

**“You Are Not Lacking in Any Spiritual Gifts”**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After the Ehipany**  
**January 20, 2008**

Texts: Psalm 40:1-12 / Isaiah 49:1-7 / 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 / John 1:29-42

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9**

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

**2** To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

**3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

St. Paul’s words to the Church at Corinth are just as much for us today. Do you believe that? Do you **really** believe that? Well, it is true.

First, St. Paul says that he is “called” to be an apostle. All of us, each one here is called, by God Himself, to some particular ministry at St. John’s...Each and every one of us. We do not choose this calling, otherwise it wouldn’t be a CALLING. No, we are called by God and gifted to it by God. So, if you are not involved in some ministry right now, then you have not accepted God’s calling on your life. What is God calling you to be involved in? What is your spiritual gift? If you are not already, are you now prepared to use God’s gift for the Body of Christ?

Also, we must remember since all of these gifts are God’s gifts, there is no gift that is greater than another...they are all God’s gifts. There are no menial gifts in God’s Kingdom...all have great worth. Recall that it is to Peter that Christ says, “On this rock I will build my Church.” Yet, someone had to bring Peter to Christ, his brother Andrew. Was Andrew’s gift of evangelism any less than that of Peter? Of course not.

Second, it says that Paul is particularly called to be an apostle (one sent) “of Jesus Christ” in other words for the whole church. Apostles are not called to one particular church but to many churches. That is why bishops are often referred to as our modern-day successors to the apostles, because they are for the whole church. In a like manner, priests are not members of particular churches, but considered to be charged to all churches. That is why in the ordination service (BCP p. 526) the people present the candidate before the bishop with these words, “...we present [Greg Snyder...or Joe Gibbes] to be ordained a priest in Christ’s holy catholic (which means universal) Church.” Our ordination to the priesthood is for the whole Church.

Thirdly, our callings are for the Church of God. The church is God’s Church, not our church. And God’s Church, wherever it is found is a complete Church. Paul does not say that the Church in Corinth is PART of God’s Church, but that it IS the Church of God. “The church as whole is present, in microcosm” (Prior, 1985; p. 22) in each and every Church! Isn’t that amazing!

Fourthly, our various callings as members of St. John’s Parish, members of the Body of Christ at St. John’s, are not only to particular ministries, but also to a sanctified life. We are, all of us, not just the clergy, not just the Senior and Junior Wardens, not just the Vestry, called to be saints. We are called to represent Christ in such a powerful and selfless way that we are His image to the world. Leviticus 19:2 has God saying to His people, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” We are called to be a holy people so that we can reflect the holiness of God. We are called to be set apart for Christ...set apart to act differently than the world...set apart to show the world what the Kingdom of God is like here at St. John’s...called to self-sacrifice, to give up our rights, our wants, our desires, for the Body of Christ here at St. John’s and for those who do not yet know the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Now, I am NOT talking about some elaborate self-help scheme. We are not to sacrifice so that we may become better persons. We are to sacrifice TO God, FOR the Body of Christ at St. John’s. We are called into holiness as individuals, but more

importantly, as a community. Our sanctification is found only in community with other saints.

Fifthly, in a much more personal way, as St. Paul thanks God for this congregation in Corinth, I also thank God for you, the saints of St. John's.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Now, St. John's is not a perfect Church, but it is a Church that seeks faithfully to follow God's Word and to be a beacon of light to the Sea Islands. So, what makes this even more striking is the kind of Church that Paul was saying this about. This Church in Corinth was probably the most unruly of all the churches he wrote to. Corinth was like the Las Vegas of the Roman Empire... "What happens there stays there." Only some of what had been happening there had leaked out to St. Paul, and thus the letter. One scholar has said of the Church at Corinth, "There was a distinct lack of humility and of consideration of others...they were keen on the more dramatic gifts of the Spirit and were short on love rooted in the truth" (Prior, 1985; p. 19). So, by most standards, Corinth was not an exemplary Christian Church. Still, even about this Church, St. Paul could say, "You are not lacking in any spiritual gift." Wow! And this is a promise to all churches. This is a promise to the good people of St. John's. "You are not lacking in any spiritual gift."

Now, lest we despair that there is so much to do...so many poor in need of help...so many desperate in our own congregation for financial and spiritual guidance...so many lost souls living here on John's Island that need the saving power of Jesus Christ...St. Paul says, "You are not lacking in any spiritual gift." What solace there is in that! Do you hear that? Let that sink in. "You are not lacking in any spiritual gift." We have every spiritual gift that we need right now, right here. Every church is gifted with what it needs at any given time in its history. Alleluia! But, that is also one of the great joys of adding new people to our numbers. Because for each new person who comes, they are bringing gifts that will be needed by The Church of

God here at St. John's. So, we need not despair over all that we are NOT doing, but instead use the gifts we have for doing what we need to do RIGHT NOW.

But, remember, these are spiritual gifts. These are 'free' gifts from God. They are not our gifts, but His gifts given to us, without merit. He knows what gifts are needed at this congregation, so He gives the gifts, as they are needed. If there seems to be a gift that is lacking at St. John's, then the time is not right for its use. Or, possibly, someone has not yet heeded the call on their life, the calling from God to a particular ministry. Either way, God's timing is impeccable.

And finally, St. Paul says, "God is faithful." Alleluia! Because of our humanity, our sinfulness, we are not always faithful to our calling, to being the follower of Christ that He would want us to be, and because of our propensity to sin, but the Good News is that God is always faithful.

Saints of St. John's,

**4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*