**Gifts and Glory: Where Spirit Meets Service**

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and John 2:1-11 (NRSVUE)**

Imagine a community center's Christmas dinner for homeless individuals where the food unexpectedly runs out halfway through. A local restaurant owner, moved by the situation, transforms what was going to be expensive catering for a corporate event into meals for the homeless dinner. Not only does this solve the immediate crisis, but the quality of food provided is actually better than what was originally planned.

The end result, many ordinary people become extraordinary when using their unique abilities to serve others. Unexpected solutions appearing in moments of crisis, the end result being better than what was initially available, and communities coming together to meet needs.

Today we find ourselves at the connection of two powerful passages of scripture: Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians and John's account of Jesus's first miracle at the Wedding in Cana. At first glance, these texts might seem unrelated – one a theological discourse on the workings of the Spirit, the other a narrative about a wedding celebration. Yet together, they reveal profound truths about how God works through humans to manifest divine glory.

Let us begin in Cana. Jesus, his mother, and his disciples are at a wedding celebration when the wine runs out – a social catastrophe in that culture. Notice the players in this drama: Mary, who recognizes the need; the servants, who follow Jesus's instructions; and Jesus himself, who transforms ordinary water into extraordinary wine. Each person has a role, each contributes to the miracle, yet the power and glory belongs to God alone.

This brings us to Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord." Just as the miracle at Cana required different people playing distinct roles, Paul emphasizes that the body of Christ functions through diverse gifts all flowing from the same divine source.

Consider how these passages illuminate each other. First, both emphasize that God works through ordinary people. At Cana, Jesus could have manifested wine from nothing, yet he chose to involve the servants, having them fill the jars with water. Similarly, Paul teaches that the Spirit distributes gifts to each person for the common good. God chooses to work through humans – both then and now.

Second, both stories highlight the importance of obedience and service. The servants at Cana had to fill six massive stone jars with water – no small task – without understanding the outcome. Paul likewise emphasizes that spiritual gifts are given "for the common good," not personal glory. The focus is always on serving others and glorifying God.

Third, both passages reveal that divine power operates in community. The wedding miracle involved multiple people working together: Mary's intervention, the servants' labor, and the steward's testimony. Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts emphasizes that no one has all gifts – we need each other. The Body of Christ functions as a community where different gifts complement and complete each other.

But perhaps most importantly, both texts remind us that all true spiritual gifts and miracles point to Jesus's glory. John tells us that through this first sign, Jesus "revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him." Paul emphasizes that all gifts come from "the same Spirit... the same Lord... the same God." Every spiritual gift, every miracle, every act of service should ultimately reveal Christ's glory and lead others to believe in him.

What does this mean for us today? First, it calls us to recognize and value the diversity of gifts in our community. Just as the wedding at Cana needed both those who carried water and those who recognized the miracle, our church needs both the visionary and the practical, both wisdom and works of power.

Second, it challenges you to be faithful in using whatever gifts you have been given, even when you do not see the full picture. The servants at Cana could not have imagined what Jesus would do with those jars of water. Similarly, you may not always see how God will use your gifts, but you are called to serve faithfully, nonetheless.

Consider the grassroots efforts after the March 2024 devastating tornadoes in Tennessee. What started as individual neighbors helping their neighbors became something extraordinary that reflected God's glory.

A local plumber began offering free emergency repairs to affected families. Teenagers used their social media skills to coordinate supply distribution. Home cooks prepared and delivered thousands of meals from their kitchens. Office workers used their lunch breaks to help clear debris. Local churches opened their doors as emergency shelters. Children set up lemonade stands to raise funds for rebuilding.

Like the servants at Cana who simply filled water jars, each person did what seemed ordinary to them. The plumber used his everyday skills. Teenagers used the social media they engage with daily. Home cooks made food like they always do. But when combined through the Spirit's work, hundreds of families received free emergency repairs. Resources were efficiently distributed through youth-led social media networks. No one went hungry as thousands of home-cooked meals reached those in need. Properties were cleared and cleaned through small acts of service. Communities found shelter and hope in church buildings. Even children's simple lemonade stands raised thousands for recovery efforts.

Just as Jesus transformed ordinary water into extraordinary wine, these everyday acts of service transformed into an extraordinary display of God's love and provision. Individual acts of ordinary service, when empowered by the Spirit and coordinated in community, became something far greater than anyone could have imagined - much like those servants at Cana could never have imagined their water-carrying would become part of Jesus's first miracle.

Finally, it reminds you that all gifts and service should point to Christ's glory, not your own. Whether you are exercising the gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discernment, tongues, or interpretation – all should reveal Jesus's glory and lead others to believe in Him.

In closing, embrace both the privilege and responsibility of being vessels through which God's Spirit works. Whether your role seems as mundane as filling water jars or as dramatic divine intervention, serve faithfully, knowing that the same Spirit works through everyone, and that ultimate glory belongs to Christ alone.

Remember this powerful truth: just as Jesus transformed water into the finest wine, He can transform your ordinary gifts into extraordinary blessings. Every one of you has been given unique gifts by the Spirit - gifts that might seem as simple as filling water jars or as complex as organizing disaster relief. But in God's hands, even the simplest act of service can create ripples of transformation throughout your community.

Think of those Tennessee tornado volunteers - the plumber who fixed pipes, the teenagers who posted on social media, the home cooks who made meals. Each person's gift, when offered in faithful service, became part of something miraculous. Your gifts, too - whatever they may be - are essential threads in God's tapestry of grace.

So, step forward with confidence. Do not wait for the perfect moment or the perfect gift. Like Mary at the wedding, see the needs around you. Like the servants at Cana, be ready to respond with whatever gifts you have. And like Paul teaches, remember that your gift, working in harmony with others, creates a symphony of God's love in action.

May you leave here today not just inspired, but empowered - knowing that the same Spirit who transformed water into wine, who equipped the early church with diverse gifts, who moved through Tennessee's tornado response, is alive and active in you right now. Your ordinary acts of faithful service, joined with others in community, can become extraordinary displays of God's glory.

Go forth and serve, knowing that through your willingness to use your unique gifts, Jesus continues to reveal His glory and draw others to believe in Him.

Amen.