

We are continuing this morning in our sermon series The Power of One Life, looking each week at a minor character in the Bible and the impact they had, for better or worse, on their world. This morning I want to look at the life of a man named Bezalel in Exodus 35:30-36:7.

The book of Exodus begins with the story of the deliverance of the Jewish people under the leadership of Moses from slavery in Egypt. The whole nation passes through the Red Sea, and comes to Mt. Sinai, where God makes a covenant with them that explains to them what it means to be the people of God and how they are to interact with each other. **One of the central features of that covenant is the restoration of God's presence**, which was lost in Eden, to the midst of God's people. To this end, a big part of the book of Exodus is given over to explaining how to construct the Tabernacle, which will be the place where God dwells in their midst. It's not easy reading for a 21st century American, but the point of all the details is that this is where God's presence will be among them. This is why the finest materials are used – gold, fine linen, silver, bronze, precious stones – because this will be the place where people meet with God, where he dwells, so only the finest materials must be used in order to give him the honor He is due.

And in the midst of the tabernacle instructions, we read about a man named Bezalel, in Exodus 35:30-36:3.

*Exodus 35:30 - 36:7 - Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³¹ and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- ³² to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, ³³ to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. ³⁴ And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. ³⁵ He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers-- all of them master craftsmen and designers. ^{NIV} **Exodus 36:1** So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as **the LORD has commanded.**" ² Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work. ³ They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. ⁴ So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work ⁵ and **said to Moses**, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." ⁶ Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word*

throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, ⁷ because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.

As it comes time to construct the tabernacle, God lets Moses know that he has set aside a man named Bezalel to lead the task. Here are a few things he says about him:

- He is filled with the Spirit of God
- He has been given skill, ability, and knowledge of all kinds of crafts
- He has been given the ability to teach others

There is more going on here than simply being a good craftsman. Bezalel has been gifted by God so that he is a man capable of bringing artistic ideals to life with his own hands, and leading others to join him in constructing a suitable dwelling place for God. This is not just learning, but a supernatural gifting. He has been filled with the Spirit of God, gifted in craftsmanship, and given the ability to teach others and to do the same. **And by using his gift, he is going to work with others to create a dwelling place for God, that the Israelites might experience more of God's presence in their midst.**

I think it's important to highlight this man because some of you may think that perhaps there are **two levels of gifts and talents**. There are those who can teach and preach and evangelize and do those spiritual things, and then there are the rest of us, with gifts like cooking and building and financial planning and mathematics and computer programming and caring for people's bodies. Sure they're important, but the real spiritual work is the work of the evangelist, the preacher, the worship leader. But this is just not the witness of the Bible. There is no sacred/secular divide, **but there is a call for each believer to use his or her gifts to build up the body until we all reach maturity**. Everyone is needed. There are four things I want to say about what the Bible has to say about spiritual gifts this morning. Let me share a few passages that highlight this important reality:

Romans 12:4-8 - *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

1) God gives each believer spiritual gifts

The witness of the New Testament is that the church is like a body, each member with a different function, and just like a body works best when every part does its function in unison, the church is at its best when we are using our gifts to serve each other. And, as Paul puts it, each member belongs to all the others. Your gift is not so that you can say “I have a gift,” but it belongs to the body and is meant to be used in the service of others.

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11 - There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of **wisdom**, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing by that one Spirit**, ¹⁰ 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**. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.*

To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. Once again the message is clear – giftings are from above, from the Spirit; each member has different gifts, and these gifts are to be used to serve the church.

You have been created, uniquely created, to do good works. Love your neighbor. Serve your family. Love your church family. Share the gospel. Find your gifts and serve.

You are uniquely shaped.

Your spiritual gifts – where has God gifted you in such a way that people experience God when you exercise that gift?

Your heart – What are you passionate about? If money were no obstacle, what would you do with your time?

Your abilities – What are you good at? What are you able to do that could bless the church?

Your personality – What are you like as a person? What might that make you a good fit for in terms of ministry?

Your experience – What is your experience? What have you experienced in your life that has shaped who you are and what you might have to offer the church?

