

## GIFTED PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 [MW19-03]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 20 January 2019

Traditionally they have been called “child prodigies”

- young people blessed with unbelievable intelligence, amazing artistic talents, or seemingly unnatural physical abilities
- you've probably heard stories about a twelve-year-old graduating from medical school
- or a six-year-old playing concert worthy classical music on the piano

For example there's Mozart who learned to play the piano at the age of four

- he composed his first pieces of music at five and at age eight, wrote his first symphony
- then there's Pablo Picasso who had already become an accomplished and renowned painter in his teenage years
- how about Tiger Woods as a two-year-old on the “Tonight Show” hitting golf balls

Not so long ago in the United States a young man named Michael Kearney

- received national attention when he earned a \$1,000,000 on the television game show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?”
- he too was a “child prodigy”
- Michael finished high school at age 6 and earned his first college degree at age 10
- he actually began teaching college by the age of 17
- he spoke his first words when he was four months old
- at the age of six months, he said to his pediatrician: “I have a left ear infection”
- he learned to read at the age of ten months

Although their stories astound us, such gifted individuals are very rare

- they are, as we say, the exception to the rule
- the vast majority of us are astoundingly average
- and that's okay, there's nothing wrong with that
- and yet as I look at you today I can say with confidence that each of you is gifted

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul writes

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve the same Lord, and we can each do different things. Yet the same God works in all of us and helps us in everything we do. The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others.*

The Lord of the Church is still speaking through these inspired words saying to each of us:

- “You have been given the gift of faith”
- “And you have been given gifts to serve others”
- God saying very clearly to each and every one of us:  
“YOU ARE GIFTED!”

Perhaps it is stating the obvious to say that

- any intellectual, artistic, musical, or athletic abilities that a child has are gifts
- no child prodigy decided to be born a genius, an artist, or an athletic superstar
- and yes, it is true that people like Mozart, Picaso, and Tiger Woods had parents that helped them develop their gifts
- but clearly they were gifted at birth
- with abilities above and beyond those of the average person

In a similar way none of us can take credit for being gifted in the area of spiritual things

- it was the Holy Spirit that first of all gave us the gift of faith in Christ and through Grace, the Word and the Sacraments the Holy Spirit that has given each of us gifts to use for serving others
- just as gifted children receive their gifts from the Creator so too the gift of faith comes to us without any actions or qualifications on our part
- just as faith in Christ is a gift worked in a person by the Holy Spirit so too a person's spiritual gifts come from Spirit's working in them

How do you know if you are gifted spiritually?

- no series of tests is required we don't even need to wonder if we are gifted
- because we believe in Jesus as our Savior we have been given the gift of faith and because the Holy Spirit has created faith in our heart we have also been given spiritual gifts for serving others

There wasn't a single believer at the Church in Corinth

- that could say he or she had no spiritual gift to use in service to God and others each of them had at least one gift to be used for serving others for the "common good" of all

So are things any different for us?

- not at all - the same truth applies to each and every one of us: You and I are gifted
- the Holy Spirit has given us at least one gift to use in service to others yes, the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to believers will vary from person to person
- some may be given numerous gifts but everyone is given some ability that can be used in service to others

After reinforcing the fact that in addition to giving the gift of faith

- the Holy Spirit always gives at least one spiritual gift to each believer the Apostle Paul goes on to give some examples of spiritual gifts
- as I reread these verses listen not only for a list of spiritual gifts but also listen for the number of times Paul repeats the truth that they are gifts from the Holy Spirit to God's people

*To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. 9 The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. 10 He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. 11 It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.*

In that last verse did you catch Paul repeating the fact that

- "each one" of us is given some spiritual gift for serving others? he said the Holy Spirit distributes these gifts and the Holy Spirit decides which gift or gifts goes to which person

So what do these gifts look like for us today?

- “serving” is such a broad category that it could include a nearly endless list of tasks like helping with “Meals on Wheels” or being a “Caring Caller” or simply keeping a friendly eye on your neighbour
- there's a whole heap of jobs that help keep our church here going cleaning, flowers, service rosters, providing morning tea, gardening and ground care
- or it could be the Lord has given you the gift of encouragement you are able to show genuine concern for others and lift their spirits with words of encouragement
- as you look at your financial blessings perhaps the Holy Spirit has given you the gift of contributing to the needs of others
- there is a whole range of ways to contribute to the life of our church and to the life of our wider community

If you do some research on child prodigies or gifted and talented children

- you will find one common problem that most of them experience gifted children are often bored in school or with life in general very often they are never challenged to use their gifts and so they waste them
- the same thing happens to many Christians their gifts go unused because they are never challenged or asked to put their gifts to use

This morning Paul reminds us

- that we have been given at least one spiritual gift to use for others you may have already discovered this and be right into it or you may have some work to do
- I would encourage you to take some time this week to reflect on your spiritual gift or gifts and ask the Holy Spirit to help you put it or them to use in service to others

Consider this:

One of the items in the Ripley's “Believe It or Not” display is a plain bar of iron, valued at \$5. That same iron bar if made into horse shoes would be worth \$50. If it were made into needles it would be worth \$5,000. If it were made into balance springs for fine Swiss watches it would be worth \$500,000. The raw material is not as important as how it's developed. God says we have spiritual gifts, but their worth to him will be dependent on how we develop them.

“You are gifted!”

- did you ever think someone would say that about you? perhaps your reaction is, “Who, me, gifted? I don't think so!”
- well, God says it about you God says you are gifted
- you may not be able to play music like Mozart, paint like Picasso or use a golf club like Tiger Woods ... but, nonetheless, you are gifted

Reflecting on this James S. Hewett writes:

You may have heard that great Aesop's fable about an old crow who was out in the wilderness and very thirsty. He had not had anything to drink in a long time. He came to a jug that had a little water in the bottom of it. The old crow reached his beak into the jug to get some of that water, but his beak wouldn't quite reach the water. So what did he do? He started picking up pebbles one at a time and dropping them into the jug. And as more and more pebbles accumulated at the bottom of the jug the water rose in the bottle, until finally the old crow was able to drink all that he desired.

That's a parable of the way God has chosen to work out his plan in our world. Each of us dropping in our own little pebble – teaching that Bible class, serving on a committee, providing transportation, visiting a lonely neighbour. Utilising the gifts that are ours, to serve in the ways we can, may not seem all that important at the time; but as the pebbles accumulate in the bottom of the jug, and the water rises, God builds his kingdom and brings his plan to fruition. You are important!

The Holy Spirit has given you the gift of faith

- and since you have been given the gift of faith
- you can be certain the Holy Spirit has also given you gifts for serving others
- as God's gifted people, let us be sure to use our gifts

Amen!