

Lenten Devotional February 22, 2018

Scripture

1 Corinthians 2:14-3:15

^{2:14}Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. ¹⁶"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. ^{3:1}And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? ⁴For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human? ⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. ¹⁴If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

Devotional

The Rev. Mark Whitsel '04, Pastor, Pleasant Hills Community Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. / Doctor of Ministry Christian Spirituality Focus

Why is it so important that Paul explains the importance of unity within the Church? Is he really concerned to press upon these early Christian believers, who are like children, the importance of getting along? While getting along seems rather trivial in the sweeping narrative of Christ's Kingdom-ushering death and resurrection, such a lesson appears to be foundational for how the Church understands itself—both as individuals and as a whole. Here Paul reminds the church (and her leaders!) that our work—our efforts—are, in the final analysis, not ours at all. They are part of a broader work that God is doing within His people. To recognize this truth is to give oneself over to a more unified vision of the Church. Clearly the church in Corinth was struggling with this very issue.

Throughout the years, I've witnessed how easily the Church at any level can fall into such behavior or thinking. We pick our people, set up shop, and build our silos. We've all seen it happen. Especially those in leadership should remember that we are not immune to this tendency. Consider the temptation for Paul and Apollos to feed into the cult of personality developing before them. How easily one could succumb to such allure! But Paul reminds us that "we are God's servants, working together," building on the one "foundation," who is Christ. For a leader, keeping a clear light of sight on this truth is always to the benefit of the people of God!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, today we thank You for Your call into the Church through the death of Jesus Christ. As we go about the hard work of leadership, guide us in paths of clarity, unity, and humility. May we model and mirror the gospel faithfully. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.