

Gifted: You Have Complementary Gifts!

A sermon based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-2,24b-27.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Are you one of those people who messes up your words...where you know exactly what you want to say or what you're trying to say, but it comes out completely wrong?

I had an English teacher who was talking about Shakespeare and, especially, MacBeth and MacDuff, but she kept saying MacDeath and MacBuff. She kept trying to correct herself and it just wasn't working.

Or, my goodness, you can find loads of examples online. A man, trying to explain to his friends the idiom: "A Bird in the Hand is worth 2 in the bush," messed up and said, "A Hand in the Bird is worth 2 in the bush." A teacher asked her 3rd graders if any of them knew what symmetry is, and one responded, "That's where they bury dead people." Or, one that literally drives me crazy is how people mix up the use of "literally" and "figuratively," (and yes, I know I did that just now...on purpose)...like, "I literally died, I was so scared," yet you're here, telling me about that experience?!? I read an article that said it was "literally" the most misused word...and that might not be a joke.

And maybe it's not the way you talk, but you tend to mix up your words when writing. Again, credit to the internet...McDonald's had to close down un-expectantly, so the typed sign on their door read, "We are closed due to power failure. Apologise (I think they meant "apologies") for any incontinence caused. Oops! Or, a Twitter fail, "I love it when you can still smell your boyfriends colon on you *smiley face*. Um, I think they meant cologne. Alright, enough of the toilet humor.

Can you really fault all the mistakes, though? English is a difficult language. Not only do some words sound so similar. There are words that actually sound the exact same but have different spellings and different meanings...called homophones Like, I don't know whether I should talk about the weather we've been having or just get on with the sermon. Or, there will be a lot of important people at the party tonight. My parents invited all of their colleagues. They're going to be mad if we ruin the evening for them. There, their, they're. Three different words, three different spellings, three different meanings, all sound the same. English is hard.

Well, I guess you could say today's sermon continues this fun with homophones. Because today's theme is: Gifted: You Have Complementary Gifts!

And you're thinking, "You're welcome, Pastor! I'm glad you've noticed!" Well, thank you, but that's not what I meant. I didn't mean specifically that you have complimentary gifts...gifts worthy of my compliments. No, you have complementary gifts, gifts used for the complete-ment of the body of Christ.

You see, that's what Paul is talking about this morning as he continues his monologue to the Corinthian Christians concerning their spiritual gifts, which we started looking at last week. He starts out by saying, ***"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ."***

Do you know what he means by the "body of Christ"? He means individual believers who are joined together by and joined together Christ, the head. So, the Corinthians believers were the body of Christ.

We, Light of the World believers, are the body of Christ, who were brought together (as equals) into this awesome body, the family of God, through the cleansing waters of baptism. That means we all have equal footing when it comes to our status before God...sinners who have been saved by the blood of Christ.

And that's where the likeness ends. You see, it really is an apt comparison when Paul likens us to an actual human body. Here are some of his main points about us believers who make up the body of Christ: 1) He stresses God's sovereign purpose in diversifying the parts of the body; God has arranged that different Christians in the body of Christ exercise different spiritual gifts, not the same gift. And this diversity is intended to accomplish God's unified purpose, which we talked about last week...to build up his family here, to dispense his love in doing so, to bring God glory. So, God's method employs diversity to create unity.

2) Paul's second point? Closely related, and that's as the human body has to have that diversity to work effectively as a whole, so the members of Christ's body have diverse gifts, which God intends to be properly exercised for the good of the whole.

3) Different gifts doesn't mean inferior. Paul observed that members with lesser spiritual gifts were feeling dissatisfied with their less prominent gifts, even feeling unneeded. Yet, those "less spectacular" gifts were just as important to the completeness of the body of Christ. Paul even calls them "indispensable" in verse 22.

Do you look at your spiritual gifts that way? "My spiritual gifts, whatever they are, are important. These are spiritual gifts, given by God, meant to help complete the body of Christ here at Light of the World...to be part of the team."??

Are you using them to help complete this body? I mean, what happens when you're not? Imagine how disastrous it would be if parts of the body didn't do what they're uniquely gifted to do. If the lungs don't breathe, the whole body dies because no other part can. If the heart doesn't beat, the whole body dies because no other part can. If the brain doesn't think, the whole body dies because no other part can.

But, maybe that's not you. Maybe you're thinking, "I'm no heart or brain or lung. I don't have the gifts that I would consider to be complimentary, the prominent, the flashy, the coveted roles...the ones always seeming to be front and center. I don't have the beautiful voice to sing. I don't have the coordination to swing a hammer to save my life. I don't even have the creativity to help form a design for a capital project here. My gifts are worthless, insignificant, unnecessary. I'm not needed here."

Or, maybe you do have those gifts, but you've chosen not to use them here. Maybe you think you're above certain acts of service. Maybe it's more than that...maybe you've quit coming to worship as regularly as you used to, or you've quit volunteering and helping out around the church, or you quit contributing financially or maybe have even been this close to quitting the congregation...because you didn't get your way on some issue here...or someone hurt your feelings and you've refused to truly forgive...or "no one complimented me when I did this for the church...they didn't even notice what I did, so what's the point?" I mean, is that what we're in it for...the compliment? Have we forgotten what it's really about? Not the compliment, but the complement...working together for the good of the body, serving together for the good of the gospel, to give glory to God, to achieve God's purpose, not my own selfish ones.

