

COMMON CONTAINERS OF GOD'S SPIRIT 1 COR 12:1-11
SECOND SUN AFTER EPIPHANY/ LIFE SUN. JAN 17, 2016

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Scripture readings today are about what makes things valuable.

Once shoe called Nike Air Jordan, considered very valuable,
not because of expensive materials or manufacturing
but because they were kind of shoe used by
great basketball player Michael Jordan.

The shoes didn't guarantee any abilities to wearers
but were associated with who had used them.

I remember those shoes because of the water jars in Gospel.

If they had brand name back then, they may have become
very expensive jars because of what they were used for,
who used them and what they were filled with.

They may been just common stone jars
but they were able to contain something special.

What if those jars had not been there?

Of course God made sure they were,
but without them would have been no miracle.

Today smart phones aren't miraculous but pretty amazing.

New one valued at \$600 - \$700. Less than 1/2 for used.

What gives it that value is not just cost of making it
but what it can be used for, connect to and contain.

A used one may actually be more valuable to you
if it is yours. because of how it has been used
and intangible things it contains.

What I am leading to is value of human life.
which is devalued today by not just by terrorists
and despotic military leaders
but by those who consider themselves well meaning
especially at the vulnerable beginning and end of life
because of what it can't do at the time,
but which has great value because of who uses it: God,
and how he uses it to miraculously contain His Spirit.

ALL NEED TO HAVE LIFE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT
ALL ARE MADE VALUABLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS
ALL BELONG TO THE LORD WHO GIVES EVERYTHING

ALL NEED TO HAVE LIFE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "I do not want you to be uninformed."

That is a polite way of saying, "Don't be dumb"
like you used to be when you believed in dumb idols.
O.T. prophets pointed out that idols were dumb
in sense that they couldn't speak, or see or hear either.
And they said those who worshiped them ended up
just like them. They didn't know anything either.

Paul suggests there are many ways to be led astray
to one of the many different false gods.

but there is only one way to be led to one true God
The God who speaks - speaks truth by Holy Spirit
which is the only way we are made able to speak
truth about true God, that Jesus is Lord.

His point is no one with faith in Jesus is lacking Holy Spirit.
Faith in Jesus is essential for eternal life connected with God,
which is what we are made for.

This is big reason why it is so important to protect & preserve
lives of infants from time God first gives life in conception.
not just because of value of their physical life
and what they could grow up to do
but because they are designed to contain spiritual life.

No matter what their physical life is like,
eternal spiritual life is always miraculous and wonderful
but they are robbed of this spiritual life if not allowed
to be born and then born again by water and Spirit
in Holy Baptism,
which would be like someone smashing those water jars
in Cana just because they were empty
and so robbing everyone of Jesus' miracle.

Paul in text focuses on what we all have in common.

One thing we all have in common is that we are all
conceived and born sinful, needing to be saved,
and the one way for this to happen is by the work
of the Holy Spirit through the word and sacraments.

But then the Holy Spirit goes on to do more.

ALL ARE MADE VALUABLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS

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Before, Paul said, people were same in being idolaters
although different in which form of idolatry.

Now believers are the same in being gifted by the Spirit,
although having different gifts.

Some are given special spiritual wisdom and knowledge,
which not just same as natural human understanding.

Paul says those without such special knowledge
are not less Christian and children of God
because they can still have gift of faith
which is knowing God as our loving Father.

There is nothing greater than that.

Which is also true of those who may not have
normal abilities for human knowledge.

Some have special spiritual abilities to help others,
also purpose of normal human abilities God gives.

Is it what we do that make us more special to God?

Are those without certain abilities less valuable?

There are also those who lack common natural abilities
but who still have ability to touch people's lives
if just by their vulnerability, and make a difference
in ways that no one else can.

Some have special spiritual abilities to communicate.

But those without such abilities are not less spiritual.

Some people also have more natural speaking ability
but that does not make those unable to speak well
less human.

Instead, God is giving us a message through them
that we need to pay attention to.

One message is that having a particular spiritual gift or not
is not what makes you more or less of a Christian
and having more or less natural abilities
does not make you more or less of a person.

Another point Paul makes is that God gives gifts as he chooses
and he knows what he is doing.

ALL BELONG TO THE LORD WHO GIVES EVERYTHING

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there
are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of
activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Valuing and respecting all human life can be complicated
and involve some difficult questions.

For example, new difficult questions are raised by
surrogate childbirth, such as who's baby it is.

But just suppose, in desperation to have a child,
you harvested eggs, which is expensive and painful,
and paid the huge price of someone carrying them,
but when the time came for delivery, you were told,
the pregnancy was too uncomfortable so I ended it.

What would you think?

The question of ending human life, either before birth
or at the other end of life by suicide,
is never an easy question, even for unbelievers,
even though it is a question being raised more often,
because of pain and suffering people deal with,
sometimes physical suffering sometimes emotional,
but always temporary, which means it must be weighed
against reality of eternal suffering, separation from God.

So now imagine yourself in God's place.

The great suffering of Jesus' death on the cross
has already paid the immense price of eternal life
for every person God gives the spark of life.
If we decide to end a life God has already bought & paid for
we are taking that life not just from that person,
but from God, which causes him immense pain
because of the value of that life to him.
If we think a particular life is not worth the difficulty
and suffering that continuing it will mean,
God says, it is worth the suffering to me.

I have been willing to suffer everything for that life.
Worth comes partly from what someone is willing to pay.
The worth of every person's life comes from
God's giving his own son to buy us back
so that we all belong to him, the one Lord of all,
the one God who gives and empowers everything,
God who has a plan to live within every person he creates
and use them for a special purpose
O.T. reading says Jerusalem's glory will shine,
not because of what wonderful things its people do,
because they don't.
but because of what God does for them as their redeemer.
In Gospel reading, Jesus does something glorious
with something as mundane & coarse as water in stone jars.
Every human life has value because God does something
even more wonderful when he transforms us
by filling us with his Holy Spirit.
He has an important purpose and use for every life
from the moment he gives it to the moment he takes it.

ALL NEED TO HAVE LIFE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Everyone conceived also needs the spiritual life
which is comes only by the Holy Spirit's work
through the word & sacraments.

ALL ARE MADE VALUABLE IN DIFFERENT WAYS

but lacking particular gifts or abilities
does not make us any less valuable to God.

ALL BELONG TO THE LORD WHO GIVES EVERYTHING

Every life is valuable to God who has bought and paid for it
by the suffering of Jesus in our place
because of his purposes for us here & now and forever.