

Gifted: You Have God-Given Gifts!

A sermon based on 1 Corinthians 12:1-12.

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

Gifted! Are you gifted? I have a cousin who's gifted...or was gifted, I'm not so sure anymore. I mean, growing up, he fit the bill of someone who's gifted – having exceptional talent or ability. He was a genius, skipped a few grades, I think he went to Cal Tech or one of those highly ranked technical colleges, landed a great job coding for one of those Silicon Valley-type companies. Not too shabby, right?!?

What about you? Again, are you gifted? Would you consider yourself to have exceptional talents or abilities?

I think I know what the Corinthians' answer would have been. You see, 1 Corinthians was written by Paul to the congregation in Corinth as a way to answer a series of questions they had posed to him. And so, as Paul starts out, ***“Now about spiritual gifts,”*** the assumption is they had asked him to comment on the topic of spiritual gifts...because when it came to that area, they had them in spades. The believers in Corinth had been blessed in abundance by God with spiritual gifts. Yet, it appears their mindset was along the lines of “well, we're such a spiritually gifted church, we'll teach these apostles a thing or two,” whereas the reality was their unwise use/abuse of those gifts resulted in cliquishness and divisiveness in the church.

They needed the lesson, thus, Paul's words in chapter 12 this morning...and his words in rest of chapter 12, as well as chapter 13 and chapter 14, which we'll be spending some time on in the coming weeks. They needed quite a few lessons.

So, first of all, Paul reminded them of the greatest gift they all shared, ***“No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”*** Do you know the gift? We call it the “gift of the Holy Spirit.” It's saving faith, which you know why it's so great, right? It connects us to Christ and to the awesome results of Christ's work for us on the cross.

That gift, again, faith in Jesus, they all possessed. But then, Paul went on, beginning to list all these other spiritual gifts, these manifestations of the Holy Spirit – the way the Holy Spirit shows himself and reveals God's love through the individual believer. That list, nowhere near exhaustive, includes the message of wisdom or the message of knowledge – in other words, being good at problem-solving, decision-making, giving godly counsel.

There's the gift of faith, which is different from the gift of saving faith in Jesus we were just talking about. This faith may coincide with the next couple of gifts, the gift of healing and the gift of miraculous powers...so a miracle-working faith. There's prophecy – not so much being able to tell the future, but speaking on God's behalf, speaking God's Word. Distinguishing between spirits is the ability to differentiate between true teachings and false teachings when it comes to God's Word. Speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues was more than being able to speak or interpret another language; it was the gift of speaking or interpreting a foreign language they had never learned or used before.

All those, spiritual gifts. All those, gifts from the Holy Spirit. All those, God-given gifts.

Now, it's a bit of a list, I know, but maybe a way to summarize...Paul's three main points about spiritual gifts here are: 1) spiritual gifts are given in great variety and abundance (*repeat*); 2) spiritual gifts all come from the same source, the Holy Spirit...God (*repeat*); 3) every believer has received his or her own gift or gifts (*repeat*).

So, according to that list, God's people in Corinth were gifted. Sure, there were different gifts given to different people. No person possessed all those gifts. Yet still, God's people in Corinth were gifted.

What about God's people at Light of the World? What about you? Again, are you gifted?

Alright, you might look at Paul's list here, say, "I don't have any of those," and conclude, "I'm not gifted."

But you are. If you haven't already, open up the "Time and Talent" survey I put in your worship folders for today. I want you to take about a minute right now, grab a pen, and start filling this out...and if you're sharing with a loved one, you can work on it together, maybe put your initials by the particular task or activity.

Now, I'll admit, this is a little out of the ordinary, a little different, maybe even a little outside of your comfort zone, but I'm asking all of you - yes for my sake, but for your own sake as well - to take this minute and start filling this out. I'll do the same

Now look that list over. What observations can you make? First off, if you circled something, which I'm assuming you all did, then you're gifted. You have spiritual gifts...gifts used for ministry, literally, gifts used for "service (that's what ministry means)" service to God and to God's people here.

The second observation - or maybe it's better as a question - are you using those gifts the way God intended? Are you using your spiritual gifts for God's purpose?

I mean, that's why gifts are given, right? Think about what you got at Christmas. The socks? Their purpose is to keep your feet dry, prevent athlete's foot from wearing the same pair over and over again. The what seemed like 15 different winter hats Mara got...to keep her head warm, yes, but I'm thinking it was to keep her looking cute. Even if it was just money you got, maybe the note said use this to help buy something for your kitchen or to help fix your car or even just go and have some fun. Gifts are given for a purpose.

Do you know what God's purpose is in giving you spiritual gifts? Well, here, Paul tells us, "**to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.**" Do you know what that means? All these spiritual gifts we've been given are intended to build up this family....the members of the Christian community we've built here...not for selfish advantage.

