

The Day of Pentecost, Epistle, Year A

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

The Day of Pentecost

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

3Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10to 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. 11All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

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. 13For 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.

DIAGNOSIS: We Fatally Trust a Standard of Judgment

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): We Must Use a Standard of Judgment

When we see something that is not the same as what we have, we evaluate it, comparing it to what we have. We evaluate its newness, its efficiency, its price, its visual appeal, and its cost. When somebody does the same thing we do, we watch and compare it to what we do, noting how they are the same and how they are not the same. We have to compare and contrast. We are compelled to do so. We cannot just look at something and withhold judgment. We judge it according to some standard. That standard could be that it fits our way of doing things, or that we resonate with that belief, or own that product. The standard could be better performance, or that the object looks newer and shinier. The standard could be that it improves your health, or it tastes better. But there must be a standard.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): We Trust in Our Judgment

With the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Christians were given something different. Not only were they given the Spirit, the Spirit gave Christians different gifts—utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, and gifts of healing. So the Christians compared the gifts, and by some common standard, or each Christian by their individual standards, ranked in importance the different gifts. Of course, this ranking rankled some Christians who did not like their gift being labeled as second-best. They depended on importance to measure the quality of their life and themselves.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): God's Judgment Is Final

When people depend upon something other than Jesus for their goodness and the goodness of their life, they no longer fear, love, and trust God more than anything else. They are not depending on God for their goodness. So, as a result, whatever they depend on (that is not Jesus) is what they depend on to pacify God's judgment and the finality of death. But how

dependable are those other things?

PROGNOSIS: Jesus' Fatality Gives Us New Life

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus' Mercy Is Now Final

Jesus takes on God's judgment and death on a cross, that "strange and awesome strife," and he finishes death, witnessed by many who saw him alive! This Jesus is ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. And Jesus' judgment is different than ours, for his standard is to give goodness, to declare people right and good to God. He does not use efficiency or looks or importance or wealth or race or any standard but his own, the standard of giving his goodness to all people as a gift. That is his promise.

Step 5. Advanced Prognosis (External Solution): Trust in Jesus Is Given to Us

To give people trust in Jesus' promise to make them good and right to God, he and his Father sent the Holy Spirit, pouring the Spirit out on people as could be seen by tongues of fire on their heads. The Holy Spirit worked, created trust in the people's hearts by using the promise of Jesus. People now depended on Jesus for their goodness and the goodness of their lives. The Holy Spirit also gave those people who trusted Jesus gifts to equip them so they could tell the promise of Jesus to others—gift to utter knowledge and wisdom, the gift of faith—and gifts to help take care of the health of those initial trusters of Jesus—gifts of healing and miracles.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): We Get to Give Jesus

Of course, the people with those gifts are inclined to compare and say which gifts are more important—again switching their faith from Jesus to importance and judgment. But Paul reminds

the Corinthians (and us) that it is the Holy Spirit that enable people to say, "Jesus is Lord." Honor and glory and respect and blessing and faith are given to Jesus, not to the different gifts themselves. If all importance is given to Jesus, then all the different gifts cannot be given different ranks of importance. There is no importance left to give. Instead, all gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be used to give Jesus to others. So if one person uses the utterance of wisdom to give Jesus to someone, and another uses the gift of healing to give Jesus to someone, they both have given Jesus to others. Both have used their gift to give Jesus to others—which is for the common good (v. 7). The common good—the giving of Jesus—is the new standard. This standard trusts in Jesus and gives honor to Jesus. That is the new way of living and the new way of looking at things.