

Written Copy: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 “Equipped to Serve as His Church”

2nd Sunday @ Epiphany

Sunday, January 18th, 2026

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge---⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you---⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Exegetical Statement

Paul identifies himself as a called apostolic ambassador of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, including the congregation at Corinth. He identifies them as those who have been called to faith Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior and have been sanctified: set apart for the holy purpose of functioning as the body of Christ in that place. The Lord declares them to be holy because of their intimate baptismal unity with cleansing power of Christ's death and resurrection given to them by faith. Paul thanks God for that gift of grace given by the Spirit working through the Gospel he proclaimed among them. Through the faith given they have been enriched in every area of their life, through the message proclaimed in Word and Sacrament and the knowledge of who Christ is and His will imparted to them. In this work the Gospel testimony and it's power has been confirmed in their lives lived out in faith toward Christ. As the Spirit called them and placed them in this congregation, He has equipped them with the spiritual gifts and talents to be Christ's Church, His body in mission to sustain the faith in one another and spread the Gospel message to the community around them. They are to do all this not focusing on building an earthly kingdom but remaining prepared for the eternal kingdom to come on the Last Day. The Spirit is at work in the to keep them in repentant faith so they will be found not guilty of any sin which would bar them from eternal life with Him. God is faithful and trustworthy to fulfill His promises. And through the faith given we live in special fellowship, partnership, and communion with Christ and one another as His body on earth.

Focus Statement:

When the Holy Spirit calls us to faith in Christ, He changes us to focus not on living for ourselves but living to serve Him. He calls us into the special fellowship, partnership, and communion with Him and one another to share the Gospel message with each other and the world around us. The Spirit equips us with spiritual gifts and talents to be used as part of this partnership with Christ and each other. And when we fail to do this, the Gospel Message of grace and forgiveness restores us to this communion and partnership with Him.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We can see our lives in Christ as being passively receiving. We can shy away from the work we are called to do feeling ill-equipped to do it.

What the hearer should do as a result:

It's okay to feel ill-equipped when it comes to serving as His Church. That means instead of relying on myself, I look to my God who is faithful to work through me and keep equipping me to do the work He has given me to do to build His kingdom.

Subject Sentence: The Spirit Calls and Equips His Church to Serve

Text For the Sermon

1 Corinthians 1:4-7 ⁴ I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that you were enriched in him in every way, in all speech and all knowledge. ⁶ In this way, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, ⁷ so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction: Feeling Ill-Equipped in Our Daily Lives

Have you ever faced a task set before you, feeling like you are ill-equipped to handle it? I felt like that when I first began my job of being an Assistant Store Manager at Hillers. For the first several months I used to dread working a closing shift by myself or working a Sunday shift by myself. I knew I was ill-equipped for the task because I hadn't been properly trained to do it. It felt like when the other managers, who had been doing this for a lot longer than I, when their shift came to an end around 6:00 PM, that they would hurry out the door with a smile that seemed to say, "Good luck, you're going to need it!"

The big chain grocery stores had a management training program that their managers had to go through. Even those who were managers from other chains had to attend classes to instruct them how this particular chain did things. And for someone like me that was being promoted from within, the training was more extensive. They taught these 'Managers in Training' how to do the job of every department in the store. That equipped them to better supervise the work others are doing because they would know what was expected of workers in all departments and how they should be going about it. And in an emergency the manager was equipped to step in and help.

I hired in as a Dairy Stock Clerk, and learned what that entailed. But because we operated shorthanded, often with no one in the grocery department to stock and fill the shelves during the day, I had to learn how to do that, to learn where back stock was kept for each aisle of the store, which you had to know from memory since for some odd reason it wasn't marked.

