

Seeing Ourselves

How do you see yourself? In many ways, most of us have a common suspicion that we are not all that gifted, that we have so much less to give than most other people do.

This is the first in a bi-weekly series, intended to encourage you to consider that ordinary folks like you and like me are indeed wonderfully gifted – that we possess gifts out of the ordinary, extraordinary, in fact.

NOW, just so that there is not underlying, hidden agenda on my part, let me share the deep, fairly simple conviction from which I am coming in this series. It is this. I am persuaded that every person has a gift/gifts - and that, in God's mysterious design, each and every gift is equally and absolutely essential. Further, each unique gift is to be spent. We are blessed so that we will be a blessing – given gifts so that we will give. Our “giftedness” is to be invested - in and for this world, in and for those with whom we share our years, in and for generations yet unborn. If any one of us withholds the gifts with which God has us, some part of God's work will not and cannot be done. In fact, the Kingdom, for which we pray, cannot come, unless and until we share who we are - for God's purposes.

In Paul's second letter to the fledging Christians in Corinth [see 2 Corinthians 8:7-15], some key words and phrases hold amazingly blunt imperatives. Do you remember your grammar lessons? An imperative is not a suggestion. It's a directive. Paul reminds those new Christians of the generous act of Jesus Christ, who was "rich but for our sakes became poor." Then, Paul says quite directly, "do something" and more than that, he says, "desire to do something." Finally, he goes on: "If the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has -- not according to what one does not have."

That's good, isn't it? Most of us, when we were young and perhaps even more recently, have spent time and energy comparing ourselves to others. Too often, we have decided that we are “less”. We can always find someone who is infinitely more talented in the sports arena, and in academic circles and in the popularity contests, and singing, and at being faithful/pious ... there's always somebody who's better at it, a lot more gifted in every way.

And yet, I wonder, does God really care how we "stack up" against somebody else? Does God really care or did He make you and me to be individual and unique and special in our own right? And if the latter, maybe it's time for us to realize that God is calling each of us to be precisely who we are and to give everything we are to the world He loves, for the sake of all His created.

That brings me to the idea that perhaps your gift is energy or eagerness. One of the gifts of the Spirit is energy. If your gift is energy, and you're not sharing it, the world is a vastly poorer place than what it could be.

I believe that if we offer who we are and all that we have been entrusted with, God will do as powerful and extraordinary things through us in the world as He did through Jesus. Someone once said, "to be a lukewarm Christian is to yawn in the Presence of God!" And Paul says, "Don't just do something; desire to do something." [2 Corinthians 8:10]

