

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 480, 224, 435, 427

THE INTROIT

(Ps:55:1,16-19,22)

P: As for me, I will call upon God; and He shall hear my voice;

C: He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me.

P: God shall hear and afflict them, even He that abideth of old;

C: Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.

P: Give ear to my prayer, O God;

C: and hide not Thyself from my supplication.

The COLLECT

O God, who declarest Thine almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 7:1-7

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all *ye of* Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are* these.

For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; *If* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.17:2,8;88:1)

P: Keep me, O Lord, as the apple of the eye:

C: hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.

P: Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence:

C: let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: O Lord God of my salvation:

C: I have cried day and night before Thee. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:
C: **that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!**

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 19:41-48

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

1: About now the spiritual, brethren, not wish I you-all to be agnostic.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 — “About Now the Spiritual, Brethren”

INTRODUCTION

I. ABOUT NOW THE SPIRITUAL, BRETHREN

II. CARRIED AWAY TO THESE DUMB IDOLS

III. IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD

CONCLUSION

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1 Corinthians 12:1-11 — “About Now the Spiritual, Brethren”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Epistle reading for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity is 1 Corinthians 12:1-11:

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Today's Epistle reading is in connection with the Gospel reading from Luke 19, where the Lord Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. Jerusalem means *flowing peace* or *teaching of peace*. Yet this is not what the Lord Jesus saw as He overlooked the city. The temple was not filled with the Spirit who teaches peace, but with a spirit of selling of things by which people would try to procure peace for themselves. So Jesus entered the temple and cast out them that sold therein and them that bought. Both the sellers of peace and the buyers of peace, both the propagators of church programs and the people who accepted the church programs, Jesus cast out of the temple. Then He began to teach daily in the temple, not allowing those whom He cast out to conduct their churchly programs.

In today's Epistle reading we hear St. Paul addressing the same issues in the church in Corinth. The apostle is confronting those who would sell and buy peace, condemning their practices by which they seek to create and promote peace in the congregation, condemning their attempts to procure peace for themselves by their own means, and directing them to the peace of God that comes only by the working of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace.

I. ABOUT NOW THE SPIRITUAL, BRETHREN

Our text begins with these words from the apostle: **“About now the spiritual, brethren, not wish I you-all to be agnostic.”** The common translation of this verse adds the word gifts, but St. Paul makes no mention of gifts in this verse. His mention of the diversities of gifts does not come until verse four, and then it is as an illustration rather than as the main point. No, this first verse is reflecting back to what is written in chapters two and three.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Corinthians 2:12-3:3)

Now, reflecting upon what he says earlier, he now says, **“About now the spiritual, brethren, not wish I you-all to be agnostic.”** Agnostic or not knowing is what St. Paul does not desire for the congregation in Corinth. These people have become puffed up in their own thinking, imagining themselves to be full of the knowledge of the Lord when in reality they are making of themselves a bunch of know nothings or agnostics. They have presumed to know the real meaning of the love of God so that they walk around saying, **“Oh, it’s not my place to judge about that. After all, I can’t judge another person’s heart.”** Then these same people go ahead and judge others by not looking to the one thing necessary, the preaching of Christ, the pure Gospel. Rather, they direct their hearts to being spiritual. They direct their hearts to matters of what they eat and drink and to their involvement in evangelism programs and stewardship programs and food pantry service and participation in the LWML or some other mission support activities and to witnessing and to speaking in tongues and to singing in the choir and to serving as a church officer and a wide diversity of things “spiritual.”

To these things St. Paul says: **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.”** (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

These people become so obsessed with being spiritual that they forget the very thing that makes them spiritual. They focus so much upon being loving Christians that they forget the very thing by which they are made to be Christians. They focus so much on being Biblical, that they forget the one whom the Bible declares. They focus so much on following Jesus that they forget the definition that Jesus teaches of being His followers.

Jesus came into the temple and cast out those who were turning the house of God into a marketplace of ideas and activities. He cast out those who sold people on the idea of making

sacrifices as a means of grace. Those who offered impressive prayers He called hypocrites. Those who brought their money and tithes He cast out of the temple. Then He began to teach of the one sacrifice by which all sins would be redeemed, the sacrifice to which all other sacrifices were meant to direct our hearts. God came to the world as a man to accomplish the impossible. He came so that God would die in the place of the world. God Himself would offer Himself as the sacrifice that no one else could bring.