When the General Manager of Hillers decided to promote me to Assistant Manager, he told the Store Manager to begin training me. But instead of having me work in each department, he used me as a glorified stock boy, doing the job I already knew how to do, partly because we were so short-handed, and he wasn't about to go fill shelves, and partly because he wasn't completely on board with my being promoted. When I started actually working as a Store Manager, I had to do a lot of on-the-job learning by trial and error like: how to wait on customers in the deli and slice lunchmeat, pick out the ripe watermelon, run a cash register, count a till at the end of the night, empty and fix a jammed bottle machine, just to mention a few.

When things went wrong on my watch, because of my inexperience, I didn't want to admit I wasn't trained for fear they would demote me. By that time Susan and I had started a family and my income as a manager was needed. But not admitting my inexperience and lack of knowledge meant I would be dressed down by the General Manager who thought I was lazy, or simply incompetent.

What about those tasks that have been thrust upon you that you didn't sign up for? When a spouse suddenly passes away and you have to learn to do all things your spouse used to take care of like: fixing things around the house, maintaining the car, getting the oil changed and tires rotated, paying the bills, and cooking, just to name a few. It can make the surviving spouse feeling ill-equipped to handle life on their own.

The Truth About Being Called to Serve in the Church

Many people feel the same way when it comes to taking responsibility for the work each person is called to do as a member of the Church. Some regard their responsibility as going no further than just to sit in the pew every Sunday, if even that frequently. To do anymore or be involved in the ministry of the Church makes them feel ill-prepared and ill-equipped. Perhaps they feel that being a part of the ministry and mission of the Church is not something they signed on for. Perhaps there are times when this is how you feel.

The thing is you didn't choose to be a member of God's family, the Church, His body on earth. That's because you didn't choose to believe in Jesus Christ. He is the One who chose you before you were even born, called you to faith by the Gospel Message in your baptism. He called you trust and believe in Him as your Lord and Savior who has done all that's necessary to make you right with God, to make you worthy of being part of His body, His family, His Church.

It doesn't matter if you have been a life-long believer or have come to faith later in life. It all happened because Christ chose you and sent His Holy Spirit into your life to radically change you. That Spirit did the work of conversion on you when you came to faith. He turned you from a life focused on pleasing yourself at the expense of God and others, to a life focused on your Lord and Savior. In your baptism you were given a new life in Christ, one where His Spirit walks with you and lives in you every day, no matter what you are doing or where you are going.

When He called you to faith, He did more than just call you to a life of worship and meditation by yourself. The life of a Christian is more than just “Me and my Bible, me and my Jesus.” He called you to a life of fellowship, participation, and communion, certainly with Him, but not just with Him, with others He has called into faith too. That communal fellowship is best seen when we gather at the table for the Lord’s Supper. We certainly have intimate communion and fellowship with Jesus who is really and truly present in the bread and wine. But we don’t gather there alone. We gather with fellow members whom we are in intimate fellowship and communion with by the faith we share, and through the shared body and blood of Christ our Savior. Christ’s call to faith includes the call to be a member of His body on earth in a particular location, like this body called Lamb of God.

The Holy Spirit Equips You to Serve by His Design

But what about those feelings of being ill-equipped to serve? What about our attitude that we didn’t sign on for this? Paul in our Epistle is drawing from what Jesus said in **John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.**

When Jesus chose you and appointed you to be a member of His Church with the mission of producing fruit that remains, fruit that has lasting effects among us and the world, He doesn’t send you out ill-equipped for the task. The key component of your new life in Christ is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. It is He who directed you to be a part of this congregation. And He did that because He also has equipped you with gifts, talents, and spiritual gifts that make you a necessary part of what He wants us to do as His Church.

As Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1:5-7 you were enriched in him in every way, in all speech and all knowledge. ⁶ In this way, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, ⁷ so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

So how were you enriched and equipped? What are the talents and gifts He has given you? Some of you can play instruments, and He can certainly use that to help us in worship here or even outside these four walls. Some of you can cook and He can certainly use that as we serve Franklin Avenue Mission, or when we have Potluck dinners, or other events that include food. Jesus found gathering around a table of food a great setting for Gospel friendship and fellowship. Shouldn’t we?

