

Numbers 11:16; 24-29

I'd like to ask you a very serious question this morning. What is it that leads married couples to **forget** that their **spouse** is a special gift from **God** - a gift to be **loved** and **cherished**? As you **think** about that question, you probably realize that there could be **many** reasons. There are all kinds of **stresses** and **strains** which occur as we live together day after day - stresses which **often** lead couples to focus on the **negative** things about their spouse - things which **annoy** them or **anger** them. That phenomenon which all too often occurs in **marriage**, can also be found among fellow **Christians** in our **congregations**. All too quickly, we focus on the **negative** things we see in the other members, and we **lose sight** of the great **blessings** which God has given to us in **one another**. Today we're going to see that phenomenon taking place among God's Old Testament people, and as we do, we're reminded to **Thank God For One Another**, and for the great variety of **gifts** which He has given **in** each of us, and **to** each of us.

The text we have before us today takes place shortly after the Israelites had set out from Mt. **Sinai**, where they had received the **10 Commandments** from God. They were beginning what **should** have been the **final** stage of their journey to the Promised Land, but **sadly**, instead of being filled with **joy** and **anticipation** as they headed toward Canaan, the people were filled with **grumbling** and **complaining**. The **specific** complaint which serves as a background for our text today had to do with their **food**. The LORD had miraculously supplied His people with **manna** from **heaven** every day. But that wasn't **good** enough. They wanted **meat** and more **variety** like they had back in their days of **slavery** in Egypt. Their constant **complaining** was more than their leader, Moses, could **bear**. So in His mercy, the LORD **provided** for Moses. He told him that He would give him **helpers** so he wouldn't have to carry the burden of leadership all by **himself**. So we read at the beginning of our text that God said to Moses, "*Gather **seventy men** from the elders of Israel for me, men whom you know to be **elders** and **officers** for the people. Take them to the Tent of Meeting and make them stand there **with you**.*"

Moses **did** what the LORD commanded. He brought the elders to the Tent of Meeting, and then we're told, "*The **LORD** came down in the cloud and **spoke** to him. He took from the Spirit that was on **Moses** and put it on the **seventy elders**. When the Spirit **rested** on them, they **prophesied**, but they did **not** do it again*" Now for some reason, **two** of the elders, Eldad and Medad, didn't **make** it to the meeting. They remained in the **camp**. But that didn't stop the **LORD** from giving **them** the **same** outpouring of His Spirit which He had given to the **other** elders at the Tent of Meeting. Now, it seems like this would have been a **good** thing. But it **didn't** look that way to some of the **Israelites**. We're told that a young man ran up

to Moses with the **report** that Eldad and Medad were **prophesying** in the camp, as though it was some kind of a **scandal**. Even **Joshua**, the **future** leader of God's people, **condemned** Eldad and Medad, saying, "*My lord Moses, stop them!*" But the question is, **why? Why** were some of the people so **upset** with Eldad and Medad? Why did they jump to the **conclusion** that these men were doing something **wrong**, when they were actually just using a **gift** which had been given to them by the **LORD**?

It's sad but this kind of misunderstanding isn't at all uncommon among God's people even **today**. We are part of a **congregation**. That congregation is part of a **Synod**. Our Synod is now made up of less than **400,000** people. But as small as we **are**, that's still **a lot** of people. And simply put, there isn't **one person** who is capable of **leading** them **all alone** - not even President **Schroeder**. And so there are many people who **help** in carrying out the ministry of our Synod. On the **local** level, these helpers gather in congregations. We need **many people** in order to carry out the **work** which the LORD has given us to do, and with the **blessing** of the **LORD**, those people are **provided**, and the work gets **done**. However, not **everyone** sees it that way, and unfortunately, that can turn **blessings** into **problems**.

Our sinful nature doesn't want us to **Thank God For One Another**. All too often our sinful nature wants us to be **jealous** of others. It wants us to find something **wrong** with the **work** that others are doing. It wants us to look **down** on them, and think that **we** could do a **better** job than **they** can. It can happen on a **large** scale when the work that's being done by others in our **Synod** is called into question. It can also happen between neighboring **congregations**. We live in an area where we're **blessed** to have **multiple** WELS congregations. But that **blessing** sometimes provides the **temptation** to look at the work which the **other** congregations are doing, and to see it as being **inferior** or maybe even **wrong** because it's not the way **we** do things. That kind of attitude is not only **ridiculous**, it's actually **sinful**. We **need** to work **together**. In fact as time goes on, it's becoming more and more important for neighboring congregations to work together even **more** to carry out the LORD's work among us.

