

“Not Lacking”
Psalm 40:1-11

Rev. Dionne Hall
1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Prayer of Preparation: *Wait patiently. Listen openly. Trust that God’s loving light and law will be revealed in these words and in your hearts. Amen.*

Every time the UMC lectionary gets into Paul’s epistles, I get a headache. The first thing I think, “If I say that, folks are gonna string me up and tar and feather me.” I really have no idea why we have to read Paul’s letters...except that that’s not true. I really do know why we read Paul’s letters and I know that you know why we read them too.

When we delve into an epistle, we know we are going to get an episode of what I like to call, “*The Church Gone Wild*.” Do y’all remember the show, “Girls Gone Wild?” They have a version of it now called, “College Gone Wild” and it’s just as bad as the original. And by original, I mean Paul’s episodes of “*The Church Gone Wild*” that we find in Scripture. Yet here’s the thing, neither of these shows has anything on the churches Paul was writing to because they were wild and wrong. They were so wrong that they had lost their way.

So, here we are with Paul pulling the reins in on the church at Corinth as he reminds them that they are saints. And, because they are saints, they need to behave like saints. Maya Angelou, famous African American poet, dancer, and singer, used to say, “*Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.*”

This is what Paul was saying in a nutshell...you are saints! ***You know better!*** You know how I know that you know better? Because ***you were called by God.*** You have been sanctified through Christ’s death on the cross. You have seen and you have heard the good news of God and in God there is nothing, there is not a thing, lacking in Christ’s message about who God is and how we are to live in the kin-dom.

Not only have YOU been sanctified in and through Christ’s message to us, so has EVERYONE who has heard the message. So, get off your high horse, stop looking down your nose at other churches and people, get yourselves together, and go do some good work for the kin-dom.

See why I don’t want to preach Paul? The man just straight up told the church in Corinth ***who they are and whose they are.***

Here’s more of Paul’s message: Don’t be walking around talking about you’re ***my*** followers...you don’t follow me, you follow Jesus. You don’t belong to the church of this or that, you belong to God, and in God there is no division and there is no partiality.

You have people who speak in tongues....so do the other churches.

You have people with knowledge in you church....so do the other churches.

You have prophets...so do the other churches.

You have healing....so do the other churches.

You have faith, miracles, discerning of spirits, and interpretation...so do the other churches.

So do the other churches because they were built, brick by brick, steeple by steeple, person by person, by God. And when God builds something nothing, not a thing, is lacking.

The people of Corinth had forgotten that when God builds something, not a thing is lacking. They had forgotten that it wasn’t them who built the church. They had forgotten that the church is God’s people and that God calls people when and where they are needed. The people of Corinth had let their pride run amok in their forgetfulness. The people of Corinth forgot that in all things and through all things is Christ. John’s gospel tells

us that in Christ is in and through all things...and that includes the formation of the church. Within each church are the members, gifted by the Spirit with what we need for the work God has set before us. Paul has been called by God to remind the people of Corinth, and us, that when the church was formed, God's work was not lacking.

Paul is reminding them that there is a greater power at work; that there has always been and will always be a greater power at work...and that that greater power was calling them to something bigger and better than an argument over who had better gifts.

Dare I say that Paul is reminding the people of Corinth that there is something greater than which church is better, which denomination is better, and who is doing God's work "right."

Paul is reminding them that as saints, as folks who have been set apart by Christ, that there is work to be done and no one has time for petty arguments. No one.

Here's the thing, the church in Corinth, the people of Corinth, probably remind you of what's going on right now in churches and denominations around the US and the world. Paul's letter to the Corinthians is prophetic; he's pointing us to this very day and this very time. Paul is telling us, thousands of years later, remember God's grace.

Remember that God's grace is poured out over all of creation. Remember that God's grace leads us and sustains us. Remember that God's grace is given to us freely. And when we remember that, we see people in an entirely different way. People become siblings and we become the family of God.

When we remember God's grace poured out on us, our eyes are cleared and then...then we begin to know that when the Spirit of God swept over the waters, when the Spirit of God began creation, when the Spirit of God breathed life, nothing...not a thing was lacking.

When we remember God's grace being breathed upon us, we remember that we each have a part in restoring this world to the image of God. When we remember God's grace being breathed upon us, we remember...we remember...and we know that we are not lacking.

So, the people of Corinth, and we, received a much needed talking to. They were reminded of what it means to be saints. They were reminded that they are to live as saints. And most importantly, they were reminded that in God, we are not lacking.

Response to the Word: *Light of all creation, shine through us, that others may see your presence living in us. Shine in our world, even in the deepest darkness, that all people may come to know your light and your love. Shine through all of creation, that the world you dream for might come fully into being. Amen.*