

The Gifts of the Spirit

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[0 : 00] This is a sermon from King's Church West, William. Just before we kind of leap out of that moment, let me just pray for us again.

! I think it can be so easy, can't it, to move from worship like that and kind of change gear and you kind of forget what God's doing in the room. Actually, what we want is to kind of sense what He's doing and continue to follow what the Spirit is leading us to do.

So let me continue to pray and hopefully that leads us in, actually it leads us in perfectly to what God has to say through the preach this morning, this afternoon. I need to get used to that. Father, Father, thank you that you did not leave us in a position where we were in doubt of what you thought of us or the purpose of our lives.

But the Lord, through what you did on that cross, we now can be sure, sure, that we have died with you, Jesus.

And that on the third day you did rise from the dead. And we have been raised with you to new life.

And that today is another Resurrection Sunday.

[1 : 32] It's another day living alive in you. And so Lord, if we know you, if we put our trust in you, we live now in light of the Resurrection.

We have Resurrection life to live. And today is the day. Today is the day that the Lord has made.

And so Lord, I just pray that you put that on our hearts that as we open up your word, it wouldn't be dislocated from what you've just brought.

But then we would see that there's a pattern here, there's a theme, there's something that you want to do in each of us. You want us to remember the life we have, the purpose we have in you.

And that no matter where we think we're at on any kind of scale, Lord, you look at our CVs and you see saint, you see holy one, chosen, special possession, set apart for your work.

So Lord, I pray now that you would fill with the power of your Holy Spirit each of our hearts with that kind of hope, that kind of purpose. In Jesus' name.

[2 : 57] Amen. Amen. So good to be here with you. Thank you for having me again. It was about a year ago, I think, that I was here. I'm very scared that I'm going to drop everything that's on here.

But I think we did all right. I just want to send you my greetings from Glasgow Graves from the church because we have a really special relationship amongst the churches in Scotland in New Frontiers.

We actually see each other quite often as elders, including Gordon. I do that kind of thing all the time.

All the time. And so we do, we see each other regularly, we pray together, we usually meet at Kings and Edinburgh. And it's a real joy. But we do have these little moments as well where maybe people speak at different churches.

And I believe that we sent a little team to help you with your kids and our growth. And one of them was reminding me of that today. So, yeah, we just really appreciate you guys.

[4 : 02] We want you to know that we love you. We're cheering for you. We're praying for you, more importantly, regularly. Well, when we first moved back to Glasgow, we spent a couple of years at Lindsay and at that point Annabelle, our oldest, and now Finley as well.

We kind of bounced around different rental properties. Finley was born in there somewhere. And eventually, we were able to buy a house. Now, we promised ourselves that we wouldn't get a do-rupper.

But of course, we bought a do-rupper. And it needed a lot of work, a lot of attention. It needed us to get architects involved and engineers involved and all kinds of tradespeople.

And as I read through Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 and see how God gifts his church with the spiritual gifts, I can't help but imagine the building of a new house.

The New Testament repeats again and again that gifts are given for the building up of the church. It's much like the imagery Peter gives, isn't it, of living stones. Jesus is the cornerstone and we are these living stones being built up together in this temple of praise.

[5 : 17] And like any good building project, there's some planning that needs to be done before we get going. And actually, before we get to the kind of jobs that we do, which we often want to jump to, it's very important that we build according to those plans.

And so I'm just going to keep referencing Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 as we begin with the workers. What is God looking for in the workers in this building project?

And then, before we get to those gifts, the plans. And then, when we talk about gifts, I'm going to talk about in the context of this building project. and we're going to talk about the trades that God has in mind to build his church.

So, let me turn first to Ephesians 4. If you have a Bible to open up. And to begin with, I'm just going to read the first three verses.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle.

[6 : 34] Be patient, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

First thing I want to say is that as a worker of God, he is already satisfied with your CV. That's why Paul opens his letters both to the Ephesians and to the Corinthians with a reminder of all that life flows from.

All of church life certainly flows from this. It's the gospel of grace. Paul's pen runs away from him at the beginning of Ephesians.

you might remember this breathless and poetic praise of his in Ephesians 1. Thanking God for their adoption to sonship now that they're hidden in Christ.

