

# Epiphany 2C

1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

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There is an old Polish saying, “In an avalanche, no snowflake feels responsibility.” Similar to it is the more popular old Polish saying, “Not my circus, not my monkeys.” In other words, whatever disaster is befalling us, whatever problem is occurring, it isn’t our personal responsibility, nor are we responsible for helping to fix the problem or to stop it from occurring in the first place.

They both say a lot about our culture today. We live in a world where individuals often fail to hold themselves accountable for their choices and decisions that affect the community that surrounds them. Sometimes, it is just a failure to see their individual impact. They get so wrapped in their excitement or so lost in their sadness that they just to forget to look. Many times it is a deliberate refusal to see the world around them. These individuals have put on blinders, like blinders on a horse that prevent them from becoming distracted or panicked by the world around them. Other times, they just have trouble believing in themselves and the power they have to impact the world.

Paul had a lot to say to the church in Corinth about an individual’s role in a community. Today, and next week, we will hear him tell both them and us about spiritual gifts. He lists several spiritual gifts such as speaking wisdom and knowledge, faith, discernment, ability to heal or teach, but the lists that he provides are by no means exhaustive. The bottom line is that God has provided us with gifts to help one another, so that we can build the kingdom of God. Paul calls them gifts for the common good.

Think of spiritual gifts like tools in a toolbox. In a toolbox, we find several tools- screwdrivers, hammers, measuring tapes, pencils, levels, and such, as well as nails, screws, glue, hangers and clasps. Each serves a different purpose, but they are all essential in their own way to build and create a finished product. The Church is God’s toolbox. It is filled with a variety of people who each have their own unique talents and skills and way of being. Each and every one of us is essential in building the Kingdom of God by serving His people using the gifts we have received.

Everyone likes to receive gifts; however, we don’t always like the gift we get. Think about this past Christmas, any Christmas actually or any time you have received gifts. I’ll wager that just about everyone has received a gift that made them whoop and holler with excitement, a gift that became part of your daily life for as long as it lasted, a gift that you received with joy and anticipation of using. I will also wager that just about everyone has received a gift that required a forced smile, received a blank stare before it was tossed it over your shoulder in your eagerness to look for something better, or was quietly hidden away never to be seen again. And I imagine many of us have received a gift that left us scratching our head and wondering just what it was and how to use it.

Spiritual gifts aren’t much different. Some gifts we like, some we toss away in hopes of getting something better, some we ignore, and some we fail to understand. The problem often becomes that we get stuck on the word “gift” in Paul’s letter and fail to notice or acknowledge that he also

mentions “services” and “activities” are used for the common good of the community as well. If we stop thinking about what we have received and instead focus on using whatever skills and abilities we possess to serve God’s children, then we have taken a step towards building the Kingdom of God. If we stop comparing ourselves to others and instead focus on believing that we are good enough just as we are, then we have taken a step towards becoming an active participant in the building of God’s Kingdom. Each and every one of us is essential in the building of a community where we all flourish.

The choices we make, the things we do or don’t do, the words we say or don’t say, have an impact on the world and the ability of all God’s children to share in God’s abundance so that there is enough for all. All too often, however, we look at a problem or an issue and say, “What concern is that to me?” It can be at home, or where you work, or in the city, state, nation, or world. We take one look, say, “Not my circus, not my monkeys,” and turn and walk away.

If we had to do a modern version of the miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana, I can totally hear Jesus saying in response to his mother’s unspoken request to do something, “Woman, not my circus, not my monkeys.” I suspect Mary just gave him “the look”, which had Jesus getting up off his bottom to do the only recorded miracle that was strictly just for the joy of those who surrounded him. Jesus had several options of how to respond to His mother’s unspoken request, only one of which involved Him performing a miracle that revealed Him to be the Messiah and had those in attendance believing in Him from the start. Jesus chose, perhaps with some pushing from his momma but it was His choice none the less, He chose to use His gifts for the common good of the community whether He was ready or not.

Ready or not, we are called to do the same. As followers of Christ, we are called to live a life where we don’t get so bogged down in wondering what Christ does for us, wondering what gifts God has given us that we never, figuratively speaking, leave the pew in which we sit. We are called to live a life of serving others in whatever form that may take in our lives so that all of God’s children flourish and thrive.

To ensure that everyone shares in the abundant life that God offers, we have to recognize where the blind spots are in our lives. We have to be willing to open our eyes and see the injustice that surrounds us. We have to remove the blinders we have put on and be willing to acknowledge that we live in a world of inequality where our actions make us complicit in the injustices of the world. We have to believe that we matter, that our choices and actions have an impact on those who surround us and the world in which we live.

In the greater scheme of the world and history, we may feel like an insignificant snowflake. But remember that each snowflake is unique, no two are alike. I know that scientists have decided that there are only 35 shapes of snowflakes; however, within each shape there is still variation. Some are bigger or smaller than others, some are heavier or lighter, making each snowflake unique. While one snowflake by itself won’t create an avalanche, it still changes the landscape on which it falls. A single snowflake can bring joy and laughter, it can generate wonder and creativity, and when it melts, it can bring life to the ground on which it falls.

God created us as unique individuals. It is our uniqueness, our idiosyncrasies; our way of being in the world as God created us to be that brings life to the community in which we live. Christ invites us to see the world in a new light, opening our hearts and minds so that we can see new possibilities and new ways of serving one another so that we serve the common good. Christ invites us to take the ordinary and make it extraordinary. He invites us bring joy to those around us. When we use the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit, our light shines bright; the world can see the presence of Christ among us, and the world is transformed.

Amen