II. CARRIED AWAY TO THESE DUMB IDOLS

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Oh how we all get carried away! Yes, we all do!

St. Paul writes, **“Ye know that ye were Gentiles.”** Were they all Gentiles? In Acts 18 does not Luke record that Crispus, the synagogue ruler and his entire household became believers? Yet the apostle declares that they all knew themselves to have been Gentiles, carried away to those dumb idols. Yes, the Jews in the synagogues throughout the world were for the most part like St. Paul had been, misled in their doctrine and life. They had been taught to listen to dumb idols just like the Gentiles had been. In their false understanding of what Moses and the prophets taught they were really no different from the Gentiles.

St. Paul writes: **“You-all know that ethnics you-all were, toward the idols, the voiceless, just as you-all were led, being carried away.”**

Ethnics, that is Jews and Greeks and Whatever, you-all know that you-all were. Regardless of the faith group that you-all had been led to embrace as your heritage, regardless of the ethnic groupings to which you were born and raised, toward the idols, the voiceless, you-all were led, being carried away.

Idols take many forms. After all, idols are constructed and raised up by human hands after whatever image the idol makers imagine for themselves. Idols do not exist by themselves. Idols are made. They can be made of wood or stone or precious metals and precious stones. They can be made of ideologies. They can be made of attempts to build up self-esteem. They can be made of family lineage and genealogy. Idols can be made of desires for self-reliance. Idols can be made of spirituality and worship and prayers. Idols can be made of anything that we choose for ourselves in which we imagine that we can find comfort and hope and good thoughts concerning ourselves.

But these idols are *aphona*, that is, without voice. Idols only say what their worshipers think and say. *Eidola*, or idols, literally means images or likenesses. This is why St. Paul says in Romans 1 that people imagining themselves to be wise “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Yes, people imagine themselves to be wise, and so we create images for ourselves. Men seek to make images of themselves through their jobs and through their fatherhood and through being manly and strong. Women seek to make images of themselves through dieting and exercise and through makeup and hairstyles and jewelry and through motherhood and jobs. Christians seek to make images of themselves through counting themselves as loving and tolerant and generous and faithful.

In all these things they convince themselves that they are making a better life for themselves and a better image for themselves. In worship they focus upon their prayers and their offerings and their reading of the Bible. In their lives they focus upon being witnesses for the Lord. In all things they judge others who judge doctrine and practice, saying to themselves that no one can judge another person's heart, which really means that they don't want to mess up the image that they have created for themselves of a tolerant person who accepts everybody regardless of what that person, thinks, says, or does.

And so we are worshipers of ethnicity, holding to our own heritage, separating toward our own idols that say what we tell them to say, holding to our self-made images of what it means to be holy and loving and godly people. Thus we are carried away with our idols, farther and farther from the image of God, which is Christ. We speak of Christ but in our hearts we worship our own images, images that we cover with various sayings and with prayers and with good deeds, commanding our idols to repeat after us that we are becoming more and more Christlike in our thoughts, words and deeds.

III. IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Therefore the apostle turns us around in our thinking to hear something very different from what we tell ourselves. He says:

“Wherefore I make known to you-all that no one in Spirit of God saying says, “Anathema Jesus” and no one is able to say “Lord Jesus” except in Spirit Holy.”

Anathema is equal to a curse. However, it comes from that which is to be set aside to be sacrificed unto God and not used in one's life. St. Paul gives a direct contrast to saying “Anathema Jesus” with saying “Lord Jesus.” He says that no one in Spirit of God speaking says, “Set Jesus aside as a sacrifice” and no one is able to say, “Jesus has barged into my heart as the Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

Notice that St. Paul does not say *by* but rather says *in* spirit. For the Holy Spirit can work so that according to or by the Holy Spirit's power a person says what is true or does what is good. The Holy Spirit worked in Caiaphas the high priest, of whom John records that he spoke not of his own accord but according to the prophecy given to him as the high priest that Jesus should die for the nation and for all the nations. Jesus also says in Matthew 7: **“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”**

So there is a difference between speaking by the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Spirit. It is possible even to prophesy and cast out demons in Jesus name and still not be in communion with God in Christ. It is possible to be motivated by the Holy Spirit and not be in the Spirit of God.

