

BETHANY COMMUNITY CHURCH

April 25, 2021

JACQUES: Good morning, and welcome to Bethany Community Church. For those who don't know me, my name is Jacques McCord, and I'm one of the elders here at Bethany.

We're glad that you chose to worship with us, no matter where you are or how you're connecting with us. This is truly a joyous day. It is our final Sunday that we will be 100% virtual. That's right, after a long wait, we will finally begin to come together in person.

There is limited space, so you will need to register. There is a link located in the mid-week email.

This last year has been very difficult, but God has guided and sustained us the entire way. He is worthy to be praised. I pray that the songs and the message today will bless and touch your hearts. Please enjoy the service.

AMY: Good morning, Bethany Community Church! I am so glad that you all are here today with us. If you are new or this is your first time, go ahead and let us know in the chat. We would love to connect with you and we would love to get to know you a little bit better.

So I am here this morning to bring you all of your announcements, which are actually a lot of announcements this morning. So get ready!

No, so I'm going to start out with www.bethanylaurel.org/announcements. That's our web page with all the announcements. It has all the details, all the things that I don't actually have time to hit this morning. Go ahead, check it out. You can find everything that you really need there.

So first of all, we have a new women's focus study starting up. It will start May 13th. You will need to register. Interpreting services are available upon request. And there's also a study guide to download. All of that is on the announcements page, and you can find the dates and deadlines and whatnot there. It seems like a really great study. It's called "What the Women Saw." There's also a trailer on the announcements page too for that. So check it out.

Nextly -- "nextly!" What kind of word is that! Anyways, we are also meeting back in the building next week in the start of our phased regathering process. We are super excited about this. But also there's a lot of changes. As the entire world is right now, we are

trying to keep people safe, so there are a lot of new things. So you will need to register on the website. Go to the announcements page. You can do that there. There's also a lot of things that are different, like we aren't passing the offering bucket because that's a lot of people touching that bucket. And things like that. So if you go on the web page, you can see some of the things to expect when you come in to the building after you register for that.

Another thing is that there are a lot of new things going on in our building. We have new carpet in the sanctuary, the youth space like Alli has talked about last week has been painted and added some cool features, updates. So just as you're coming in to our building, look for some of the new things and the exciting upgrades that we've been able to do.

Another thing that you can find on our website is if you would like to financially support us, there's the "give" tab, and that's also on our app. So that is available to you all as well.

Whew, so that was a lot. Go to the announcements page, check out all of the details, because we are excited! We're excited about all of these things that are happening.

All right. Let's go ahead and pray for the rest of our service.

God in heaven, we thank You for the opportunity to be here even in this very different way of meeting together. I ask that You would soften our hearts to Your word and help us to be ready to hear from You.

We just thank You for all that You are doing. We thank You for the exciting things happening in our church family, and just ask that we would have soft hearts to You and that You would be working in big ways, amen.

PASTOR NATE: Amen, amen. Hey, I'm so glad that you're here with us for week 2 of our series entitled "Trustworthy Trustees." This week we're going to go into another section of how we should handle the things that God has entrusted to us.

Let me pray for you before we get into that.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for another opportunity, another day to come before Your throne. We thank You that even now, as we are in our homes or in our cars or wherever we might be, that Your word can extend through these networks and through the technology that You have afforded to us.

Lord, I pray now that where each person is, that You might touch their hearts, prepare their hearts. Guide my words that Your word might be manifested in them so that they might apply it.

Now, Lord, I thank You for this opportunity. I thank You for using me. And I pray now that You might allow those who are viewing this cast or listening to the podcast to hear You in this moment. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Turn with me, if you will, to 1 Peter 4:1-11. We're really going to hone in on the back part of this passage. You see, this series gives us a litany or a list of things that we have been entrusted. Last week I told you how we defined a trustee, and essentially it's that something has been placed in your care for you to use and execute in the manner and according to the will of the person who it actually belongs to.

