

Romans 12:1-8
Kirkwood Sunday

1 Peter 4:7-11

September 13, 2015

The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Preached by Philip Gladden at Camp Kirkwood, Watha, NC

Good Stewards of God's Grace

"Charismatic Christians"

Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

A number of years ago, a small group of Presbyterians interested in preserving beautiful Camp Kirkwood took a giant leap of faith and organized the "Friends of Kirkwood." These folks met many times around the tables in the Dining Hall, praying, talking, sharing stories, and wondering how in the world Camp Kirkwood could be saved and revitalized.

"Friends of Kirkwood" thought outside of the box and entered into a partnership with the Wilmington Family YMCA to help administer the camp. "Friends of Kirkwood" has leased Camp Kirkwood from the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina long-term.

Here's what has happened since those first meetings of just a few people around the table in the Dining Hall:

Over \$406,000 has been raised for Camp Kirkwood.

"Friends of Kirkwood" has paid the YMCA \$135,500 as part of our partnership agreement to support the management of the camp.

"Friends of Kirkwood" has contributed \$188,740 for camp fixtures and improvements. Lots of folks have said Camp Kirkwood has never looked better.

In the calendar year 2015, "Friends of Kirkwood" has been able to accomplish the following:

- * received a new Kubota 4-wheel drive tractor with a front loader and a 5 foot box blade;

- * purchased two golf carts to make navigation around the camp easier;

- * begun Vesper Dell renovations, including new benches. The bench in the center of the front row has been dedicated to the Wallace Presbyterian Church because of our congregation's support of "Friends of Kirkwood";

- * purchased a 15 passenger bus to carry kids back and forth to camp. Wallace Presbyterian Church served as a drop-off and pick-up point for two months this summer for day-campers;

- * completed a Tree Trail so campers can learn to identify the many different kinds of trees in this beautiful place;

- * paid \$5000 toward the Tom Sawyer Raft Rides, which have been a big hit with campers of all ages;

* completed the labyrinth for people to use for their spiritual nurture. Our own Pat Barrow had a big part in the design and construction of the labyrinth.

* hosted a multi-church “Creation Camp” Vacation Bible School in June, with approximately 135 campers and 75 youth/adult volunteers.

When I think back to those very early meetings around the table in the Dining Hall and remember the faces of the people who committed themselves to reviving Camp Kirkwood, I’m not sure many, if any, of those folks would describe themselves as “charismatic Christians” — at least, not in the sense that we usually hear that term used. However, according to today’s epistle lesson from 1 Peter, about how to live in these days between Jesus’ first coming and his coming again in glory, all of them are “charismatic Christians” — “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

(1 Peter 4:10)

In that group of people who began “Friends of Kirkwood,” and among the many, many people who have gotten involved since, there is a great abundance and a wide variety of gifts, ranging from handyman/woman skills to bookkeeping to construction to vision-casting to leading music to organization of camps to worship leadership to generous giving to preaching God’s Word in the Vesper Area.

We usually call someone “charismatic” if she has a special magnetic charm or if he is the type of leader who inspires great loyalty and enthusiasm. In the church, many times “charismatic Christians” are thought of as people who speak in tongues or are filled with the Spirit in a very demonstrative way. All too often, the “charismatic” movement in the church is seen or experienced as divisive.

So, what does it mean to say that we are **all** “charismatic Christians”? The word for God’s grace and the word for God’s spiritual gift or gifts are almost exactly the same. In fact, the word is where we get our word “charismatic.” So, when Peter writes, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received,” he is having a little fun with his words — We are stewards of God’s gift/God’s grace, so we are to use God’s gift/God’s grace to serve one another.

Here we are in this beautiful place, worshiping God who has given us the gift of his grace in Jesus Christ and who calls us to use our spiritual gifts to serve one another with love. How entirely appropriate, then, that we gather around the baptismal font and the Lord’s table on the same day. In a few minutes, we’ll hear these words:

“In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God. God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ’s ministry of love, peace, and justice.”

“Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. Take, drink, remember, and believe that the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.”

In his letter about being good stewards of God's grace, Peter explains the purpose and importance of using whatever gift God has given you: "Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever." (1 Peter 4:11)

In other places in the New Testament, the apostle Paul lists numerous spiritual gifts (*charismata*):

- * prophecy, in proportion to faith
- * ministry, in ministering
- * the teacher, in teaching
- * the exhorter, in exhortation
- * the giver, in generosity
- * the leader, in diligence
- * the compassionate, in cheerfulness
- * the utterance of wisdom
- * the utterance of knowledge according to the Spirit
- * the gift of faith
- * gifts of healing
- * the working of miracles
- * prophecy
- * the discernment of spirits
- * various kinds of tongues
- * the interpretation of tongues

These are just some of the spiritual gifts Paul lists. This suggests there are many, many more spiritual gifts that God gives to us as believers, all for the common good, all to be used in service to one another.

Take a minute right now to think about different people in our congregation. As you see their faces in your minds, think about the specific gifts these people have and how they use them in our church and in our community. Think about how their gifts help to build up the body of Christ. Think about how their gifts help to nurture and strengthen your own faith. Think about how they use their gifts to serve other people in our community and beyond. Now, give thanks to God for his "manifold grace" and the "variety of gifts" he has given us.

Someone here this morning may have already thought about you and your gift/gifts and thanked God for your service. Now, take a minute to think about the spiritual gift or gifts God has given you and how you use or can use them to serve others with the love of Jesus Christ. As Paul says, "there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Not only are we all "charismatic Christians" since God gives each of us spiritual gifts (*charismata*), we are all called to be good stewards of God's grace. During the

months of September and October, I am going to preach my sermons under the overarching theme of “Good Stewards of God’s Grace.” For the next six weeks, we’ll be thinking about “stewardship” in its all-inclusive sense. In other words, we’ll be thinking about “stewardship” as so much more than just fund-raising or meeting the bottom line of the budget. But, the stewardship of our financial and material resources will be in the mix, because those are important gifts God has given us to use to his glory through Jesus Christ.

Just the other day, I saw a sign that reminded me, “God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good.” That’s the basis of our Christian stewardship — what God has done for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in our baptisms and our calling to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. We are called to be “charismatic Christians” because God gives us his grace and graces us with his gifts.

Let us pray: O Lord, giver of life, we know that all we have received is from your hand. You call us to be stewards of your abundant grace, caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us always to use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send your Holy Spirit to work through us, bringing your message to those we serve. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. We pray with grateful hearts, in Jesus’ name. Amen.