

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As a child I used to visit my grandparents on their farm on a regular basis. Frequently in the summers, I would spend weeks at a time with my grandparents and help with some of the chores. One of these chores that I remember well was bailing hay. My grandfather would take all of his grandchildren to help with the task. We had a system to make the chore happen more efficiently. The adults would pick up the hay bail after it was thrown back on the wagon from the bailer. From that point the older grandchildren would carry the bail to the back of the wagon where the younger ones were waiting to stack it. The process continued and once the wagon was full, we took it back to the barn where the same sort of process began all over again until the wagon was unloaded and the hay was neatly stacked inside the barn.

For this process to work so well, everyone involved had a certain job to do. We each did it and realized that everyone involved in the process was essential for getting the job done.

Today's epistle lesson reminds us that we are all essential. Paul wrote to the Corinthian community concerning spiritual gifts. He wanted this fractured community to realize that they all were important. Some in the Corinthian community wanted to claim that their gifts were more superior to others. Paul reminded them that this was not the case. Each gift is a gift from God. There are many gifts, but one Spirit, one Lord, and one God.

God gives each of us different gifts. If we all had the same gifts, the world would be a boring place. We would all do the same thing. God made each of us unique. Some are teachers. Some

are stay at home parents. Some are administrative assistants. Some are artists. Some are firefighters. Some are mathematicians. Some are good with children and youth. Some are great with the elderly. Whatever we do, God has given us the gifts. We all are essential to the church, to God. We all have different gifts that enable us to do God's work in the world.

We all are essential. We are all part of God's puzzle. Without our piece in that puzzle the body of Christ is broken. As we do ministry our gifts are needed. Each one of us possesses something unique. Sometimes we need to ask ourselves, what are my gifts? What am I good at? Those gifts are precious. There are times when we surprise ourselves and others with the gifts that we have. Sometimes others don't know the gifts that we have because we don't share them.

Sometimes our human nature takes over and we, like the Corinthians see our gift superior to or more important than someone else's gift or talent. We slip into thinking that the only way of doing things is my way because I'm the only one who can do it right or I'm the only one capable of doing it. It'll be easier if I just do everything myself. I don't need help from anyone.

While we many think that our gift is more superior we tend to forget that there are others around us with gifts to help us. We become a lonely puzzle piece without the support of other pieces. We are weak. We need the gifts of others to complete our task, to do ministry together. In November the council put a puzzle together and put pieces on magnets for each of us to remind us that we are all essential.

We are essential. Without you we are not whole. Just like a puzzle we are incomplete. Just like a puzzle, there are holes in us; we might fall apart. We are essential to our life together as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are essential to our stewardship and ministry. We are essential to worship with our families on Sundays. We are essential in our Sunday school class. We bring our gifts to bear in our special ways through ministry. We are essential in our faithful stewardship and ministry because we are the models for our children, for our future. All of us together are what make us whole.

We are all essential. The Spirit gives each of us different gifts and abilities. There aren't any gifts that are better than others. We each have a special calling from God in our lives. Our careers, our families, our responsibilities are all unique because we are all different, and yet one in God.

We are all essential to each other. For the world to keep on going, for ministry to occur we all have different gifts to support each other. We are all essential to God and to the church's ministry by the different gifts we possess.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.