To the Corinthians in their chaos, he gives nine verses helping them to remember, remember, you are holy and you're also being sanctified, increasing in holiness.

[7 : 42] You are his people. And then he thanks God for these messy Christians. Not because they're great, but because they are recipients of grace.

Their new identities are in God and they're no longer sinners, they're saints. The architect God has not gone out to tender when we did our project.

we did go out to tender and we were very careful about who it was that we were going to trust to do the building work. But it seems that God has done this in a very different way.

He doesn't want us to prove ourselves that we can do it and that we are reliable. He doesn't go out to tender. He has already chosen his workers. You're his workers.

Chosen from before the beginning of creation. Hard to believe, I know. it's me and you he's chosen as his workers.

[8 : 47] He's looked at our CVs and because of Christ, he is very pleased. He's called us to now live up to our CV and give ourselves to joining this building work of his.

As 1 Corinthians 3.9 says, don't you love this? we are now fellow labourers with God. He has made you a builder in his kingdom and given you gifts.

He even says the weakest looking among us, 1 Corinthians 12.22, are indispensable. Hey, you're indispensable.

I know this isn't very Scottish but I loved that you did this earlier. Can you do it again? Could you turn to someone nearby and say you are indispensable? Good.

You are. You're indispensable but there is quite the gap between who we now are, our new identities in Christ and the way that we often behave.

[10 : 02] Perhaps you know something of that. I do. The church in Corinth was really struggling to reflect much of the gospel in the way they were behaving.

Be ready for that. I'm going to be jumping between Corinth and Ephesus. Don't worry, we're not getting confused. We'll just go between the two, okay? Yet these guys, these believers in Corinth weren't lacking in any of the gifts.

So Paul says, so if you want all the gifts, okay, you don't actually need to listen to this next bit. So if that's you, you just want the gifts and you don't care about how things are built, you just want the

spectacular gifts, then you actually don't need to listen to all the teaching that Paul gives around it. I wouldn't recommend it. It looks really chaotic and I'm pretty sure I wouldn't want to be part of a church like that. but you don't actually need to be doing all these things to be the workers that he wants you to be if you want the gifts because they're given by grace.

Okay, Ephesians 1 through 3 is just going to help us see what kind of worker does he want us to be. So he's given us this new CV, okay, so you're a saint not a sinner, but now he wants you to live up to that CV.

[11:27] He's saying, okay, this is who you are. You're holy, now be holy as I am holy. The first thing he says in verse 1 is that he wants us to be a devoted people, wholly committed to him, not people just looking to do some cool miracles or be entertained, but people who give themselves to him no matter the outcome.

Paul doesn't just give his appeal to this devotion from chains, he was in chains, but he actually uses his chains, his imprisonment, for the basis of his appeal, which I think is a very odd way to try and convince people of something, don't you think?

Hey, do this because I'm in chains and you could be in chains too. He is clearly not looking for sympathy.

let's come be like me, revel in the glories of Christ by going to the end of yourself. Whatever the end of yourself looks like, be desperate for Jesus.

Paul finds glory, beauty, purpose, joy, fulfillment and the power of God in his life at the end of himself. In other words, he realises his need for God on the deepest of levels.

[12:47] There's a desperation for what is more worthy than any of the shiny things in the world, including God's gifts. Church father, Theodore, Theodore, do you know this person's name?

I'm terrible at pronunciation. Theodore, is that right? I could have said anything. Great. He said this of Paul, he glories in chains more than a king in diadem.

He glories in chains more than a king in diadem. Above our desire for gifts and position, we must ask ourselves, do we actually desire these things because we want more of Jesus and his kingdom?

Or some other reason? Are we willing to throw all of it away as long as we've got Jesus? If that's where we are, we're in a very good position to receive and use gifts in power the way that we're supposed to be used to build in the way that God wants us to build.

God is looking for devoted workers. He's also looking for a kind of devotion that is humble. The word humility here literally means lowliness of mind.

[14:11] Jesus' lowliness of mind took him all the way to the cross. His humility brought us honour. Paul's saying, want to be like Jesus?