So what is the difference? How many ways do we see in our own lives that we offer Jesus as a sacrifice rather than living in the faith by which He rules our hearts as Lord? How many ways do we make idols of our worship and praise and prayers, idols that say and do what we determine, sometimes even speaking the facts of the Gospel, but then making these dependent upon our own efforts and actions and motives?

Notice that St. Paul is not speaking to those who are outside the congregation but to those who count themselves as members of the congregation. He is warning those who are confessing members of the congregation in Corinth that some of them are not really in God's Holy Communion at all, but are actually saying, "**Anathema Jesus!**" rather than "**Lord Jesus!**"

Oh yes, they were all singing praise to Jesus! They were all crying out "**Lord! Lord!**" in connection with the name of Jesus. But they were divided and those who truly are living in the communion that the Holy Spirit creates and preserves, those who are truly in the Spirit Holy, do not continue in disunity.

Yet today, congregations and entire church bodies do exactly as the Corinthian congregation and imagine that these warnings do not apply to them. They divide themselves from one another regarding what they believe, but by minimizing their confession to what they call the "basic doctrines of Christianity" they create an image of unity that is nothing but smoke. Yet they continue in this smokey church, minimizing their conflicts by having multiple worship services, thereby creating the image of unity which is really complete disunity. More and more they begin to focus on their tithes and their support of mission work and their exuberance in worship and praise, making images of a holy communion for themselves, but not truly being in the Spirit of God, for the Spirit of God is the Spirit of true unity in Christ.

But we can always twist this so as to make new images for ourselves, images that tell us that we are really OK after all. So we promote spiritual inventories, either in the congregation or individually. We look to things that we either like to do or that we do well and we label these as gifts of the Spirit. Well, this does sound true, for after all, all good gifts come from above, don't they? And so we each begin to separate to our own little committees and programs: some excelling in wisdom and various kinds of advice, some excelling in knowledge for running the congregation and balancing the budget and planning for future growth, some excel in expressions and acts of faith that serve as examples and encouragements to others, some excel in providing comfort and healing for emotional distress and aiding the physical ailments of our bodies, and on and on the list goes. Every person takes an ability and makes an image for himself of what good things are done.

Yet in all these things we forget that the only reason for such gifts to be given and utilized in the Church is for the building up of the Church in the unity of the doctrine by which we are made one in Christ. In all of these things we say "Anathema Jesus," imagining that the suffering and death of Jesus are the starting point from which we must progress. But the Spirit of God teaches that the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is not just the starting point, or even the most important part of the life of the Church, but that there is nothing else in which the Church exists and lives. The preaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments through which the Gospel is applied to us bodily, are the life of the communion of the saints.

CONCLUSION

How strange and sad it is that we continually forget the power of the Gospel. Like the Corinthians, we tend to forget that the grace of Jesus is sufficient for us. According to our own reason and strength we always get carried away with our idols. According to our own reason and strength we reduce the Gospel to a few basic points and imagine that the rest can be set aside without losing the knowledge that enables us truly to say, "**Lord Jesus!**" The Holy Spirit must break us and bring us to our knees before we turn away from our idols and trust in Jesus and His merits alone. The Holy Spirit must crush the idols that we create for ourselves so that all that is

left for us to see is the mercy of God in Christ, lifted up before all the world as the one who was made to be Anathema in our place. But that sacrifice has already been offered, once and for all. Jesus has already taken the sin of the world and has fulfilled all righteousness for us. Now, we gather in His name, congregating to hear the sweet and life giving words of the pure Gospel, coming continually to the washing of our souls in connection with Baptism, and rising up with the good conscience that the Holy Spirit gives us so that we feast upon the body of unity and blood of forgiveness and salvation. This is the life of the Church. This is what the Holy Spirit works so that Jesus truly does live in us as Lord over all. This is how He sets us free to live by grace through faith. When this is what is worked in us, we have no need to create images for ourselves, for the Holy Spirit restores us to the very image of God, in Christ Jesus, the Lord. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.