

### ***Alternative Meditation on I Corinthians 12: 1-11***

No doubt you have heard this passage many times before -- so many, that it might be difficult to hear anything new, but let's try. It is important to note that Paul wrote these words to a very young church, a community of believers who had banded together.

*The Corinth church was a vibrant community where members received varieties of gifts from the Spirit. At the same time, the church did not have a consensus on, or a clear understanding about, spiritual gifts. Many of them were in rivalry with other members. Some claimed they were better than others because of their spiritual gifts. The problem is they did not ask what they could do for the common good or what the Spirit wanted them to do. (Yung Suk Kim, Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11, workingpeacher.org)*

In these words, Paul reminded the early church that everyone was gifted, everyone had something to offer to God, the community and the world. He also reminded them that all gifts are valued and are to be used for the common good. This was a new message for that community. While it is not a new message for us, it is not one our culture encourages or cultivates.

Gifts and talents or abilities we develop are not the same thing. Being a star athlete or super smart is different than a gift of the Spirit. People think I Corinthians chapter 12 lists the gifts of the Spirit. It does list nine: *wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of Spirits, speaking in tongues, interpreting of different tongues*. Romans 12: 7-8 reveals others: *servicing, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy*. There are also the gifts of *hospitality, administration and helping*. My point is that gifts from God come in many forms.

I mention this because I want to invite you to think about your gift or gifts, how God has gifted you to work for the common good, and how you can help bring about God's kingdom. Most of us are uncomfortable with such thought and talk. Maybe this is out of modesty, maybe out of insecurity. Maybe it is because you were raised to not be the center of attention. It could be any of these. It could also be fear; it takes courage to express our gifts.

What I am going to do is stop for 5 minutes. For the next 3 minutes, I am going to ask you to think about what your gifts are. If you are not sure, you can ask someone else. I know, I know. I hate it when people ask me to do this, but in the spirit of *Disturb Us Lord*, I want you to write down your gifts on the card I'm distributing. Then I want you to come up with one way you will use your gift to enrich the world. Write that down. At the appropriate time I will invite you to offer up your card as an offering to God.

In closing, I offer you these words from Marianne Williamson...

*Our worst fear is not that we are inadequate,  
our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?'  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God; your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There is nothing enlightening about shrinking  
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We were born to make manifest the glory of God within us.  
It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine  
we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.*

*As we are liberated from our own fear  
our presence automatically liberates others.*

This is the message of today's scripture. Hear it, believe it, and most of all, live it. Amen.