Now, also look at the bottom of your sheets. Read 1 Peter 4:10 along with me (either out loud or in your heads): "**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.**" What does that add to God's purpose? Serving others, yes, again, building this up...but also, administering God's grace, that is, showing and really dispensing God's love to others here.

But going a little further, the next verse of 1 Peter 4 concludes, "**so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.**" So, the

overarching goal for God giving you spiritual gifts is what? To give him glory. You are gifted. God has given you spiritual gifts, meaning he wants you to use them for spiritual reasons...to build up God's family here, to dispense God's love in doing that, and ultimately, to give God glory.

Are you? Is the answer any easier than looking at that list you began filling out a few minutes ago? If these are things that I'm good at and enjoy doing, and yet, the only manifestation of them has been on this sheet and not in actuality, then what does that say about me? What does that say to God?

Remember, earlier, I had said my cousin was gifted. Did any of you catch that? He WAS gifted. With all the intellectual abilities he had, you know what he's doing now? He joined a band, gave up this great-paying job where he had shown so much potential and promise to work in a guitar shop and spend his free time playing, I'm assuming, low paying gigs with his band. I know what his parents thought...what a waste.

Or, in the book of Acts, Paul was in Philippi, and this slave girl possessed by a spirit, was making loads of cash for her owners through her fortune-telling abilities. She even followed Paul around, rightly calling him a **"servant of the Most High God."** But it wasn't to give glory to God, so again, what a waste.

Could that be said about your spiritual gifts? Are you wasting something that's God-given...that God, in his infinite wisdom and eternal love for you, gave you. You can't claim ignorance; you have the proof sitting in front of you. Are you using your spiritual gifts to give glory to God? Do you even care if you're not? Does you think God cares?

Oh, he does...so much so, in fact, that instead of focusing on our question today, "Are you gifted?" he changed that around to this...you've been gifted! I mean, listen to his words in Romans 6, **"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Think about it. God, who in his love – his underserved love – has generously given you spiritual gifts and has watched as you let them go to waste, God decided the best course of action was to give you another gift. I mean, when does that ever happen in life? Rarely. But it's not just any gift. It's Jesus.

We get all hyped up about Christmas and God's gift to us in baby Jesus, but the real meat of that gift is what Jesus came to do. If you want to add some flavor from the gospel for today, in his love for us, his bride, Jesus vowed, "I'm willing to live for you, and I'm willing to die for you." And he did. .

I mean, talk about spiritual gifts. Healing sicknesses, calming storms, feeding thousands, raising the dead to life, man, did he have gifts. Did he use them to God's glory? Yeah, because you know what accompanied those gifts? The proclamation of the gospel...his miracles always pointed to God.

But going beyond that, because that wasn't Jesus living for us. His living for us was the life of perfection...every action, every word, every thought in line with God's commands. And that was for you, because you can't.

And, though he had earned heaven for himself, he was still willing to give that up to die for you. A real sacrifice – not the, "I guess I can spend a few hours doing this at church," but "I want to be on that cross, saturated with every sin of all time, forsaken even by my own Father, left to endure the atrocities of hell, to save you....to forgive you, my beloved!"

And now, even now, he lives for you. Raised from the dead, assuring you your sins are all gone...assuring you heaven is yours. The gift of God. You are gifted!

You have the proof. You have God's gift of grace – his underserved love – in Jesus...a present spilling over in your life, covering over all of your sins.

But going beyond that, you are gifted with spiritual gifts. Now, a quick lesson in the Greek language – free of charge! The Greek word for grace is “charis;” if you don't remember that in five minutes, that's ok. You know the Greek word for gift? In 1 Corinthians 1, where Paul first mentions spiritual gifts, he uses the word, “charisma,” which finds its root in, you guessed it, “charis,” grace. It's no accident. Your spiritual gifts are rooted in God's grace, his underserved love for you. Your spiritual gifts are God-given. Your spiritual gifts, given by God, are divine. Your spiritual gifts are what they are because you have a God who loves you too much, enough to say, “Here's the way you can say ‘thank you’ and give glory to me. Here are my gifts to you.” It's like sitting in Oprah's audience on one of her good days, as she sings out, “You get a car, you get a car, everyone gets a car,” but this is even better

Again, you have the proof...right here. You have the knowledge of your own gifts. You have the motivation to use those gifts.

My cousin, he's still gifted. He might not be putting his intellectual prowess to good use, but he loves music, he's got skills there, and he's enjoying it.

Through God's grace, you are gifted. You have God-given gifts, meaning he's given you the skills. You know what they are. Now, we get to – and we will - enjoy using them to God's purpose - to build up God's family here, to dispense God's love in doing that, and ultimately, to give God glory.

God grant us grace in doing that. Amen.