Think back to Stone Soup. What was the moral of the story? Everyone brings something to the table. Even something as minor as the salt and pepper was needed to make a dish fit for the king himself. What you have is needed to complete this body, to work together to bring glory to the King himself.

Have you ever thought of that? What if everyone in this congregation were using their gifts? Or are your thoughts consumed by I can't, I won't, I don't need to?

Have you ever thought of what this "body" looks like when you aren't using the spiritual gifts Jesus has given/gifted you for his spiritual reasons? I have this puzzle of the state of Alaska, which my Grandma got me when she was up here this past summer. It's sitting in my office at home, completed...well, except for one piece. It's missing one piece. And, at the end of the day, it's fine, it's serviceable, I guess. I know what I'm looking at. But what if I were missing half of the 1000 pieces? Would we even recognize it, then?

To be honest, that's what it's like here. If there's one person not using their spiritual gifts, you know what, God's work is still getting done here...God be praised. But when there's a bunch of people not using their gifts to be part of this family, guess what happens? Different parts/members being forced to overextend themselves and over-work themselves...picking up the weight. What does this body look like...to God? It's an incomplete picture, isn't it?

Are you bringing something to the table? Or, are you leaving this body incomplete, in danger of dying?

Thankfully, there's one part/member of this body we can't be...the head...because that part belongs to Christ, the head of the Church...the head. Listen to Paul's words in Ephesians 1, ***"God placed all things under [Jesus'] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body..."***

And, I think you know the head is the most important part of the body, right? I mean, think of boxing. What is every boxer taught? Gloves up; protect the head.

And yet, what did Jesus, our head do? He took the blows for us...physically and eternally...as he was beaten by his enemies on the way to the cross, as his brow was pierced with the crown of thorns, his hands and feet ripped with spikes nailed through to the cross, his side sliced open so his blood could pour out for you...and on top of that, he selflessly shouldered your selfish sins and suffered hell for you.

You see, Jesus, the head, the most glorified part of the body, humbled himself to death to gain you the greatest compliment – forgiven, saved, saint – and the greatest complement – to be part of God's eternal family. He made a tremendous sacrifice through his life, death, and resurrection so that we could thrive under his headship.

That means we are released from self-centered care to care for others. Just think of your own body. That's what the kidney does...the "trash collector," filtering out the waste in your blood. That's what the brain does...making instantaneous decisions to protect your other members, keeping them from harming themselves. That's what the heart does...pumping warm blood throughout your body, supplying oxygen and nutrients to tissues and removing carbon dioxide and other wastes. That's what your pinky toe does, helping you keep your balance so you don't fall over every time you get up. And they all work together so cohesively.

In his love, God blends us (as that's what the word combine in verse 24 literally means, "blending")...he blends us together so that we can work together for the good of the body....meaning there's no room for division.

And that takes work on our part. You remember how *Stone Soup* ends? As the soldiers leave the village, the people say, "Such men don't grow on every bush." Members of Christ's body who are so focused on the good of entire body and not on themselves...those people don't grow on every bush.

But, by the grace of God, those people are you. You are gifted. You are important. We need your gifts. Your spouse needs you to use your gifts in the home. Your kids need you to use your gifts in their upbringing. We need you to use your gifts at Light of the World. God needs you to use your gifts...whether big or small. Another pastor once said, "**Leaders in the church are necessary, but followers are needed too. The church needs both generals and privates.**"

If a man dislocates his little toe, his whole body is wracked with pain, even though only a seemingly insignificant body part is involved. If the finger is pinched, the other members of the body are concerned and rush to its aid. They do not say to the finger, "That's your problem." If someone compliments a young girl on her beautiful hair, the rest of her body doesn't sulk. The entire girl glows with pleasure. We cannot assign value to our body parts. We won't. They are all valuable. If one body part is in trouble, the rest of the body is concerned. If one part rejoices, the rest of the body joins in.

You have complementary gifts! You've already started discovering them. Challenge yourself to grow into them, to think of ways to put them into practice, to help complete this body.

And, as you do, I'll compliment you. Thank you for using your gifts in service to Jesus and his people here. I know it's not the reason why we serve (to get the compliment), but I for one can tell you it's nice it is to feel appreciated, like your work meant something, like your gifts are noticed. So, again, thank you. And maybe don't let me be the only one to say that thank you. It's ok for you to say that as well! We are the body of Christ. We are in this together. We can make our appreciation known to each other.

You are gifted! You have complementary gifts. You have indispensable gifts. So, use them? Of course we will. With Jesus directing the body, we are able to provide meaningful service with the gifts of God's grace. We will work to complement one another in the way that we use our gifts—identifying and utilizing the specific gifts God has given us to benefit others...for his glory. Thank you, Jesus! Amen.