

May 11, 2008

His Gifts

Here it is, Pentecost, a day we have basically celebrated each Sunday during the Easter season. We have spent the last six Sundays focusing on how the resurrection of Jesus Christ changed His disciples and we've also looked at the effect it had on the early church. With each Sunday we talked about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit the same Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to give to all who believe in Him. In our Gospel this morning, Jesus described this relationship when he said, "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." This echoes what he had earlier said to the woman at the well in John 4, "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." And we saw this inaction on that first Pentecost when Peter, "filled with the Holy Spirit," stood up and gave that great sermon the sermon that cut to the hearts of the people and led the people to ask, "brothers what shall we do?" To which Peter responded, "repent and be baptized every one of you." Repent they needed to acknowledge their sin, turn from it, seek forgiveness and change. Did they ever change we have seen over these last weeks that they devoted themselves to Bible Study, fellowship, to worship together, to prayer, to preaching, we've seen that they were bold, courageous and yet contented and peaceful. This begs the question, "How did they do it?" And we give the standard answer, "Jesus fulfilled his promise and gave them the Holy Spirit."

This answer is very true yet it is only half of the story. Yes Jesus gave his Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit doesn't come empty handed he brings with himself gifts, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:7, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." There are three components to this verse. First, "To each one is given," if you are a Christian the Holy Spirit has given you a spiritual gift, maybe more than one, the Bible doesn't say to some it is to each one. So each Christian has received at least one gift. Second the gift given to each one is, "manifestation of the Holy Spirit." Manifestation the dictionary tells us it means, "readily perceived" of the Holy Spirit is in you he gives you a spiritual gift and you will use it; it will be readily perceived or seen. Third the gift given is for the common good. It is to be shared to build up the body of Christ, which is the church. I'm not talking about the building again we're talking about the body of believers. It is not given to be used for profit or for self-glory it is given you are blessed is that you may be a blessing.

At this point some of you might be saying, "Ok Matt the Holy Spirit gives each one of us a spiritual gift or gifts that we are to be used for the sake of everyone but what exactly is a spiritual gift?" Paul gives us a list of a few of

them. He begins by saying, "To the one there is given," notice not everyone receives every gift, God distributes them as He sees fit so to one is given, "the message of wisdom." I know we have some people with this gift in this church I've seen it manifested. I love it when at an elder or consistory meeting says, "It might be wise to...." When I hear that I know there's the gift of the Holy Spirit and how many times I've heard that phrase and embraced the wisdom in it to one is given the message of knowledge. It is just that the knowledge and understanding of how something works and how something should be. I've seen it as we've talked about the preschool I have got to be honest I've been out of my domain but we have individuals who have the gift of knowledge and they have some fabulous insights. The gift of knowledge comes in many fields from the knowledge of preschools to the knowledge of scripture to the knowledge of how to arrange flowers to knowledge of how to teach to a knowledge of how electronics work to the knowledge of how to evangelize to the knowledge of how to work in cement to the knowledge of how to be an administrator, to the knowledge of how to paint or even mix colors in paint to the knowledge of how to fix sprinklers and the list goes on and on.

To another a different gift may be given; the gift of faith. When Paul says this its not the saving faith it is the knowledge that God will provide and meet the needs of the church. This is the person who no matter what the situation is the person is always upbeat and knows it will all work out that person has the gift of faith.

Then to another is the gift of healing. When we see this we need to notice that Paul says, "Gifts of healing." He uses the plural form of healing there are many forms of illness or sicknesses they range form cancer to a broken heart likewise there are many gifts of healing ranging from the miracle to a listening ear to someone who is depressed or anxious.

To another is given miraculous power, again, this doesn't necessarily mean the person has the gift to part the Red Sea, it could be that the person has the gift to get something done or get something accomplished much faster than usual. You know this person it's the person that takes something on and we end up saying kind of tongue in cheek its' a miracle when they get something finished in a record time.

To another is given the gift of prophecy, which is the gift of proclaiming God's word, to another is given the gift of distinguishing between spirits what a tremendous gift this is. You know who these people are they are the ones who meet someone right away they know that's a good person or I got a bad feeling about that guy. How I wish I had a little more of that spirit.

Then to another is given the gift of speaking in tongues. Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 14. Some people call this the language of heaven or of angels. It's a language that's not known to humans but it's a language that the spirit sometimes gives to people fro the praising of God or for building up of the

church. But with it another person gets the gift of interpreting tongues; the gift to know and understand what that language is saying.

Paul finishes it off by saying, "All these are the work of one in the same spirit and he gives them to each one just as He determines." So what happens when we faithfully use these gifts? One there's unity in the body of Christ. Two Paul says who use these gifts there are going to be some who are apostles or prophets or teachers or administrators or healers or workers within the church. Third as we use these gifts in unity in whatever position we are in we will see the fruits of the Spirit and they will be plentiful. We will see the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Fourth when all these things are happening God's kingdom will expand the church will grow. Finally probably most importantly God will be glorified.

So the question is are you using your gift? Do you celebrate when others use their gift? This is what Moses had in the Old Testament. Moses was God's man and basically the people had come to expect that he would have all of these gifts and he would do it all for them and it was too much and so he gathered seventy elders who would use their gifts to meet the needs of all the people. Now two of the seventy didn't show up for the meeting but when the Holy Spirit came on the group that had gathered together with Moses those two who were separate also received the gift of the Holy Spirit and they begin to prophesy and they began to do things that only can be done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Immediate reaction from Joshua in particular was Moses stop them their not here with us to which Moses says how I wish there were more and I can tell you as your pastor I wish there were more who step out in faith and use their gifts. You're not going to be met with a no we cant use your gift we need every person to use their gifts because each person here the Holy Spirit had given a gift to so that God's kingdom does go and so that His name is glorified.

In our Savior's name, Amen.