

Communities of Love

After graduating from Manchester College, my husband and I decided to share a house with two other couples who were good friends and shared a vision for living in community. The decision on where to live was the easiest because only one of us had a job. But immediately upon moving in, we began to argue about little things like whether to organize the spices alphabetically or by function, whether to choose food based on nutrition or price (remember, only one of us had a job), and if it was okay to eat more than three cookies for dessert. Communities are complicated.

James had been part of the diverse and often opinionated community of apostles, so he knows what he is talking about when he cautions these newly formed faith groups to “let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (v. 19). He directs them to the word of God that Jesus taught and embodied in his mission of love. Communities are complicated. Our differences can become cracks in the foundation of our relationship to that mission of love.

There are times when I do not feel like listening or loving. In those times I try to ask myself: “What would I do if I *were* a compassionate person?” Then I have a choice to be or not to be a follower of Love. Which brings us to where James started: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (v. 17). Parker Palmer sums it up this way: “Community is finally a religious phenomenon. There is nothing capable of binding together willful, broken human selves except some transcendent power.” Becoming a community of God’s generosity patterned after Jesus’ love is a choice—and it is also a gift.

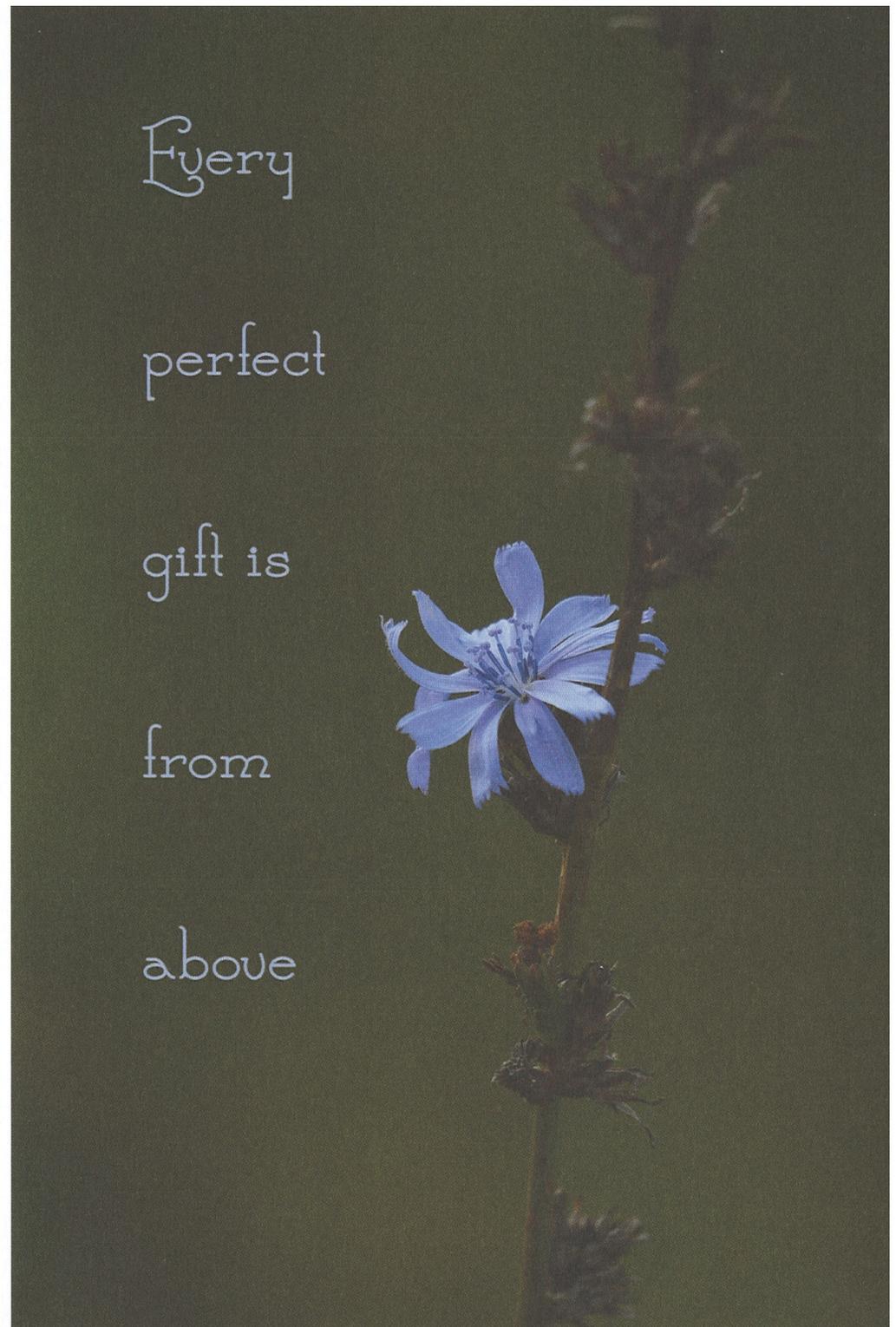
—Kay E. Gaier
Wabash, Indiana

Text for today: “Every good gift and *every perfect gift is from above*, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:17-22, *ESV*). **Bible readings for today:** Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9; Psalm 15; James 1:17-27 (17); Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23.

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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
Hagerstown, Maryland

MORNING WORSHIP

10:00 AM

August 29, 2021

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN GOD?

PRELUDE "O God Beyond All Praising" (Holst/Giamanco)

***CALL TO WORSHIP** Don Rowe, Worship Leader

One: Come to listen for all God seeks to teach us.
God has given us birth by the word of truth.

**All: We are drawn to God as to a lover.
We leap for joy when we know God's care.**

One: Every perfect gift comes to us from God.
God's image is a part of each one of us.

**All: God's grace has been poured into our lives.
Wisdom and understanding are offered to us.**

One: Who will dwell on God's holy hill?
