*After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. She made this vow: “O Lord of hosts, if only You will look on the misery of Your servant and remember me and not forget Your servant but will give to Your servant a male child, then I will set him before You as a Nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.” As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore, Eli thought she was drunk. So, Eli said to her: “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.” But Hannah answered: “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.” Then Eli answered: “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to Him.” And she said: “Let your servant find favor in your sight.” Then the woman went her way and ate and drank with her husband and her countenance was sad no longer. They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said: “I have asked him of the Lord.”* 1 Samuel 1:9-20

*What should be done then, my brothers and sisters? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three and each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If someone sitting receives a revelation, let the first person be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged (and the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is a God not of disorder but of peace), as in all the churches of the saints.*  1 Corinthians 14:26-33

*A man got up to leave early from a church service and the pastor asked him where he was going.*

*The man responded: To get a haircut.*

*Why didn’t you get one before services? - the pastor asked.*

*Because I didn’t need one then! – the man replied.*

*He was later heard to remark that his pastor was just like the Pharaoh, he would not let the people go.*

**Out of Chaos**

1. Many years ago, as a young man, while visiting Sweden, I spend a week at the Orebro Mission Youth Camp and one evening, while participating in the Worship Service I witnessed a form of a *“communal prayer”* that was unknown to me. Years later, I once again experienced the same form of prayer, but this time it happened in South Korea, at the United Methodist Church in Seoul. In both cases, the worship leader invited people to pray, but it was a prayer with a twist. Almost everyone in the attendance prayed aloud and at the same time. In both of these cases these prayers lasted for several minutes and ended when prompted by the worship service leader. For someone who grew up in a Baptist Church in Poland, both of these *“prayer experiences,”* seemed to me to represent a form of chaos yet, in both of these instances they were a perfectly normal form of a prayer for the people involved. In Sweden it was the service dedicated to the Pentecostal style of worship, while in South Korea it was a natural form of a prayer in that particular church.

2. I thought about both of these experiences while working on this message, because I believe something similar was going on in the church in Corinth. What seemed to me at first to be a *“chaotic prayer,”* whether in Sweden or in South Korea, were actually controlled forms of the liturgy used in the worship service by the worship leader. I believe that the chaotic form of worship service in the church in Corinth might have been caused by the willingness of the church members, who possessed different spiritual gifts, to emphasize the importance of their particular gift. Paul however saw this as something that does not have place in the worship service, because it does not emphasize on worshipping God, but on the spiritual gifts of the members. Although the spiritual gifts are important, they must serve a purpose in worshipping God, and since every congregation is a part of a larger *“body,”* all the elements are necessary and important for the whole body to function properly, but in a harmony, not just only a particular one. No particular spiritual gift might be in the full control of the entire body. Every single spiritual gift we have is necessary for the Church, but no one is dominating, just as nobody possess all of the spiritual gifts there are.

3. In the preceding chapter, (1 Corinthians 13) Paul writes about love, and even though he stresses the importance of love, he still lists hope and faith as important. When the spiritual gifts are expressed without love, according to Paul, they resemble the *“sounding gong,”* which means being pointless, empty, and hollow. Paul emphasized the importance of love as the measure of success because love offers, not forces, what it has to offer. Similarly, all the spiritual gifts are important and overemphasizing just one or only a few of them, invites chaos to the entire *“Church Body.”* In both instances of the prayers I mentioned, these particular prayers were a part of something larger, namely the whole *“Worship Service”* experience. Even if these prayers were not *"my cup of tea,"* I was still able to participate in the Worship Service, enjoying the variety of inspirational elements of it. As much as the prayers may seem *“chaotic”* to me, in the end I was able to see them as a part of an orderly *“Service of Worship and Praise,”* where the whole *“body”* expressed the individual spiritual gifts with no one dominating it. I cannot think of a better analogy then attending the symphony concert, when, just before the concert begins, all of the musicians in the orchestra tune up or test their instruments. The *“cacophony”* of the sound the instruments make are totally opposite and contrary, to the beauty of the sound by the same musicians and the same instruments, which begins with the conductor’s baton being engaged. It becomes almost a miracle, when the same musicians, the same instruments, even the same notes, working together in unison, create a masterful, musical symphony experience. As Christ’s Church we all are as these musicians, each and every one different, and on its own seemingly creating chaos, but conducted by God, *"exceling in the gifts that build up the Church."*