And that same **jealous** attitude which shows itself in **congregations** also shows itself as we deal with one another as **individuals**. The 8th commandment tells us to take other people's words and actions in the **kindest** possible way. But how many times don't we think the **worst** of what someone else says or does, because it's not in line with **our** way of thinking? It's bad enough when Christians face persecution from the **unbelieving** world **around** us, but when Christians face

persecution from **one another**, that's a tool which the **Devil** is using, to try to drive us **apart** - and we can't let that **happen**.

We **all** need to check our attitudes in regard to how we look at **each other**, and how we view the **ministry** which is being carried out by **us**, and by our **brothers and sisters** in the faith. Let's take a look again at how **Moses** reacted when Joshua told him he needed to **stop** Eldad and Medad from prophesying. Moses said, "*Are you **jealous** for **my** sake? If only **all** of the **LORD's** people were prophets so that the Lord would put **his Spirit** on them!*" Moses wasn't **upset** with Eldad and Medad because they had missed the **meeting** or because they were **prophesying**. Instead, he was **happy** to know that **wherever** they were, they were doing the work which the **LORD** wanted them to do. Moses understood that these **men** were **gifts** from God, and that they had been **given** a gift from God, and he was **thankful** that they were **using** it. Moses knew that the **LORD** had given this gift to Eldad and Medad, and to all the **other** elders as well, so they would be able to **help** him in his service to God - **not** to **hinder** him.

It would be well for **us** to think that way too - especially when we're tempted to **tear down** someone **else** in the Church. We need to remember just what it means to be **members** of the **Church**, and I'm **not** talking about having a **mailbox** in the back, or having our name and our picture in the new church directory. Being a member of the **Church** means that we confess our faith in **Jesus** as our **Savior** from sin. It means that we recognize that our only hope for **salvation** comes from our gracious **God**, who sent His one and only **Son** to die on the **cross** for us. So, when we look at the **other** members of our congregation, we need to recognize that **they** believe and confess the **same thing**. We are all **sinners** who would be completely **lost** without our Savior. **Jesus** is the one who gives our lives **value**, and because we are now a part of **His body**, we need to **work together** with all the **other** parts of His body - with all the people who share our **faith** in **Jesus** **wherever** they're found. And we need to **appreciate** what a **joy** and **blessing** it is to **share** in that fellowship.

We all **need** one another, because even though we share a **common faith**, we have all been blessed with **different talents** and **abilities**. By God's design, each one of us is **unique**. So when someone else uses a gift which **they** have - and it **isn't** one that **we** possess - that's **not** a reason to be **jealous**. Instead, it's a reason to **thank God**. It's a **wonderful** thing when God's people **use** their various **gifts** to work toward the **same goal** - the goal of spreading the Gospel of **Jesus** throughout the world. **Thank God For One Another**. Whether we say that **out loud** or **not**, those words should certainly be in our **hearts** every time we speak to a fellow **Christian**. Husbands and wives, think about how some of our conversations might

change if we started out by telling our spouse, “I **thank God** for bringing you into my life.” Fellow members of **Trinity**, as we work together for the sake of the **Gospel**, don’t be **jealous** of one another, but rather tell one another, “I **thank God** that you are using your gifts to further God’s kingdom.” Each and every one of us is **important**, because we have all received **gifts** from God - gifts which need to be **used** for the benefit of His Church.

That **doesn’t** mean that there will never be honest, constructive **criticism** or loving **admonition** among us. But it **does** mean that we must never lose sight of who has brought us **together** in the **first** place - our **God** - a God who knew from the very **beginning** that we couldn’t **save** ourselves - a God who knew that our salvation depended on **Him alone** - a God who **loved** us so much that He sent His only **Son** to **die** for us. And now we are **privileged** to **thank** Him for His love. As we work **together** to further God’s kingdom, let’s always **Thank God For One Another** as brothers and sisters in **Christ**, and for all the **gifts** which He has given for us to **use** as we **share Jesus** with the world. Amen.