Be willing to lay yourselves down again and again and again for the sake of others. This is how he wants us to build. He wants a Christianity that is alive because we are radically laying ourselves down, dying so people could have life around us.

that is the shape of the Christian life. And so the gifts we pursue and receive must be used for the sake of others. These gifts are not just for our fun, to make us feel good, to get position, acclaim.

No. They're for others. It's not about whether others deserve our honour. it's not tit for tat. Praise Jesus, he did not think of it that way.

And we must be willing to lose ourselves in the same way. John Stott said before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us.

[15:27] It's why Jesus' brother James says God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. If we get the cross and want the power of the cross for us, then we surely will see that a humble life is the right response.

To live for self cannot be gospel life. We must rid ourselves of the motives for self-acclaim. If we don't and we receive these gifts in power, which we can do remember, it will not be good for us or for those around us.

true glory like Paul finds in chains and Ephesian believers aspire to is humility. God is looking for humble workers. He's also looking for us to be gentle.

No leader can even begin to compare to Jesus on the impact that he made on the earth. There is no one that gets anywhere near it.

He is the greatest leader to have ever lived and he said this about himself, I am gentle and lowly in heart. Do not confuse kindness or gentleness, fruits of the spirit, for weakness.

[16:47] Now there is a kind of weakness to it and it's to be embraced. But it's to be embraced in the way that Jesus does. Jesus trumps any cultural hero you can think of for strength of character. He led not with a forcefulness, but gentleness and the world is still listening. Jesus is not looking for workers who desire the gifts for power or self-importance. He doesn't want peacocks and loud voices. He just wants us to embody his humility and gentleness, to rely on his power, to lay ourselves down for the sake of others and for his glory and allow our trust in him to be where we garner strength. He also wants us to be patient. God has been patient with us and if we want to thrive in our spiritual gifts, we need to be patient with each other. It's easier said than done, isn't it? we need to have the willingness to have long suffering towards people who are difficult.

[18:05] Church life is great for that. Really good. I mean, if you were in church with me, you'd be thinking about me, honestly. And that is actually a good thing.

Not that those people do things that they shouldn't do or that I do things I shouldn't do. But that God uses these things to help us to become more like Christ, to lean in, to get nearer people when they're sinning, when they're annoying.

It's good for us. We need to be quick, to be slow, to be patient with people, to be patient like God is patient with us. God is looking for us to be patient as we work.

And finally, he wants us to be tenacious. Jesus wants workers to put in the effort. We'll see in a minute, unity is a gift from the Spirit and Paul shows us how it cannot be destroyed.

Yet, he calls us to eagerly maintain this unity. unity. We know this is true of any other family, right?

[19:12] Some families are close, some families not so close, some totally estranged, some are not really living as family at all.

It requires us to work at it. We have to be intentional about our relationships. As a writer to the Hebrews says, do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another.

To use more biblical language, make every effort. Fight the good fight. that means we can't wait for it all to be done for us or to us.

We, like Christ, must be willing to make first moves. So I plead with you, ask God for the courage you need to be a builder, to be proactive, to walk across the room and have that difficult conversation.

Want to be a worker for Jesus? Turn up when you don't feel it. Give when you feel like you just want to receive. Speak truth and love, especially when all you want to do is shrink back and hide.

[20:24] When there's an opportunity for kindness, hospitality, to listen, be tenacious, keep going.

Don't just do the easy thing. As you do and the gifts come, that is when we'll be able to see the power of God at work in people's lives.

Not just a spectacle, but people being changed, being built up. If we're going to be workers in the kingdom, we need to be devoted, humble, gentle, patient, tenacious.

Those are the workers God is looking for. Alright, that's the workers. What about the plans? Don't worry, we're getting there. We're going to get to these gifts in just a minute. First, Paul wants us to see the purpose and plans God has for the gifts, to God's vision for them.

So let me keep reading through this passage, verse 4, Ephesians 4. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

[21:31] One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. The triune architect holds the eternal plans.

Plans where every single part that makes up this new build was thought of in advance. And the plans are based on the oldest and most reliable plans that there are.

The image of the community of God. God said, let us make man in our image. In Genesis 1, 27, all community is made to image the personhood of God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

To be one in spirit is to rediscover the design of the community's architect. Our one spirit is the Holy Spirit who joins us as one people set apart to image the community of the Godhead.