4. To bring the order out of chaos, we must learn to love one another and to grow in that love. The growth however is possible only when we listen to God, when we try to understand what He tells us and when we follow His directions. Just as the orchestra follows the baton of the conductor, we are to follow and to be influenced by God, not trying to influence Him instead. We must respond to what is God’s will for us, and not vice versa. The problem of modern Christianity often is in that instead of listening to God and to His will, many Christians try to create their own ways of interpretation of God’s Word and try to sway God to accept their behavior and aspirations, which actually mimic the behavior of the modern, godless society. The Corinthians might have been acting with a lot of excitement, and in result of this they were carried away by their emotions. This is exactly what is also happening in today’s society. Modern psychology speaks about expressing our emotions as a means of solving personal problems, but many psychologists today question the correctness of such an approach. Emotions are important and valid, but emotions cannot control us as the only source of our actions and behavior. The best illustration of this might be the *“temper tantrums”* many children engage in when denied of something. Emotions alone may very well move us in the wrong direction, and such was a case with speaking in tongues without the interpretation Paul speaks about or with prophesying. The emphasis on one element only, even if this is the spiritual gift, may carry people away from God and consequently from one another.

5. I began this message with the illustration of the prayers which seemed chaotic to me at first but in the end proving to be the integral part of a much larger picture, namely the entire *“Worship Service.”* For Paul it was really important to focus on the orderly worship and praise: *“When you come together,”* he writes, *“everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two or at the most three should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.* God is a God of peace and order, and our worship must reflect this. Equally, the worship service must include participation of many members of the *“body of Christ.”* The hymns we sing indicate our need to praise God; a word or instruction whether through preaching, teaching, or sharing a testimony, leads to strengthening of other people’s lives; the prayer serves as a means of our communicating with God directly, while confession allows us to realize what and where our weaknesses are. Everything that we do in the *“worship service,”* must be done to strengthen the Church as a whole, as well as all of us individually.

6. Anything we do when we come together in fellowship, strengthens us and we all must not only to participate in it, but we must also use whatever gifts we were entrusted with by God. Whatever gift you received, bring it to God and become an active rather than a passive participant. I came across an interesting statement: *“There is no ‘I’ in the entity called a team.”*  We all have something we can share with others, and this is exactly what we do in the worship service. Every time we meet for the fellowship and worship, we bring something as an offering to God, and we enrich someone else’s life, and there are still plenty of people around who are in need of someone’s touch, a word of encouragement, or some sort of support. The spiritual needs are always there, but the Church must utilize the gifts which are already there. We were called as individuals by God, but He placed us in communities and taught us to worship together, so, we are to worship Him as one, where all, the young, the old, and the middle-aged, work together for the good of the entire body. Our ministry and our worship service belong to all of us, and we are all in this together. Like the orchestra with all the instrument tuned and tested, following the guidance of the One and the Only conductor, Jesus Christ. When we come before the Lord together, when we are worshipping Him, we deliver this beautiful spiritual symphony.

7. I cannot help but to conclude my message with a story about Henry Ward Beecher, a popular Congregational preacher of the late 19th and the early 20th century. He was going to be absent from the pulpit of the Plymouth Church where he served as a senior pastor one Sunday and asked his brother to preach instead of him. When the worship service began, and it became apparent that the great preacher would not be preaching that particular morning, some people got up and begun to leave the sanctuary. Beecher’s brother stepped into the pulpit and said: *"All of those who came to hear Henry Ward Beecher preach this morning should take this opportunity to leave; all of those who came to worship God may remain."* After that no one else left the sanctuary. This is what the worship service is all about, all participating, not just entertained by one particular spiritual gift, even if this gift is a gift of preaching. We are Christ’s Church, and we are all in this together, in the worship and in the service. We might be different as individuals but we all have something in common, our love for God and this love must be present not only in our worship but also in our life. Next week, on Wednesday evening we will once again celebrate our *“Antigo Community Thanksgiving Service,”* in St. John’s Roman Catholic Church, and although from different churches, and different people, we all will once again come together as one, to praise and to worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and offer our heartfelt thanks for all His blessings. In doing so we will stand together as the *“Body of Christ,” “body”* consisting of many pieces and with many gifts, yet one in our mutual *“Worship.”*