

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered-Down

Thursday, August 27, 2020

A Barber's Confession

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—1 Corinthians 1:4-7

As most of you already know, I have been a licensed barber for a number of years and much enjoy trimming a little hair as I am able. Under normal circumstances barbers are not exalted as the great VIPs of our modern world, but during the height of the COVID lock-down and immediately following our status became greatly enhanced! The guys were desperate for a haircut. In the meantime, I had suggested either obtaining a flower to wear in the hair and pronouncing this “The Summer of Love,” or purchasing a violin. Neither of these two suggestions were well received and the men were simply relieved to again be properly shorn.

The initial haircuts after the lock-down were interesting, first because there was so much hair to cut, and secondly because most of them had received some self-care or amateur hair care over the intervening months. I got a good look at the self-trimming abilities of several guys, and the haircutting skills of the wives of America. The results were shocking, and at some personal risk I am compelled to confess that most folks are better at cutting hair than they realize! Barbers aren't supposed to admit such things as others in the profession might hear that as a betrayal of our craft. (I will, however, qualify my overall appraisal by adding that from observing the amateur work that I have, it can safely be concluded that our profession is secure.)

The lesson behind all of this is a familiar one. When circumstances require us to step up, we are commonly surprised at the skills and abilities we have. In fact, this is a familiar scenario in the educational process that we call life. Whether it be having to step into an absent co-worker's place, discovering nursing skills while caring for a stricken loved one, or learning the next phase of parenting as our kids grow, we have all been thrown into circumstances which have forced us to try new things, and to grow! The COVID crisis has forced us all to try new skills and endeavors. A month ago, we were celebrating with the Christian Education department as they had to learn the ropes in the putting together of an on-line Vacation Bible School. And along the lines of schools, many parents have come to see that they were better teachers than they realized as they scrambled to guide their children through on-line classes.

Crises are very effective in teaching us new skills and surprising us with talents which we did not know that we had. Wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to wait for a crisis to take those steps of faith? We are a gifted people with so many talents and abilities still awaiting discovery! Paul began his letter to the Corinthian Church with a bold assurance that *you are not lacking in any spiritual gift*. This is quite an assertion, and we would all do well to take Paul's words to heart. Later in the letter Paul went into greater detail regarding those spiritual gifts:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. —1 Corinthians 12:7-11

We really are God's gifted people. Consider just what those gifts within you might be. Try some new paths of service in the Church or in your home. Don't be afraid to fail. Perhaps you will succeed in learning of a gift that you *don't* have, and if so, don't count that a failure. I would even encourage those who might have haircutting ability to give that a try. And besides, I am always available for some repair work.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

O Lord, our heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be ministered unto but to minister: we beseech thee to bless all those who follow in his steps and give themselves to the service of their fellowmen. Endue them with wisdom, patience and courage, to strengthen the weak and raise up those who fall; that being inspired by thy love, they may worthily minister in thy name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the sake of him who laid down his life for us, the same thy Son, our savior Jesus Christ.

—Episcopal Church of the United States of America. Book of Common Prayer