Our hope is this, a new humanity in Christ. We're hidden in Christ. And so we have access to God and can image God again as holy people.

[22:43] That's why Paul describes the church here as the body. Christ is the head through him. We are united to God and through Christ we are connected to one another.

And whether you're a lung or a foot or a shoulder, there is no opt-in or opt-out. You cannot be a Christian united to Christ and without being united to one another.

Ephesians 2.15 already called us one person. we are by nature one body held together by one spirit. So I'm sorry guys but you don't have a choice.

Look around. You're connected. But as you may even have experienced in this excellent church may I say, gospel unity is not always our lived experience.

Just look at the chaos that was going in Corinth culminating at their gatherings, infighting, greed, cliques all over the room. And even though as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12.7 the spiritual gifts are given for the common good, the use of spiritual gifts in Corinth was not doing much good for anyone.

[23 : 53] You see, you can have all the gifts and use them in a very unhelpful way. If the gifts aren't used for love, Paul says we are like clanging cymbals.

We might be heard but it's useless. because of that, the gospel screams when it comes to the gifts. Do not fixate yourselves on the many gifts of the body. In verse 7 you're going to see that they are only given to help us live out our union with Christ and increase unity among us.

the spirit of God is acting like ligaments, tendons, muscles, cartilage in the body, uniting and strengthening each body part together and the gifts are given to help with that, to maintaining unity and ushering one another to Christ our head.

God so every time you use a spiritual gift, whether that be administration or whether that be tongues or whether that be a prophecy, every time we must remember that its purpose is to glorify Christ ahead and maintain our unity, maintain and build our unity.

[25 : 33] God has made plans clear and he has set out the kind of workers he desires us to be. Now we're ready to talk about the gifts and don't worry it won't take too long. Finally we get to the gifts themselves, the trades.

In C.S. Lewis he's the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Aslan comes to the children as Father Christmas to remember this bit and he gives them all gifts. He says these are your presents and they are tools not toys.

The time to use them is perhaps near. Bear them well. In our house in England we made a mistake when we decided to put in a WC in the downstairs cupboard, hall cupboard.

We decided we would get one guy who said he could do everything. He was going to be doing the joinery work, he was going to do the plumbing, he was going to do the plastering, he was going to do the tiling and he gave us a very good price.

So I thought okay let's go for it. Turns out he was a joiner and he should have stuck to that. A building requires all kinds of traits, working together and complementing each other to build a functional and beautiful building.

[26 : 49] The church requires all kinds of gifts. That's why Paul says to the Corinthians and 1 Corinthians 12, to one there is given through the spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

He then goes on to ask rhetorical questions in verses 29 and 30 of the same chapter.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? No is the answer.

No. And he has already written in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all needed. The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.

And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. So no one person gets them all, but we all receive something. Some receive many, but the mark of the spirit is diversity within unity, and it's on display through the giving and receiving of gifts.

[28 : 12] There are many gifts that Paul says in Ephesians 4 11 through 12 are given to equip the saints for ministry. And he says they are given, as 1 Corinthians 12 says, for the good of all.

So we've got lots of gifts, and we could talk about all of those, but you're going to want to go home soon, so I'm not going to talk about all of them. But I am going to talk a little bit now, just as we close, about how we receive those gifts.

And I think there's actually a very simple loop. It's quite practical, really. Ask, try, encourage. Ask, try, encourage.

So we approach this as a church, as one body, you guys, will be approaching this as a church. This is never, this is never applied biblically to individuals.

Just not. It's applied to the church, and for the benefit of the church. So the first thing you guys are going to have to think through, and maybe you're already doing, is ask.

[29 : 16] The gifts are exactly that, they are given. God gives gifts and they do not come by way of a personality test. God loves to receive our requests and to give his children good gifts and so it amazes me that when it comes to the gifts we often don't ask.

John Blumhart, a 19th century German pastor, wrote, I long for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, another Pentecost. That must come if things are to change in Christianity for it simply cannot continue in such a wretched state.