Some of you may not be the best cook, but the Lord has given you the time and ability to help those who can by setting up and cleaning up, doing dishes, sweeping and mopping. These may seem like menial tasks, but when you are serving the Lord in His kingdom, no matter how menial the task, there is a special warm feeling, a satisfaction that comes from serving Him.

Some of you may be gifted with being able to help plan Fellowship Events and Youth Events. Some of you may be artistic and can make signs and decorations that draw attention to such events. Some of you could take flyers for events and post them in stores and places that you frequent that will allow it, as well as pass the information out to your neighbors and friends and post information on upcoming events on your Facebook page. Some of you can fix things around the Church or help with maintenance of our equipment. Some of you could be worship assistants helping with the Soundboard, the Livestreaming, being Gatekeepers, being Greeters.

All of these things do require a sacrifice, a sacrifice of your time and talents. But these things are not really yours; you didn't manifest them by yourselves. All of them are gifts from the same God who gave you your physical life and called you to faith and gave you your new life in Christ. Your time and talents don't belong to you; they are gifts from your Loving and Saving God. And He is pleased when you use them in fulfilling your role as a member of His body here in this place, His Church.

How can you know how He wants you to serve Him? Prayer is a good way to start. Ask Him to show you how you might become more involved in what we do here. Then don't be afraid to try things out. If it doesn't work out, that's okay. No one is going to fire you. Working for Christ is all about grace. But you will know when you have found what He wants you to do because it won't seem like a chore to be despised. It will feel fulfilling. And others may tell you how thankful they are to have your help and what a good job you are doing. You can have a talk with me or your Elder and we can help direct you.

And when you feel ill-equipped to serve the Lord in ministry and mission, that's not always such a bad thing. It means that you are not leaning on yourself, but instead you are trusting in Him to lead, guide, empower, and equip you to serve in His kingdom.

What is the Reason We Seek to Serve?

Why should we seek to be involved in the ministry and mission here at Lamb of God? Certainly not to be saved, or to earn favor with our Lord. Your faith and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior is your proof that you already have favor with Him through the faith in Christ He has given you. Your desire to worship and praise Him is proof that the Spirit is at work in you. Your presence here in worship and gathered at the Communion Rail is proof that you are in intimate fellowship and communion with Him and with your brothers and sisters who are also in Communion through His body and blood in the bread and wine.

You serve Him out of loving obedience for all He has done to save you and is doing to keep you in faith. You serve Him in order to exercise that faith with the good works He saved you to be a part of. And in doing so His Spirit draws you ever closer to Him in faith even as we become His tool to draw others closer to Him in a faith relationship, so that along with them you may be safeguarded in your faith in the midst of a world that would seek to draw you away from your Lord and Savior. You do so because He has called you to be a part of His body, the Church, and the work He has given us to do.

Conclusion

At Hillers I muddled through those things that I was not trained to do; but not just by myself, the Holy Spirit helped me in ways I never imagined or realized until much later.

When it comes to our call to be the Church in ministry and mission you may feel you didn't sign up for that. And you're right, you didn't. God chose you before you were born. He called you to faith in His Son and changed your heart and mind when His Spirit came upon you in baptism. It's then that He called you to be a member of His Church. His Spirit has equipped you and is equipping you whenever you gather here with us to be a part of His body, the Church. His gifts and talents He gave you were not to build your own kingdom here in this fallen world. But to serve your neighbor, your family, and your Church, by working to build His kingdom of sharing the Gospel Message of faith in Christ. And whenever you and I fail in that service, the grace and forgiveness we have in Christ covers it all.

And Paul gives us this promise as we serve: **1 Corinthians 1:8-9** ⁸ **He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁹ **God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.** May all of us grow in that fellowship, participation and service to our Lord and Savior, even as He works to keep us blameless by keeping us in faith toward Him to life everlasting. Amen.