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1 Corinthians 12:4-13

How Do We Love Ourselves?

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1 Corinthians 12:4-13 Common English Bible

There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord;  and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.  A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good.  A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit, performance of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues to another, and the interpretation of the tongues to another.  All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person. Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many.  We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink.

Today is Pentecost, a day when we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit coming like a powerful wind, descending on the disciples like tongues of fire. Today is the day that the Christian Church was born in wind and fire to guide us down the journey of this life so that we may lift up the downcast, heal the broken, reconcile what is lost and bring peace where there is chaos. The Holy Spirit is alive in the world in and through us, the disciples of Jesus.

For the last few weeks we have been trying to answer the question, how do we love ourselves? To love ourselves we have to embrace and believe in our hearts that God loves us. Loving ourselves begins with loving ourselves as God loves us because God loves us so much. Daily we have to remember that God loves us. Last weekend we were on the all-church mission trip and after we worked, we went to play in Canyon Lake. The lake water was cold! I was hesitant to keep walking in the lake because it was so cold but my husband Lee said to me as he splashed me a little, “Remember your baptism!” Every morning when I take a shower and the water falls on my face, I breathe in and breathe out and give God thanks that I am a beloved child of God.

The next step to loving ourselves is accepting forgiveness. As the great hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” reminds us, “Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.” I am broken and I need God’s mercy, grace and love to make me whole. I have to remind myself that God has forgiven me and I have to accept God’s forgiveness, again and again. God forgives us when we do something wrong and we have to let the guilt go so we can be free to share God’s love with others. God’s mercy helps us to extend forgiveness, grace and mercy to others. We have to let go of the things in our past or in our present that we can’t let go of and receive God’s forgiveness.

Today on the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, we celebrate the power within us that reminds us that we are a new creation in Christ. And for some folks the idea of the Holy Spirit within each one us is a bit terrifying. It may make some want to run away because they are afraid of being changed or different. The Holy Spirit has given us all different gifts but some of us squander those gifts or hide them. We say not today or no Lord, not me or how can one person make a difference? Sometimes we struggle with loving ourselves because we wish that we had the gifts that someone else has. The Apostle Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians help us remember that there is no shame in our weakness. Whenever we feel weak, it is then that God is strong. Our strengths are our weaknesses.

I remember growing up I wished that my parents weren’t divorced. I wished that I didn’t have stepparents and even ex-stepparents. My ex-stepsister is my friend on Facebook, I have decided that I don’t like calling her my ex-stepsister so I need a new word for the step siblings that I used to have. When I served as a youth minister I remember talking with one of my youth who was very upset about their parents getting divorced. They didn’t think that it would ever get better. They didn’t think that there would be an end to the fighting and the going between houses and the feeling like you had to pick sides between your parents. I was able to share with him about this thing that I thought was a weakness in my life. I could tell him that it did get better when your parents divorced. I remember telling him that my parents had each now been married three times and his eyes got really big, and I said that it gets better. I could talk from real experience. What I saw as my weakness was a strength.

In 2 Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul relates words that he heard God saying to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul was encouraged to share about what he saw as the weaknesses in his life because it would allow people to see the power of Christ that was with him. Paul says that there is no shame in our weakness. Paul says when I am weak, then I am strong. It is like the world is upside down. Our weaknesses are our strengths and our strengths are our weaknesses.

It is interesting though because with the gift of the Holy Spirit life didn’t get easier for the disciples. They still had challenges and hardships. The Holy Spirit doesn’t make life easy. Life is still life. The Holy Spirit equips the disciples to persevere through the challenges.[[1]](#footnote-2) In John’s Gospel the disciples are hiding in the upper room in fear that the people who crucified Jesus would come after them. Jesus comes and breathes the Holy Spirit upon them and doesn’t show them a secret tunnel to hide in. Jesus sends them out into that dangerous world. “As the Father sent me, so I now send you” (John 20:21).[[2]](#footnote-3) The Holy Spirit gives them the courage they will need to go into the world.

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the Holy Spirit is given to enable individual believers to look beyond their individual needs, hopes, or fears and equip them with distinct gifts, all in order to work together for the common good.[[3]](#footnote-4) The Holy Spirit doesn’t rescue us from the world, but encourages us and stays with us to meet the needs of the world with courage.[[4]](#footnote-5) The Holy Spirit is always with us, strengthening us and helping us. I think that we wish that the Holy Spirit could whisk us away from all of our pain or show us a secret tunnel to hide in, but that isn’t how it works. The Holy Spirit doesn’t take our challenges away from us, but is with us during our challenges.[[5]](#footnote-6)

God comes alongside each of us in the presence of the Holy Spirit in order to strengthen us and equip us to endure during challenges and difficult times in our lives. God works through us as we share our story and care for those around us as God cares for us. The Holy Spirit is encouraging us to share God’s love in word and deed so that others may know that they are not alone. The Holy Spirit isn’t given to us so that we won’t suffer any more difficulties or any more hardships, the Holy Spirit comes to be with us and for us and to use all that we have and all that we are for the sake of those around us.[[6]](#footnote-7)

I see the Holy Spirit working in the single mom who cares for her children with patience and love. I see the Holy Spirit working in Tracy Wallace walking alongside new friends in South Dallas as they find hope together. I see the Holy Spirit working in the youth who reaches out for help when they feel the shadow of depression coming. I see the Holy Spirit working in this place of Greenland Hills as we love ourselves by being in community with one another. We are never alone, since we are surrounded and lifted up by our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Spirit is like breath urging us to stay alert and pay attention. The Holy Spirit is a seal, an emblem, bearing our family crest as Christians giving us the promise of belonging.[[7]](#footnote-8) There are so many gifts that we have to give and receive, so many miracles that are happening all around us. We only need to stay alert and pay attention so we can let the Holy Spirit surprise us.[[8]](#footnote-9) Today on this day of Pentecost, may we break open the doors of our resistance. May we love ourselves by claiming the gifts that God has given us to make a difference in this world. May we love ourselves by sharing our stories with each other. May the fire of God’s Holy Spirit light a fire within each of us and give us courage and faith to claim God’s call for our lives. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. http://www.davidlose.net/2017/05/pentecost-a-with-not-from/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://www.davidlose.net/2017/05/pentecost-a-with-not-from/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. http://www.davidlose.net/2017/05/pentecost-a-with-not-from/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. http://www.davidlose.net/2017/05/pentecost-a-with-not-from/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. http://www.davidlose.net/2017/05/pentecost-a-with-not-from/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. http://www.davidlose.net/2017/05/pentecost-a-with-not-from/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/spirit-pentecost-searching-for-sunday [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/spirit-pentecost-searching-for-sunday [↑](#footnote-ref-9)