We're used to hearing this term because in many churches, they might have a board of trustees. In Bethany's articles of incorporation, the trustees of the church actually is listed as the elders of the church. So we're not unfamiliar with this term.

But one of the ways that we overlook it is that you and I are each called to be trustees of the many things that God has given to us, whether it be our children, whether it be our finances. And today specifically, the gifts that He has given to us.

So looking at this passage, we're going to pick up here in 1 Peter, where Peter is encouraging a community of believers to endure. They're facing intense persecution that was prevalent during this time, and he seeks out to encourage them. And in this time, he goes through a list of things. He deals with holy living and submission to authority and husbands and wives. He deals with suffering for righteousness sake, all before he gets to chapter 4.

In chapter 4, the Bible says, reading at verse 1: "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does. The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

I want to focus in here, if because here we see Peter, he goes through a list of things. He compares and contrasts those who are living contrary to the word. He puts a number of categories there, including that term we talked about last week, "debauchery," or this lavish excessiveness in these areas. He talks about all of that.

He talks about how you might be judged in the flesh, but the reality is, all of us will be judged by God who is in the Spirit, and that's how we should flow. We should function in accordance with that.

But when we pick up here in verse 10, and actually, I'll back up just slightly, because here he says in verse 8 "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." And it's here in verse 10 that I want to pick up and hone in because here, after giving at least two references of time, the time we spent living one way versus the other, which is something we talked about last week, about how we handle the time, here we want to talk about the gift that God has given to us. And the thing I want you to remember is that the gift that God has given you comes with responsibility and a purpose. The gifts that God has placed in you comes with a responsibility and a purpose. And that is also true for me.

So I want to talk about that for a minute. And here are some things I want to give you out of this text as we're used to, so if you're taking notes, you can go ahead and write this down, that when God gives us a gift, we are called with that gift to serve others. We are called to serve others.

We see this in verse 10. The Bible says in verse 10, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." I want to talk about this for a little bit here, because it's important for us, before we realize that we have to serve another, that we show gratitude -- coming off of last week -- that God Himself decided to give us the gifts that we have. You see here it starts off in verse 10 and says that "As each has received a gift." That "receive" means to get something or come into possession of whether physically or abstract. What that means is because of where we fit into this, we did not go acquire a gift. We did not go create the gift. But whatever gifting you have, it's on you to maybe grow that gift and expand that gift, but the gift that was placed in you was given by God.

What do I mean by that? Some of us are musically inclined. You know, I have a natural ability, my wife will tell you, I can sit down at a piano and I can hear a song and I can replicate the song. And many would look and say, well, how did you learn that? And the reality is, I taught myself to play by ear. I would listen and I could have the ability to replicate it.

I can also draw things that I see. So if I'm looking, I can just draw, and I haven't really taken an art class, and I didn't take training for piano. But yet I could do it. God gifted me in those areas and in some other areas.

And the greatest sign that God was the one who gifted me it was that He placed the same gift into my older son. You see, my son, he just turned 10. So he's kind of getting a little taller and he's making me nervous because I can see the day when he will look down on me. But I noticed something in him looking up to me. He saw me playing the piano, and we had a little keyboard that I used to have that I used to play on until I got my new one. And we set it out where he can play on it. And one day I was listening, and my son was recreating on his keyboard what he heard me playing on mine. And I realized that God had given him a similar gift to what He had given me as it relates to music, and that it was on us to steward the gift that God had given him. That we were supposed to help him mature in the gift. But first we had to recognize that the gift was given by God and not ourselves.

And if we have to do that for my son and the other two children in the areas that God has gifted them, then it stands to reason that we all should take a step back and thank God that He gave us the gifts we have. And if we recognize that the gifts were given by God, then we also should recognize that if He gave us the gift, that there's a purpose and a plan for that gift.

Peter here talks about it very quickly. He says as each has received a gift, and then he tells us something behind it in here in verse 10, and he says "use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." You see, when we look at this next part of this singular verse, he says use it. Use the gift. That means the gift that God gave you, he didn't give you to sit on it. You see, he didn't give me gifts and talents that I was just supposed to be a hoarder, but He gave me those gifts and talents. So I've received the gift, but I was given the gift and then instructed to use the gift.

