

## Many Gifts, One Spirit - Emp. Ephesians 4:1-16

-While the kids are leaving, I need two volunteers to come up on the platform to answer some very easy questions

-I want you to answer all of these questions from where you are standing on the platform

-Where is the pulpit?

-Where is the piano?

-Where is the projector screen?

-On which side of the room is the congregation seated?

-We've been talking throughout this series about how the Spirit gives different gifts to different people

-Did you know that the spiritual gifts we receive give us different perspectives?

-It's a bit like the old saying, "if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail"

-This gets at the idea of our points of frustration we spoke about a couple weeks ago

-How our spiritual gifts help us understand why we get frustrated about certain things within the church

-You see, our gifts form a filter that we see through

-A filter we often don't even realize we are seeing through

-So we assume that our experience must be everyone's experience

-"The normal Christian life"

-This is why we need community

-Because it's only as we talk and compare notes with others

-That we discover their perspective is not the same as ours

-That our gifts have shaped our perspective

-For example

-If you have the gift of helps or hospitality, you might wonder why everyone doesn't stay to clean up from the church potluck?

-Are they just lazy?

-Or, if you have the spiritual gift of Faith, you might wonder why people are having such a hard time believing what you know God has already said.

-Do they really trust God at all?

-Or, maybe you have the gift of Evangelism and you don't understand why people are so afraid to talk to others about Jesus

-Isn't that what He told us to do?

-For all of us, our spiritual gifts shape the way we live our lives as Christians

-It's just a matter of whether we recognize that or not

-Lest we think that this is a recent problem, or just because we're less familiar with the spiritual gifts,

-Let's look at a couple examples from the early church

-And I'm grateful to Jon Thompson and his work on gifts for helping me see these two stories in light of spiritual gifts

-And not just personality clashes

-In Acts 6 a division grows up between the Hebrew Christian widows and the Greek or Hellenised Christian widows

-Those who had lived their whole lives in Israel

-And those who were still Jewish, but had lived in other parts of the Roman empire

-And come to Jerusalem in their retirement

-The Hellenistic widows felt they were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food

-Because they were outsiders

-This was the earliest church division

-The disagreement rose to the level of the Apostles and they responded,

-“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

-They said, “It's not right for us” to wait on tables

-Note that they don't say that it is unimportant

-Or that it is beneath them

-Or even that it was unspiritual

-Instead, they commissioned 7 men full of the Spirit and wisdom to the task

-Men who maybe had gifts of helps or administration

-They laid hands on them, prayed for them, and empowered them for this ministry

-To bring it to today, our weekly bulletins are important

-They communicate announcements

-They help people follow the order of worship

-They keep the names of those who need prayer before us

-That said, it wouldn't be right **for me** to neglect writing my sermon

-To type and print and fold bulletins

-I don't mind doing those things

-But it takes me away from what I am called and gifted to do

-Then in Acts 15 we're told that Paul & Barnabas

-Who had been sent out together on the first missionary trip from Antioch

-They had a sharp disagreement

-That disagreement was centered on whether they should they take John Mark on their next mission trip

-This was an issue because on the first mission trip

-John Mark had deserted them partway through

-Paul, who probably had gifts of leadership and apostleship,

-And was more concerned about the 99 sheep

-Said "No. There's no way we take him again"

-Meanwhile Barnabas, which was a nickname that meant son of encouragement

-He was focused on building people up

-Just like he had done for Paul when none of the Apostles trusted

-That this murdering persecutor of the church had truly been converted to Christ

-Barnabas was willing to take the chance on John Mark

-And encourage and invest in him

-So they split and went in different directions

-I'm not going to make a determination on who was right and who was wrong

-John Mark may have needed a wake up call to get serious about God's mission

-But in 2 Timothy 4, Paul says that John Mark should join him

-Because he is useful for the ministry

-And John Mark goes on to right the earliest biography we have of Jesus

-The Gospel of Mark

-Paul and Barnabas' gifts brought tension into their relationship

-That could have been addressed by acknowledging those perspectives

-It's no different for us, we need to have grace for other gifts and the ways they shape our perspectives

-And we can be helped in this by paying attention to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4, our Scripture reading this morning,

-Did you notice how many times Paul said the word "one"?

-**One** body, Spirit, hope, Lord, Faith, Baptism, God & Father of all

-Many gifts, but the same Spirit

-Different gifts, but the same source

-Diverse gifts, but same body we are part of

-Because unity is the goal

-And even though unity is the goal, Christ gives different gifts to different people

-The different gifts which are given are given as Christ apportions

-It's based on His mission and wisdom

-People get hung up on if the gifts listed here

-Are actually gifts

-Or if Paul was establishing offices within the church

-But I don't think it is incidental that the gifts listed here,

-And I do think they're gifts,

-They're all gifts in the word cluster

-Remember that word gifts clarify the nature, action, and purposes of God

- And these gifts in particular are given, Paul says, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry
- They are given to build up the body
  - To help us reach that unity that God intends for us
    - In Him
  - And to help us grow to maturity
    - Completion
    - Perfection
    - To fulfill our purpose
  - So we might attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ
    - You and me
    - And us together
- Because God's purpose is to grow us up to maturity
  - Which looks like, "Speaking the truth, no matter how it makes people feel?"
    - No, speaking the truth in love
      - For the benefit of the other
  - In every respect the mature body of Christ
    - Who is the head
      - Not just in the source of being the leader
      - But also the source

- And the unifying principle
- Each part doing its part
- But notice how Paul uses the language of human development
  - Growing from an infant to maturity
    - Think of what a baby can do
      - Compared to what an adult can do
    - We have different expectations for them
      - You can't expect a baby to use full sentences
        - To let you know what's wrong
        - And what he needs
      - What do babies do?
        - They cry
    - But if I, as a grown adult, walked into the house after work
      - Another thing babies can't do
        - By the way
      - But if I walked in and just started crying at Meg
        - She would try to comfort me
          - But she would have no idea what I needed
        - And playing 20 questions when you don't even get a yes or no answer

