



Sermon, Sunday January 26, 2025 "Eagerly Desire the Greater Gifts"

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 ¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work powerful deeds? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Introduction: Corinthian Church

Today is the third Sunday after the Epiphany. Today’s text is 1 Corinthians. Corinth, which was a major transportation hub at the time, was a prosperous city in Greece. According to Acts 18, Paul came to Corinth via Athens during the latter half of his second missionary journey. Paul preached the gospel of Jesus to Jews and Greeks in Corinth. The Jews were strongly opposed to the gospel preached by Paul, but the Corinthians were relatively friendly. Fortunately, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and several Corinthians accepted the gospel preached by Paul. This was the beginning of the Corinthian church.

Three or four years later, Paul heard news in Ephesus about the Corinthian church. There were two main types of news he heard about the Corinthian church. First, it is related to the immorality of the Corinthian church (promiscuous sexual ethics, trials between believers, marriage, issues of free people and slaves, and food placed in front of idols). Second, there is a division within the Corinthian church. Paul thought seriously about the division in the Corinthian church.

The division in the Corinthian church occurred not only among church leaders but also in church positions and volunteer activities. To solve this problem, Paul visited the Corinthian church in person and wrote several letters.



Body: The Holy Spirit, the source of charisma!

Paul thought that to solve the problem of division in the Corinthian church, it was necessary to realize what the essence of the church was, that is, what the spiritual relationship of the believers that made up the church was. So, in verse 12 of today's text, Paul says, **"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ."** This verse means that Christ is the spiritual head of the church, and all members of the church are members of Christ.

We must learn from Paul's teaching that the church is His body with Christ as its spiritual head, what the essence of the church is, and what the spiritual relationships of the believers who make up the church are.

The words that appear most frequently in today's text, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, are **'gift of grace'** and **'Holy Spirit.'** **'Gift of grace'** means charisma.

Charisma in the Bible means **'gift.'** In 1 Corinthians, the specific details of the gifts are mentioned repeatedly. 1 Corinthians 12:8-9 says, **'To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.'** According to verse 28 of today's text, this gift includes apostles, prophets, and teachers. What this means is that all the workings and services performed in the church are charismatic. What this means is that all the workings and services performed in the church are charismatic. We generally use the word **'charisma'** to refer to a person with some supernatural power, but if we look at the Greek concept in the Bible, **'charisma'** means very ordinary work and service within the church given by the Holy Spirit.

According to Paul, the source of all charisma is the Holy Spirit. So, the statement that charisma is given by the Holy Spirit appears repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

Paul says that the ability to heal illnesses is charisma given by the Holy Spirit, and that preaching the Word within the church is also charisma given by the Holy Spirit. Although Paul does not mention it in today's text, the activities of the church choir are also a gift given by the Holy Spirit, called charisma. Furthermore, the act of cleaning for the church community is also a charisma given by the Holy Spirit.

I mentioned the Holy Spirit in last week's message and said that the Holy Spirit exists but is not something we can possess. I also said that we can know and experience the Holy Spirit as much as we know and experience God the Father and Jesus the Son.

However, it is not easy to answer with confidence whether we have received the Holy Spirit or not. Nevertheless, I hope you will not think too hard about whether you have received the Holy Spirit. If you are in a church community and have participated in its activities in any way, you are a person who has received charisma (gifts).

In today's text, Paul uses the human body as an analogy to explain the principle of charisma. As I have repeatedly said before, the source of all charisma is the Holy Spirit. This means that all gifts are qualitatively the same. If the gifts come from one Holy Spirit, then naturally all gifts are essentially the same. However, saying that the gifts are essentially the same does not mean that the actions of the gifts themselves are the same. Paul explains this in detail in verses 15 and below of today's text. According to Paul, the roles of the eyes and ears are different. Additionally, the roles of the stomach and the hands are different. In other words, the role of the pastor and the role of the choir within the church are different. However, even though all these roles have different functions, they are essentially the same and come from the Holy Spirit.

However, even if I claim that all charisma within a church community is the same, some may think otherwise. If someone can think that he or she is participating in the charisma of the Holy Spirit while cleaning restrooms at church, then that person possesses the spirituality of charisma that the Bible speaks of.

If we are people who clearly recognize that our abilities and gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit, we will not be concerned about the high or low of our role in the church. Of course, it is not easy to achieve this



spirituality of charisma in our realistic daily lives. Since each of us is very weak in this regard, the spirituality of charisma should not be left to individuals alone but should be steadily developed by the entire church community together.

No matter what the church community does, it must move toward saving the community, not exalting individuals. Because the church community is the spiritual body of Christ.

Conclusion: Organic Relationship Community in the Holy Spirit

So, how can the church community move around the Holy Spirit, the spirit of life, rather than people? First, specific issues must be decided through deep reflection according to the circumstances of each church. However, if we follow Paul's teachings today, we must consider the **“weak parts”** more important (verse 22) and the **“the inferior member”** more precious (verse 24).

This spiritual principle of charisma must be expanded not only to the church but to the world. So, shouldn't we live in a world where poor countries are recognized as more precious? Shouldn't Christians aim for this kind of world?

However, these things are not possible just because someone forces you to do them. Only when we deeply understand and trust that all creation has an organic relationship in the Holy Spirit, the source of charisma, can that possibility be opened little by little. I hope that our church community can fulfill this role well. **Amen!**