And that use of the gift has a purpose as well, and that is to serve one another. So for some of us, it might be music. And if your gift is singing, then you use the gift to edify others with your voice. And if you're a musician, you use your gift to do the same to the glory of God. And here it says to serve one another. And that word "serve" is an interesting word because it's derived from the same word that we get deacon from all over the scriptures, and what it means is, to serve or minister, to attend to the wants and needs of others. It means you're going to use whatever gift God gave you. Maybe your gift is that for whatever reason, you were just gifted with the ability to cook even when no one showed you. Are you feeding anybody with that gift? Or maybe you've been given the gift to speak. What are you speaking with the gift that God gave you? Maybe it's to sing. Are you using the gift?

For this community, Peter has just pointed out that they had gifts, each of them, as God so designed, from one Lord, one Spirit, just as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, but here he's pointing out that you have a purpose for that gift. And it's the same in our body and in our church. And here when I say body, I mean the body of Christ. Each one of us has a gift, and if we're sitting on it, we are not serving our God well, because not only are we -- going back to last week -- not redeeming the time, not reclaiming the time, because we're not operating in His will because if God gave us the gift, then it's His will that we would use that gift, and in this case, to serve one another.

And I call us to this because I think that it's important for us to realize that just as we're supposed to handle our time well, we're supposed to handle the gift that God has given us well, because He didn't give it to you to sit on it. He didn't give you the gift to just put it in the closet and only share it with yourself.

You know, it dawned on me that as a parent -- I have small children, and many of you do too, and I realized that whenever we have or have had any type of sweets around, my children forget about balance. You see, when my son was younger, and even my daughter when she was a little bit younger, I thank God that they've gotten better recently, but what they would do is, if we had anything worth having, anything that tasted very good, both of them would go in and try to eat as much of it as they could, to keep it to themselves. Then they would take whatever was left over, if we had muffins for breakfast one day and we kept some for the next day, they would wake up as early as they could, run down the stairs, and try to consume the remainder.

You see, in their mind, it was all about them. They were young and they were children. But the reality is, some of us have child-like instincts, that God gives us gifts and we assume He gave it to me just for me. But the reality is, anything that God has placed in your care already has a plan and a purpose, and He is giving it to you so that you might use it for His glory.

And some of you may be saying, well, wait a minute, well how come God hasn't given me the gift. The reality is, He can't give you what you won't give away. So whether it be a gift or some other thing, God will only entrust to your hands what He can trust you to do His will with.

I want to continue in this verse, but I want to give you a different point to write in your notes. You see, the first thing I gave you is that you are called to serve others.

The second thing I want to give you is that you are called to steward the gift that God gave you. You're called to serve others and called to steward the gift that God has given to you.

Still sitting in verse 10, the Bible says, "As each has received the gift, use it to serve one another." We just talked about that. We are to serve one another, to meet the needs of one another, collectively and individually. As the church, we are called to serve the needs of the community. We are called to take the gospel into the community. And yet within the walls of the church, each of us has a gift that we can bring to bear to do God's will in the community.

But the back half of that verse says, "as good stewards of God's varied grace." I want to talk about these. I want to give you three words to look at. "Good." We look at "good" and most of the time we see it as the moral side of it. I want to give you, the word here is kaloi, and what it means here is, having desirable or positive qualities, especially those suitable for a thing specified.

"Steward" here is an administrator, a supervisor. One who supervises or has charge and direction of a thing.

And this "grace" here is the grace, it's the outworking, it's the resulting activity that is the necessary consequence of genuine, beneficial goodwill, especially used of the outworking of God's goodwill.

