shared by the entire community. The typical wedding feast could last up to seven days. That sounds strange to our modern way of thinking, but this offered a bright interlude in an otherwise dreary existence. The ceremony would begin on Tuesday at midnight. After the wedding the father of the bride would take his daughter to every house so that everyone might congratulate her. It was a community experience. Weddings were a time of joy. At the wedding, which Jesus attended in Cana of Galilee, there was great joy but a problem developed. There was a shortage of wine. Not only was that a social embarrassment, it was also a symbol. For a wedding to run out of wine was an omen that there was little chance of this particular marriage reaching its full potential, maybe joy was not meant for this couple.

So Mary approaches Jesus and asks him to do something. His response? "Why do you involve me woman?" Sounds harsh, so unlike him, and it has long puzzled biblical scholars.... So Jesus turns water into wine, and, there you go, no more wine shortage. What we see is that Jesus clearly has power from heaven to do this mighty miracle. No one else

could do this. This story is found in some of the details that John provides in his telling of it. The water that Jesus turns into wine-where does it come from? John tells us: “Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim.” Now John didn’t have to tell us that much detail. He could have just said, “Now there were some large water jars there, and Jesus turned the water in them into wine.” But we’re told more than that. There were six of these large stone water jars, each of them holding twenty or thirty gallons. And Jesus has the servants fill each one of them to the brim. This emphasizes how abundant is the gift Jesus is going to give. That’s how Jesus does things. Always more than we can expect or imagine. He is rich in his grace toward us. Full to the brim. Always more than we can measure.

He himself goes to the people, making himself available to all, instead of favoring the rich, he favors the poor. Instead of practicing violence against the enemies of the people, he urges forgiveness and the strange instruction to turn the other cheek. This new kingdom sounds dangerous: it threatens the established order; it makes waves where calm is needed; It shines the light of God like a lighthouse beacon. It is different .. it is new...It’s a big change... but This is the meaning of being called: we are changed, we are different, we are new... and afterwards we cannot, we must not, keep the knowledge to ourselves. We must share it with others for the salvation of the world. Those who are called are eager to share its joys with others. On this Human Relations Day we are called to examine our spiritual gifts. We sometimes think whatever we do is not that great. We don’t have lots of money to give or able do great things. But we can do something. No matter how large or small. I could tell you many gifts that members of our church have. Making a meal, knitting a prayer shawl, sending a card, making a phone call, praying for someone.. there are many.. I invite you to come to the Administrative Board meeting today and share in some of the things are church is doing.