Those who walk uprightly and speak the truth.

**All: We will honor God by honoring our neighbors.
We will act toward them as we wish to be treated.**

***HYMN #110** "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing"

[Verse 1]

*Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace.*

[Verse 2]

*Jesus! the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music to the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.*

[Verse 3]

*He speaks, and list'ning to his voice new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.*

[Verse 4]

*My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of your name.*

[Verse 5]

*Glory to God and praise and love be ever, ever giv'n by
saints below and saints above, the church in earth and heav'n.*

***OPENING PRAYER**

O God from whom every gift derives, we gather to worship You this day. You are an awesome God, greater than our comprehension or our imagination. You are beyond any word we could ever use to describe You. And yet, through Jesus, we know the intimacy of Your vast love. We have come to You in thanksgiving and praise, to know that You are God and to place our lives anew into Your perspective. Enlarge our vision this hour with Your Word. Instill in us, again, Your hope in place of our despair, Your peace where our hatred threatens, Your joy amidst our depression, Your love overwhelming our apathy. May Your Holy Spirit surround and indwell this congregation now, and forevermore. In Jesus we pray. Amen.

A MOMENT TO BECOME LIKE CHILDREN

SERVICE OF GIVING

Call to Giving

Let us not forget that the bounty we enjoy is only loaned to us for a little while, to be managed to the glory of God. Every generous act of giving is prompted by God's own generosity toward us. We are invited to return the first fruits of our labors that, through the outreach of our church, God may accomplish much good for those who most need to know that someone cares.

You may place your offering in the plate at the front of the church during the offertory, if you have not done so yet. Or if you are watching the service online, we virtually pass the offering plate to you. You can prepare your offering to be mailed to or dropped off at the church this week; or you can use Paypal on the Hagerstowncob webpage.

Offertory "Abide with Me" (Owens)

***Doxology #119** "Praise God from whom"

***Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Our hearts overflow with thanksgiving for all the bounty you entrust to our stewardship, O God of light. You have reached into the shadows, where we often flee, to rescue us and give us your work to do. As you have freed us from the chains of sin, we seek to offer healing to others as we listen and share and do. Bless our offerings of self and substance, we pray. Amen.

(continued)

