

January 20, 2019

**Text: [1 Corinthians 12:1-11](#)****Title: “Has Jesus Become the Lord in Your Life?”**

There was a very nice lady who strongly believed in prayer. One night in a fit of loneliness she knelt at her bedside and prayed hard. “Dear Lord, I’m not asking anything for myself, but would You please send my mother a fine, handsome son-in-law?” What a faith she had! Faith is one of the gifts we receive from God, isn’t it?

In the early church there were many supernatural gifts, in fulfillment of the prophecy. I am sure you remember one particular prophecy in the Old Testament. It says, “And it will come about after this, that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” It is from Joel (2:28). But that is not all. Jesus also said, “These signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mark 16:17-18).

Now we have in today’s text an enumeration of some of these gifts: a word of wisdom, a message of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, a discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. The apostle Paul says. “Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.” In other words, he speaks here alone of “the spiritually endowed,” of religious, pious people. Perhaps we cannot imagine ourselves at present belonging to any such classification, and so we think that this passage hardly applies to us.

But please notice what a remarkable thing Paul says in verse 2: “You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to idols that could not speak.” That means, says Paul, you had religious experiences even when you were heathen. At that time you were carried away, just as you are now. And you, as if driven by supernatural forces, were drawn away to the gods. To be sure, it was not God, nor was it the Holy Spirit. That is why it makes little difference whether we are religiously inclined or not.

Of course, the Corinthians did not see it that way as we can do now. They imagined that only those things that were unique and had no natural explanation were really given by the Spirit. They thought that one who just prayed the Lord’s prayer showed little of the Holy Spirit - because anybody could do that!

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To pray without premeditation before a crowd would show more of the Holy Spirit. If one could pray in polished language and use special words, it would imply more of the Holy Spirit. And if one began to speak in thoroughly unusual and unintelligible words because the Spirit had taken hold of him, then this would be regarded as the highest expression of the Holy Spirit. But Paul was telling them: guys, you have been able to experience all of that as heathen also.

Then, what is the Holy Spirit in the thought of Paul? Paul is very clear and this is what he says in verse 3: “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord!’ except by the Holy Spirit.” Of course, anybody can say the three words without the Holy Spirit. But that is not what Paul had in mind. Whoever can say “Jesus is Lord” sincerely, in other words, whoever can say it not only with his mouth but with his total life, that person lives in the Holy Spirit. Friend, please know the Holy Spirit is at work at every point where Jesus becomes Lord over me. That can take place as a miracle. It has brought answers to prayer in my life, which I knew only as an overpowering miracle I could not explain. That is a part of the matter, as Jesus wills to become Lord over me.

However, my friend, when Jesus wills to become our Lord, He can come quietly and naturally. Things may simply go awry. Weeks, months, even years pass. You remember the life situations Joseph experienced. How about Job, Jeremiah, or Jonah? It is no different even with Jesus’ disciples. They had more hard times than anybody else. Years seem passed without outcome. Nothing miraculous happens. We battle with ourselves, sometimes succeeding, sometimes losing.

But that's not all, because Jesus never let us go. “Do good to those who hate you,” He says. “You cannot serve God and mammon,” He says. “Do not be anxious about tomorrow. Consider the lilies of the field,” He says. One of these sayings, which perhaps we could not even repeat correctly, will not let us leave alone. Jesus becomes Lord over us. The Holy Spirit lives in us simply, not displaying exceptional piety, but very practically and very concretely.

On the other hand, things may go quite well with us. We may have a streak of unusually good luck. We find the place in our vocation that brings us real fulfillment. We meet someone we will marry. After a long time of waiting, a child is given to us. God must be in what happens to us and go with us into our new calling, into our marriage, into our life with this child. What could we say but “Jesus, be my Lord”! Jesus! Emmanuel! Friends, His very name suggests what is incomprehensible about Him: In Him God has actually entered into all earthly, human, practical problems.

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That is why Paul says this in verse 7: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” Otherwise, one would be no Christian at all; one would not belong to the church. Therefore, the Holy Spirit does not exist just for particularly pious specialists. The Holy Spirit is at work wherever Jesus is allowed to become Lord over a human life, and it makes no difference whether that happens as a miracle or not.

“Therefore,” says Paul in verse 3, “I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed!’” Once again, Paul does not mean that we merely say those three words. He has in mind those who push Jesus aside with their total existence, those who to a certain extent curse Him in that they do not let Him lead them. This is how it can happen. We simply go on as usual. We will not have Him to have His way in what is perverse and evil in us. Moreover, we will not have Him connected with what is fine and good in our lives. Interestingly, we can do that even in a religious matter. For instance, the speakers in tongues, in the city of Corinth, took themselves with their overpowering religious inspiration so seriously that they no longer had consideration for the community. They spoke and spoke, and threw the worship service into confusion. And plain, ordinary people no longer understood anything at all.

But friend, do you think speaking in tongues is the only problem we can think of in the church? There are many other problems just similar to that, but sometimes we do not even have any idea about that. As a matter of fact, you and I can even speak piously or live piously in such a way that we confuse people with the best intentions. When that is true, we do not help them at all. We only make life and their way to God more difficult for them.

But Paul says that where Jesus becomes Lord, things are done for the good of the community. This is his point. The Holy Spirit never closes our hearts. He tears them open continually for the sake of others, for the sake of the community. When the Holy Spirit is at work, we never remain solitary person, considering only ourselves and our own religious and personal fulfillment of any importance. We no longer act according to our own interest and our own desire for power if we are willing to follow the direction given by the Holy Spirit. We become mindful of others and exist for them. When Jesus becomes Lord over a human heart, others are always close at hand and find open doors. How many times have we really seriously thought of the catch phrases, “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors?” Have we truly and sincerely opened our hearts, minds, and doors to the people around us?

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The possessors of spiritual gifts, so Paul is telling us, are those who allow Jesus to become the Lord so that He may check and kill what is perverse and evil in us and give depth to our happiness and our good works. When that happens, friends, the Holy Spirit is at work.

But whenever we become irresponsible and just want to wander off again, whenever we just refuse to give up what we must give up, whenever we selfishly and deliberately avoid people whom God sends our way – then we choke out the Holy Spirit and squander the life we could spend in the service of God.

Friend, we can easily see why the Corinthians misunderstood what Paul wanted to say to them. For if Jesus wills to become the Lord over us, then He must indeed become stronger than our hearts, stronger than our wishes, stronger than our cares and intentions. Our life is really good and fruitful only when it belongs to a Master and only when Jesus is stronger than we are.

One theologian once said that the first conversion is a conversion away from the world, from our own thoughts and preoccupations. He went on, however, to say that we need the second conversion, a conversion back to the world. In that experience we learn in all our desires, in all that is laid upon us, in all that we want to do, to allow Him – Jesus – quietly and simply to become the Lord.

Why do we keep the Lord's Supper every month? Because it reminds us that Jesus wills to come to us in that utterly simple event. He offers us a little piece of bread and a drink of grape juice and tells us by it, "I would like to give you what you need to live, what truly nourishes you. I would like to become the Lord in your life, that there may be a genuine Pentecost. Receive Me then."

My friend, the question laid before us is: Has Jesus become the Lord in your life?

*Dear God, please help us to let Jesus become our Lord in our daily lives. Let Him become stronger than our hearts, stronger than our wishes, and stronger than our struggles. Let our life be controlled by His Spirit. In Christ, our Lord's name we pray. Amen.*