-Is completely  
frustrating

-The normal expectation is that as a  
person grows and ages

-They also mature

-This is key because we need to have grace  
for one another as we learn and grow in our  
gifts

-We don't automatically know how to  
exercise our gifts with maturity

-Even though they are given by  
the Spirit

-It's not like installing an app  
on your phone

-Where you download  
it

-And it's ready to go

-We need to grow in our giftings

-Now, we tend to be pretty gracious for  
those growing in the love and word gifts

-It's not too often that we are  
disappointed when someone has  
too much mercy

-Or someone tries to help  
and serve too much

-And fails

-We tend to have some grace,  
maybe even finding or creating  
opportunities,

-For those in whom we see  
leadership or teaching gifts

-Thank God for the  
grace I've been shown  
as I learned how to  
teach and preach

-Where we tend to have more trouble  
showing grace is with the power gifts

-We've seen speaking in tongues  
misused

-We've seen people claim  
prophecy in order to  
manipulate others

-We've heard the stories of  
evangelists who healed  
people

-Only to find out later  
they were plants in the  
audience who didn't  
actually need healing

-But those growing in power gifts need  
at least as much grace as those with  
love and word gifts

-As they learn to use those power  
gifts well

-And they might even need  
more grace

-As these gifts can stretch us beyond our comfort zones

-This kind of gracious bearing with one another is necessary as we grow toward maturity in Christ

-As each part does its work

-Because as Paul told the church in Thessalonica,

-We don't want to quench the Spirit,

-We want to give space for the Spirit to work

-And people to grow

-So let me recap real quick

-We've been talking about gift tension

-How even though there is one Spirit

-One purpose

-Which is building up the church to maturity

-Preparing the Bride for Christ

-And becoming a compelling witness to the world

-The different perspectives formed by our spiritual gifts

-Must be acknowledged so we can see how God is using each of us

-And our gifts

-For His purpose

-And this means we need to give grace as people grow in operating in their gifts

-This is one way we keep the unity of the Spirit

-Now, let me tell you where we're headed in the next few months

-We're taking a 3 week break from spiritual gifts

-A chance to catch our breath

-Then over the summer we'll be teaching on the specific gifts

-Setting up expectations and house rules around the gifts

-And offering invitations to respond to what God is revealing to us about our gifts

-In the fall, after we get more of a sense of our gifts,

-I hope to offer opportunities to gather in clusters

-Love gifts, Word gifts, and Power gifts

-To explore those areas more

-But before we close this morning, I want to invite you to deal with the stuff that is coming up within you.

-As we have had this conversation

-This morning,

-But also over the past 6 weeks

-You may have become aware that,  
somewhere along the way,

-You were hurt by someone's use  
of their gifts

-Or by someone claiming to  
be exercising a spiritual gift

-And it's made you hesitant about  
the whole conversation

-If that's you, I want to invite you to ask  
God to heal those places in your heart

-And I want to encourage you to  
ask God to help you forgive that  
person

-For either their immaturity in  
their gift

-Or their manipulation

-For others of you, God may be reinterpreting  
interactions you've had with people within the  
church

-Things that were chalked up to  
personality clashes

-Or misaligned priorities

-But were actually the result of  
unacknowledged gift tension

-And it has separated you  
from them

-Would you be willing to humble yourself

-To make every effort to keep the  
unity of peace

-And seek not just  
forgiveness,

-But reconciliation and  
restoration?

-Church hurt, because we're called to be  
family to one another,

-Can be some of the deepest hurt

-But nothing is beyond  
Christ's redemption

-Who do you need to go to?

-Finally, God may have been revealing that  
you have been carrying a burden of  
expectations

-Which were set by someone with  
different gifts than the gifts you have  
been given

-And you've felt like a failure for  
not being able to find the same  
freedom and joy in those areas

-And God wants you to  
release those expectations  
you are carry

-Expectations He  
never put on you

-And that might mean forgiving  
that other person for putting those  
expectations on you

-Because they didn't  
understand how spiritual  
gifts work

-But it might mean forgiving them  
just for operating in their gifts

-And forgiving yourself for  
picking up those  
expectations that were never  
yours to carry

-When Meg and I were at the Spiritual Gifts  
workshop in Tennessee back in April

-This was an area God really spoke to  
my heart about

-You see, in my time here in  
Collingswood, I've wrestled with a  
lot of guilt

-That, as a pastor, I'm not  
more naturally a shepherd

-I might show up in a  
moment of crisis,

-But I'm not great at  
following up

-And walking with  
people over the long  
haul

-And while we were in Tennessee, God  
told me, "You need to forgive Pastor  
Sam in your heart"

-You see, if you know Pastor Sam,

-You know that he has a gift  
of shepherding

-He walks with people

-He loves on people

-He is always showing  
up for people

-Pastor Sam didn't do anything  
wrong, but unconsciously, I had  
picked up a burden of expectation  
that I needed to pastor like Sam  
pastors

-And in one of the sessions,  
God said,

- "Scott, you're not a  
shepherd. That's not a  
gift I've given you. And  
Scott, I don't need you  
to be Sam, I need you  
to be Scott."

-And there was a freedom  
that came in those moments

-So, I don't know all that God is saying to your heart this morning

- About people you might need to forgive

- Or about reconciliation and restoration you need to seek

- Or about receiving freedom from expectations you need to release

-But we're going to take some time this morning to respond to God's work in our hearts

- You can do that in your pew

- You can come and pray at the altar

- I don't want to rush this moment

- But let's not miss it either