

“Equally Empowered to Love”

Acts 2:1-4 & 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

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Growing up on a dairy farm I learned it takes a variety of gifted workers serving together to produce wholesome milk. I was born in March. By May my parents mounted a car seat in the tractor cab. They hung a swing in the milking parlor. When I was six, I got my first chore feeding calves for a penny a calf earning about a dollar a week. At age eight, I started driving tractor. I watched every task and eventually did every task. One of my favorites was to help the service contractors repair and install equipment. One contractor always had special tasks for me to complete. Ten years later I asked his daughter on a date several times, but she always said no. Finally her mom encouraged her to say yes, just once, because I was such a nice boy from a nice family. Now I am married to her.

After college, I farmed with my dad. Although both of us could do any task on the farm, it was clear that each of us had gifts and preferences for certain tasks. Work was more efficient and enjoyable when we each worked in our gifted area. Dad enjoyed milking cows, knew every cow by name, their health, and genetics. With my economics degree, I knew the statistics on every cow. How much it cost, per stall, for their food and overhead. I knew exactly how much money they were generating over costs; or in some cases, how much we were subsidizing them. This made for great debate every quarter when we sat down to determine which cows to sell. I had the numbers and was motivated by money. Dad knew each cow's circumstances, whether or not they would become profitable in the future.

If you wanted something fixed fast, with bale string, in an emergency you wanted my Dad. If you wanted it ripped apart, rebuilt, often over-built, to last for a long time you wanted me.

My giftedness was in managing the crops. I enjoy numbers and spread sheets. The more variables, the longer and complex the equation, the more fun. I carefully calculated how much we could harvest in a day based on labor, equipment, weather, and average breakdowns; then sequenced the planting of specific seed varieties, so we could harvest our crops at the peak nutritional value. I knew how much it costs us per day in lost nutrition value for every day past peak, so I could decide whether to hire more labor, replace a piece of equipment, or rent extra equipment.

After farming with my Dad for a year, my parents took a month vacation during summer alfalfa harvest. My Dad bought his first farm when he was 18. In 44 years my Dad took one vacation, of one week, when I was confirmed. Cows need to be milked twice a day, always at the same time 4:30 am and 4:30 pm. On our farm it took 7 hours to milk the 116 cows. Later I learned that this one month vacation was my Mom's idea to see how I could handle all the aspects of the farm. I was frustrated by all the time it took to milk the cows which meant I was unable to get the alfalfa harvested at its peak. Cows are so temperamental. You need to speak

loud to one, sing to another, and coax others. Each cow had its favorite way to be handled. They totally messed up my efficiency. I wanted to treat them all the same. I wanted to get out of the milking parlor and get to the crops. At the end of just one week, I began to hate the cows. Clearly working with cows was not my gift. Since my Dad was retiring, my lack of herdsmanship gifts is why I decided to leave the Dairy farm and work as a Dairy Nutrition Consultant.

Great teams, companies, bands, clubs, families, and churches all are aware of each person's gifts. They have each person serve where they are gifted. They value each person and their unique gifts. They work together utilizing each person's gifts to thrive.

The Apostle Paul wrote. **1 Corinthians 12:3b-13** **"No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 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, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 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. 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.**

There are a variety of gifts, services, and activities; but, it is the same Holy Spirit who bestows and activates all the gifts for the common good not for competitive use. The gifts are many and God perceives exactly what is needed to serve the entire community. Every individual is granted specific gifts, but no one has all the gifts. Nor should anyone ever boast that any gift is superior to another—all are bestowed by God and are not achievements of individual effort. The church needs every gift, just as the physical body requires all of its parts. And just as our physical body has many parts, so the Body of Christ is composed of many uniquely gifted members.

Meister Eckhart insists "love can only be where there is equality." Each of us is a beloved child of God. Each of our gifts is equally valued by God. We should never elevate any person above another or ever look down upon any person. Our purpose is to love creativity, beauty, and harmony between all people and all of creation. True love can only be where there is equality.

Scripture proclaims. **Acts 2:1-4** **"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."**

Each of us is sort of like a windmill. We have the potential to produce abundant energy, light, and love. A windmill only works when it is facing the wind, receiving the energy of the wind. We are empowered when we face God, receiving the Holy Spirit.

Imagine the Holy Spirit is a battery. Each of us is a different device in need of a power source. You can take a battery and use it in a clock to tell time, in a flashlight to see, in a radio to be entertained. Each device has a unique purpose; however, all are powered by the same battery.

Without the Holy Spirit the church is dead, lifeless, motionless, helpless, a heap of dry bones in a valley. With the Holy Spirit, the sacred breath of God, the church rattles together becomes enlivened, lives. We are empowered by God to transform the cosmos with love. We are empowered to carry on the ministry of Jesus. We are empowered to be God's loving presence to one another and all people.

The Apostle Paul wrote. **"No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.** Every belief in God; every act of love; every sensation of joy; every question regarding our purpose; every moment of peace; every gift of grace; every creative act are all empowered by the Holy Spirit. Each of us is here today by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives each person a unique gift for the common good. You may have the gift to milk cows, to manage crops, to fix things, to clean, to sing, to make art, to speak, to teach, to cook, to nurture, to care, to pray, to write, to work with numbers, to encourage, to smile. Each of us is empowered with unique gifts. All of us are empowered to love.

The empowered eye enables us to see God. The empowered ear enables us to hear God. The empowered tongue enables us to tell of God's love. The empowered heart enables us to love. The empowered mind enables us to know God. Each of us perceives God in a unique way, through a different piece of the puzzle through a different facet. Together we get a fuller experience of God. It takes all of the puzzle pieces fit together to complete the puzzle revealing the image. It takes all the facets to reveal the splendor of a precious gemstone.

The more diversity the more of God we experience. The more uniformity the less of God we experience. Our diverse beliefs about God should be celebrated. We should learn from different denominations, different religions, and different people. Every person is given a gift. Every gift is equal. Where there is equality there is love. Where there is diversity there is a more robust view of God.

One sign of a church empowered by the Holy Spirit is variety. You can see that this church is empowered by the Holy Spirit for each person is serving in a unique way. Each person has a different view of what we should be doing and how it should be done. We support a variety of missions. We do a variety of mission work. We share a wide range of God sightings. Some of us share our image of God. Some of us share the mystery of God. Some of us share how we think about God. Some of us share how we feel about God. Some of us excel in sharing peace, others grace, joy, hope, compassion. Some of us see and share God's word to us through scripture, others through nature, city, people, simplicity, and technology. You can see that we are a church empowered by the Holy Spirit for we worship in a variety of styles. We have two different, distinct worship spaces, with a variety of music some of which takes us out of our comfort zone,

out of our preferred style; yet, it is all Holy Spirit empowered. If you open yourself you will catch a new glimpse of God.

Perhaps this is what scripture means by different tongues. The tongues are people expressing their experience of God through different languages, different gifts, different ways of worship, and different ways of believing, different ways of serving. Can you think of a time when someone said just the right words, or did just the right thing, or just was present with you then you were comforted, transformed, empowered, that is the Holy Spirit weaving us together, molding us more like Christ.

We all are empowered with love to bring together in harmony all of our unique sounds producing a song. We are empowered with love to fit each of us a unique puzzle piece into the perfect spot reveal the complete picture. We are empowered with love to weave each thread of our differences into a magnificent tapestry. Amen