So when we see this, we are supposed to have the qualities necessary to steward or administer the gift that God has given us because of the grace that He has extended toward us. And what does that mean? That means God gave you the gift, and as a steward of it, it's not yours. You're meant to use it, manage it, and administer it according to His will. We have to learn that we are stewards of the things God has given to us. No, it doesn't belong to me. No, it's not just about me. Anything that God has placed in my hands, there's a purpose to it. And some of it is for my benefit and yet some of it is for the benefit of another.

And here Paul talking to this community that has been dealing with hardship, that has been dealing with an external circumstance and culture that do not like this community, that would like to squash this community, he says, hey, it's on you to encourage one another, using the gift that God has given you, that you might serve one another well, and you're going to do it because you are a good steward. Not because He gave you

something that just belonged to you. Not because He told you that you were the greatest thing or told me that I was the greatest thing. Not because I just have these talents. But because God gave me something for the world.

Then the text goes on, and I want to talk to this a little bit, because after you realize that not only are you meant to serve one another, that serving means to meet the needs of someone else, and not only are we called to steward the gift that God has given us, because all of our gifts came from God with a purpose and a plan.

We are also called to use the gifts to glorify God. After Peter says that in verse 10, I'm going to read right from verse 10 into verse 11, and the Bible says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God provides, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

I want to talk about this because he lays out some interesting things here. Paul -- not Paul, I'm sorry. Peter walks out and he says, use the gift the way God has designed you to use the gift that He has given to you, as a steward of it, knowing that it's by God's grace that it was given. And when you do it, understand some examples. In verse 11, he gives some examples. He says, "Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God." That word "oracle" here means saying or collection, a message that is stated or declared by a particular person, especially divine messages that are gathered together to form a collection.

And what he's saying here is when you speak, speak as you are speaking the will and the word of God. And when that comes to me, it hits home, because, see, as a kid, I talked a lot. And my son now talks a lot. And the only distinction between my son and me now is that I've figured out that God gave me a gift to communicate His word. So when I speak, I try to speak the word of God. That's what He is saying here. He says, "Whoever speaks, as one who speaks the word of God." So speak it and proclaim it, not as your own words but what God would have you to say.

Then he says, "Whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God provides." So he says, when you serve, don't serve to your own exhaustion. Don't serve to your own limits. But serve in a manner that demonstrates to others that you are going over and above because you're doing it by the strength of God. That strength here, the wording there really conveys the capability or strength, the possession of the qualities required to do something or get something done.

What it's pointing to is, the thing that you are going to do as one who serves is going to need God. And when you function in it, you function as though it is God who is strengthening you. So you're willing to go the extra mile to serve another because you know God will support you as you do that. You're willing to go just a tad further because you're not operating in your own strength but you're operating on the premise that in order to do what God has gifted you to do, you're going to need Him to get there. There's a reliance on God when you're called to serve.

Then he says, coming behind that, he says, "in order" -- see, you're going to do all this so that, or in order that -- "in everything" -- in every obstacle you overcome, in every

project you take on, in everything you serve in or under -- "God maybe glorified through Jesus Christ."

What is that saying? That's saying the purpose of your gifting is never about you. And your outworking of that gift should always be such that it glorifies your Father through Jesus Christ. That means when people see you serving, they should see something distinct about you that implies who you serve so that God may get the glory by your actions. When you operate in your gift, others should be edified and exhorted to serve your Father, because in everything, and in all things, God should get the glory out of the gift that He has given to you.

This is something that I need to impart to us because when we consider the title of this message being "Handling God-given Gifts and Talents," the reality is, we are doing just that. We are handling God's-given gifts. That mean He gave them to you to use. We are trustworthy trustees. We are stewards of the varied grace of God. That's Him going above and beyond and giving us His goodwill, but in His goodwill, He is giving us gifts so that we might do things and function in a way that will give Him glory.

So what does that mean for you and I? You see, even as Peter was talking to this community under the duress and the stress of the environment around him, he encouraged them to function in a way that would please God. He said, he comes behind, and it's a great thing here, because Paul talks about your time. And then Peter comes in and says about your gifts. And they go hand in hand. When you're managing your time, manage it in such a way that it pleases God by using the gifts you have to serve one another, by using the gifts, recognizing that they came from God, and that we're not called to be hoarders, we're called to be stewards. And therefore we should function in a way that brings Him glory.