The gifts and the powers of the early time, oh how I long for their return. And I believe the Saviour is just waiting for us to ask for them. We, as a movement of churches, have seen some of that.

our history tells us that that does happen. And it should tell us that it can happen again. When we ask, we've got to be careful that the individualitis of our culture doesn't blind us to the irony of taking the letters given to churches where all the language is corporate and apply it to me.

I was watching Wales v. England in the rugby yesterday. Did you watch that? Maybe one or two if you're interested in that oval-shaped, egg-shaped game that I like. And a guy called Ellis Mee got the ball out wide for Wales.

[30 : 43] I love this. Ellis Mee is in the wide channel and he's got a three-on-one. That means he's got two people outside him and one defender in front of him. They should score. All he needs to do is pass.

But Ellis Mee decided not to pass. And the commentator quick as a flash said it should have been we not me. The same is true for us.

We always need to be thinking we not me. With the exception of a certain type of tongues, prayer language, all the gifts should be pursuing the gifts.

We should be pursuing them together and for the benefit of each other. Okay, so God gives and we need to ask. We need to ask.

We need to try. We need to try. What I mean by that is that we give it a go. We've got to start giving it a go in faith.

[31 : 40] I received a call to teach and lead when I was at a Bible camp years ago. I was 18 years old. Honestly, I had no idea. Not a clue what I was doing.

I went back and I told my pastor at the time, he said, okay, we'll give you some opportunities. Why don't you start with some youth and then we'll do some other things. I was dreadful. Now, you might still think I'm dreadful. But the development of a gift can take time.

It doesn't necessarily start immediately to be an incredible gift. And I think sometimes we think they're kind of beamed down to us, but actually that's not the way it works.

The Spirit gives us a gift and then we work on it with God. It's an element in which we just get on with what's in front of us. With what God is doing and trust God for what he's going to give.

You might be catching up over dinner with someone in church later tonight or maybe through the week and maybe they say, I've got a sore wrist. Here's a good question.

[32 : 45] Shall we pray for that? If they say yes, would you mind if I just laid a hand and ask God to heal it? See how you can just kind of start feeling these things out, whatever's in front of you, use it as an opportunity to try.

It's often the case with tongues or prophecy. I'm not sure I've spoken to anyone who had their tongue taken over and they just began to speak a prophecy out without it first coming into their minds and they need to speak it out in faith.

Same is true of tongues. You start speaking out in faith and hope that you might have received this gift. After a while you kind of find out but you need to kind of speak it out.

God doesn't take your tongue over. You've got to speak it out and try. It's faith. Tentative phrases are good. I think God might be saying or I keep getting this picture and I wonder is it from God?

Better that we try than quench what the Spirit is doing in us. Ask, try and finally, encourage. It's clear that every gift should be valued and more importantly the people who God has given gifts to should be honoured.

[34 : 03] The church in Rome was encouraged to outdo one another in honour. When you see someone using their gift or they make an impact in your life by faithfully using the gift that they have, would you take the time to thank them?

honour them, honour the gifts, honour what God is doing amongst you. They might not even know that they've got a gift. You need to let each other know God's using you.

I think God might have given you a gift of whatever it is. Alright, let me wrap up. We are workers to the vision of the community's architect, all building unity with our different trades.

Be devoted, be humble, be gentle, be patient, be tenacious, that's the kind of workers he's looking for, and eagerly desire all the gifts of the Spirit across this wonderful church.

Why? Because there is one body, one Spirit, and one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God and Father over all. Now get stuck in and allow yourselves to get into this loop in the church.

[35 : 22] Ask, try, and encourage. Lord, thank you for this wonderful church. Thank you, God, for what you're doing amongst them. Thank you, Lord, that you love to give gifts. You're a good father and you love to give gifts to your children.

But I pray that some of the words that came earlier about purpose and about stepping into the things that God has for people today, now, not just waiting for things.

Lord, I pray that this little loop would help. Ask, try, encourage. I pray, Father, that people take that into their hearts, what you have said to them through your word, and that they would trust your word, and that they would find that they begin to receive gifts and see them used in great power, and that unity would come as a result.

we love you, Lord, and we say they're your gifts, and we lay ourselves down and say, would you give us gifts? We eagerly desire them, as 1 Corinthians 14 says we should.

Amen. Amen. Ian, thank you so much.