The second truth about spiritual gifts comes from 1 Corinthians 12:

1 Corinthians 12:18-22 - But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ 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!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

2) No one's gift is unimportant

We are all needed – everyone and their gifts – and sometimes those that seem weaker are indispensable. Sometimes there may be an older person who says that they can not serve or teach or give much, but “all they can do is pray.” To which I say, “that is no small thing!” There are many of us who can not find extended time to devote to prayer, and thank God for those who can do it.

The third truth is this:

1 Peter 4:10 - Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

3) The gifts are given to us so that we might serve others

Use your gift to serve others. The vision of the church is a place where everyone contributes their gifts, ministering to God and to each other, until, as Paul puts it:

Ephesians 4:11-13 - It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Pastors and teachers and prophets and evangelists are to **prepare God's people for works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up, so that we might reach maturity and the fullness of Christ.

The expectation is that every Christian will use their gifts and talents in ministry, so that the body of Christ might be built up until we all reach unity and attain the whole measure of the fullness of God. Paul talks about the body – what would it be like if the toes stopped working, or the ear decided not to function? If we could ever

awaken and unleash the massive talent, resources, creativity, and energy that we have here, the church would explode. I know there are gifts that many of you have that we don't even know about.

We are like a body with many members, each with different functions, and the Spirit has given us gifts to be used for the common good. We belong to each other, and we depend on each other's gifts to function. What is your gift? Prophesying? Serving? Teaching? Encouraging? Giving? Leadership? Mercy? Do it! We are all ministers. **You have all been created for ministry:**

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

First of all, let me say that this is the vision. **However, I also realize that everyone is at different points in their journey and at different stages of their life.** For some people, this may be a season where it's best for you not to be serving but focusing your energies elsewhere. For others, you may be new to the church and just checking it out, and the church should be serving you, not expecting you to jump in and serve.

But for the rest of you: where are you gifted? What is your passion? What are your natural abilities? What is your personality? What experiences have you had? **Take out the insert.** Try some things and see what sticks. Try some ministries and see where you are gifted.

We are blessed as a church by all who have served, so thank you. Remember the vision – a church of people gifted by the Holy Spirit with gifts that are to be used for the common good, so that we might reach maturity and unity. We belong to each other. We are all needed.

Continuing in Chapter 36, v. 4-7, look at this incredible ending to the story of Bezalel:

So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work ⁵ and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." ⁶ Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, ⁷ because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.

What an incredible ending – they had to turn the people away because they had more than enough to get the job done. The people were so excited about creating a dwelling place for God, a place where the people could meet with God, that they brought more than enough.

That's the vision – a church where everyone is bringing their gift to the service of the church to the point where people have to start using their gifts elsewhere, because what we have is more than enough to do all the work. Why were the people in Bezalel's day so excited? **Because they recognized that they were creating a dwelling place for God**

So does this mean we should create the greatest church, with a ceiling that changes colors and fancy waterfalls and everything? No. Does this passage justify spending millions on a building? No. When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, something dramatically changed, as God's dwelling place becomes His people instead of a building; the place we meet with him is in the community, not a tabernacle or church. The message of the new covenant is that God does not dwell in a manmade building but in the midst of His people.

*1 Peter 2:4-5 - As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a **spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering **spiritual** sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

The point is not the building, but the community. We are like living stones being built into a spiritual house.

1 Corinthians 3:16 - Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

4) Through our service, we build up the community where God dwells

We are God's temple. God's Spirit lives in the midst of His people. We worship Him not by creating a beautiful building but by bringing our gifts to the community. As you bring your gifts into the church, you create a tabernacle in which the Lord can dwell. Bring your best, that He might be honored in our midst.

What a picture – a community of people who have been given gifts by the Holy Spirit and recognize that their gifts are not to own but that they belong to each other and are to be used for the common good, so that we all might reach maturity and

reach fullness in Christ, so that when people look at our church, they would recognize the body of Christ.

Thank you to all who have served. Let me leave you with an encouragement from Paul's letter to the Colossians:

Colossians 3:23-24 - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

In the end, we work for the Lord, not for man, and our reward will come from Him, not from the praise of man.