So when you consider your gifts and your talents, I ask the question: What are you doing with what God has given you?

Has how you've managed the gifts that He has given you brought Him glory?

Or do you sit on it on dwell in it and enjoy it for yourself? Do you operate in pride when you realize that you have a gift? Or do you recognize that God gave it to you and that the glory that comes from it should never point to you; it should always point to Him?

I want to refocus us as we consider what we do with the life we have, so that we might steward the time that God has given to us, and that we might also steward the gifts that He has given to us so that another might come to know Him, that we might use every gift in the body, that the whole body might be exhorted, the body of Christ that is, might be exhorted. That when we gather back as a church, that we might all put our hands and use our gifts in the field that God has given to us. So if you have a gift of music, that you might use it for His glory. If you have a gift of teaching, that you might use it for His glory. If you have a gift of service, that you might serve as though relying on His strength.

And whatever your gifting is, I am calling on us as a church and those of us who are friends of the church to use what God has placed or entrusted in our care in the manner that is according to His will and that will always bring Him glory.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this message. I thank You that You have indeed blessed us with many gifts that we could not have achieved or acquired on our own. I pray that as we steward those gifts, that we also strengthen, that we work at them so that we might make the most use of them for Your glory.

We thank You in advance for the gifts that You have given to us individually and collectively, Lord. I pray now that we might learn to serve others well with them, that in our service, others might see You. I thank You for this, in Jesus' name, amen.

I pray that that word encouraged you, maybe even challenged you, or maybe just blessed you to know that when God created you, He had a purpose and a plan. And in accordance with that plan, He gave you certain gifts and talents. And in that plan, He planned a perfect will, that includes you using them. And in that, you take great joy.

But if you don't have that relationship with Him and therefore you're saying, God gave me something but I don't know what His will is, I encourage you to establish a relationship with Him. I encourage you to spend your time in the word of God so that you might understand His will but so that you might also understand His ways so that you can use the gift that He has given to us for His glory.

Maybe you're here and you're saying, I'm viewing this cast and I never really considered all that God gave to me. I've heard that He gave His Son, and indeed, He did, but I didn't know that He had also put in me gifts for His glory. And I've traveled away. I've used my gifts for other things that didn't give Him glory. And today I would like to pray with you if you would like to change that and walk in a different path.

And if you're sitting at home or your car or anywhere else and you're saying, I really need to be connected so that when I do use my gifts, I can serve one another in the body of Christ and also be a part of a church that seeks and wants to serve the community, we would love to have you join with us. And you can do that through our website. We have the membership form there. No matter where you are, you can join and be a part of what God is doing here and around the world.

Let me pray for you.

Heavenly Father, I thank You for every viewer, every person listening, watching, or replaying this message. I pray that You might instill in them the recognition of the gift You have given to them.

For those who are making a decision to serve You, Lord, not only in their lives but also with their gifts, I pray that You might embrace them, direct them, steer them, let them know that You have been waiting for their return. Even as Your word says that "If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Lord, I pray for the salvation of the person who is viewing this cast.

And even beyond the salvation, I pray that they would submit their will to Yours, in submitting their will, they might also surrender their gift for Your glory.

Lord, I pray for the person looking for a church family. I pray now that You might press on their hearts that while they can have faith in You alone, we are stronger together, when we can strengthen one another, exhort one another, and encourage one another

along in our walk of faith, that we might continue to grow and be transformed into Your likeness, and that we are blessed with the opportunity to serve one another.

So Lord, I pray that You would touch each and every person on the other side of this lens. Touch them, keep them, hold them, and uplift them, in Jesus' name, amen.

I pray that that word blessed you, and I look forward to connecting with you next week when we come back again and continue this series so that we all might grow better and be called trustworthy trustees.

So until we meet again and until we greet again, may the Spirit of God and the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit rest, rule, and abide with you. God bless.