

## Speaking and Serving

**Readings:** 1 Peter 4:7-11; Romans 12:1-8

**Text:** 1 Peter 4:10-11

Anita and I love doing jigsaw puzzles.

We almost fight about who is going to do the puzzle  
and who is going to look after the kids.

I love it how the picture comes together piece by piece.

All the intricate details don't mean anything till they are in their right place.

But you know what really sucks...

Missing pieces!

They frustrate your puzzling effort and you feel deflated when you have finished the puzzle...

It just doesn't sit right.

The church is like a puzzle...

God calls us to love and serve each other, using our unique gifts  
and when we do it is a beautiful picture, full of colour and life...  
but its not complete when there are pieces missing.

Think of the puzzle as we look together at 1 Peter 4:10-11

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11

### **You have received a gift.**

The first thing we need to note from these verses is that each of us is uniquely gifted by God.

Now some of you say...yeh right! Me uniquely gifted!

But it's true...it's what God tells us through the Bible.

You are uniquely gifted by God.

Each of us...you and I...have received a special gift.

No matter who you are, who you think you are, what you see in the mirror,

No matter what your self esteem issues.

If you are a child of God...you have been uniquely gifted by God!

So that God's grace in its various forms can be on show.

So that God can be glorified.

So that his story can be told through you.

There is no believer here who is not gifted by God.

Doesn't matter about your age...whether you are the youngest or oldest.

Strongest or frailest

Most educated or most simple

No matter who you are...the newest Christian or the oldest Christian.

No matter who you are...you have been uniquely gifted by God.

How does that make you feel?  
Special, important, loved.  
It gives purpose and hope, confidence and assurance.

The question then is NOT 'God, have you gifted me?'  
But 'How have you uniquely gifted me?'  
'What part of the puzzle am I?'

God has uniquely gifted each and everyone of you.

I may seem to be harping a bit on that point...  
But I hear it so often people say...I've got no gift.  
I have been down that road myself.  
If God says he has gifted you...then you had better believe that he has.

We know from Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 that there are many kinds of gifts...  
And even these are not an exhaustive list...there are more.

Sometimes our emphasis is wrong in looking at our gifts.  
We spend a lot of time and energy within the church trying to figure out what our gifts are.

There are tests and questionnaires you can do.  
Books written about discovering your gifts.  
Classes on determining your gifts.

These are well and good...but we can also simplify it to 2 questions:  
What do you like to do and what are you good at?

How you answer those 2 questions (which must go together) is probably a pointer to the gifts you have received from God.

If you love to serve behind the scenes and you are good at it...  
then you probably have some gift in serving.

If you love to give and are competent at it...  
then you probably have the gift of giving.

If you love speaking with unsaved people and can relate well to them...  
Then you probably have the gift of evangelism.

If you love to sing or play an instrument and you are capable of holding a tune or playing a note...  
Then you probably have the gift of music.

You can make your own check list...and see what God has given you to do.

I believe that each of us needs to experiment more.  
Act on your passions and see what God will do.

Why I say this is because the word 'received' literally means 'to lay hold of'.  
It is not about a passive act (our meaning of receive),  
but one that involves our dedication, focus, and intention.

God has given you a gift.

If you don't open it, you have not truly "received" it.  
It's like getting a Christmas present and not opening it.  
You receive it...but you have not taken hold of it in a way that benefits you.

### **You are to use your gifts to serve**

It is undeniable that the reason we have been given a gift is so we can serve others (v10).

The word 'serve' that Peter uses is where we get our word Deacon from.  
It means to wait on someone else, to attend to someone seeking a need to be met.

God is calling us to serve one another as deacons.

We may have just installed two new deacons to add to the two we have...

God will use them to drive that ministry forward.  
They will help us with opportunities to serve one another with the gifts we have.

But while they have been set aside for that task...

Each of us is called to deacon to each other.  
This is the call on us as Christians, not an optional extra...but a reality.  
Called to deacon to each other...with the gifts we have.

Realize the context in which Peter is writing (See 4:1)

Peter is writing to a people who are hurting, who are persecuted,  
who are even losing their lives because of their faith.  
Peter reminds them of a Saviour who suffered and their share in that.  
He wants us to think and act like Jesus.

Jesus...the one who came to seek and save the lost.

The one who came, not to be served but to serve  
and give his life a ransom for many.  
The one who says 'I am among you as one who serves (Lk 22:27)  
The one who gave up the glory of heaven and entered our hurting, sinful world...  
Who clothed himself with humanity and humility.

We are to serve like Jesus.

Then Peter writes about the ways that God provides in dealing with the hurt.  
God provided each other...to support, encourage and serve each other in their hurt.

We are a hurting and broken community...in our own way.

And God provides each other to help.

I love you guys...I want to serve you.

The elders and deacons love you and want to serve you.

But we can't do it by ourselves.

We need Christ...and we need each other.

We need to be connected to each other like the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle.

Together we build the church...together we move forward.

You know it starts here, in this church...

But it only starts here.

It also includes our community.

We are uniquely gifted to bless our community.

We are the city on a hill that can't be hidden.

We need to love our neighbour, especially those who hurt.

We love through our word and deeds.

We are salt and light to the world.

And we have only just touched the surface of what we can do when we work together.

We need to ask God to continually bless our community work and see where he takes us.

### **We should treat having gifts like a steward.**

The phrase 'faithfully administering' from the Greek actually means 'good stewards'.

The word Peter uses is *oikonomous*...

which means the person who manages the affairs of another person's house.

They were usually a slave responsible for managing the rich man's property or household...

Joseph in Potiphar's house, or even in Pharaoh's house...

was the trusted slave who managed the affairs of the house.

The picture given is of a house with differently talented stewards...

given the owners funds to distribute.

Each of us are stewards in God's house, using our gifts to distribute the grace of God in its various forms.

We are like Pez dispensers!

(Hand them out to elders and deacons)

You get the idea?

The gift you have is not yours...it belongs to God.

He has given the gift for you to use, manage and distribute...

You are to be faithful in that service.

We need to find new and creative ways to distribute the various aspects of God's grace we have in us.

We are called to use the gift as stewards...not for our pleasure, glory, advantage  
Not to make us rich.

But so that we can show and tell God's story and glorify him.

**Using the gifts that God has given make up the whole picture of God's grace.**

God's grace in its various forms...

picture of the jigsaw puzzle we used at the thankyou night last year.

Each one of us has been given a piece of that puzzle...

Each of us has a piece of that beauty of God's grace...

Each of us holds a piece.

God's grace is varied...it has so many aspects to it...

But bring them all together and you get a beautiful picture...

one that is complete and full of colour.

God has a beautiful story to tell...a story about his grace and mercy.

And he chooses to use us to tell his story.

He uses us to reflect his beauty.

Together we make the picture, the story complete.

We each have a part to play.

Today we installed some new elders and deacons...

Set aside for a specific task, for a specific time.

We recognise the pieces of the puzzle they carry and we want to encourage them to use it.

We also prayed for all those involved in the different ministries of this church...

And again we recognise the pieces they carry in telling, reflecting God's great story.

But the only way the world we see the complete picture is when we all come together with the different parts that we carry of the grace of God in its various forms.

When we don't serve one another...

we are withholding a piece of God's grace in its various forms.

And the picture is not complete.

God's grace is the most expensive gift there is.

Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price on the Cross.

Someone had to pay the price of sin.

The cost for us sinners is separation from God,

broken fellowship with the Triune God.  
The great news is that Jesus paid the only price that would be accepted.  
His sacrifice broke the power of sin, setting us free from sin.

As believers we know and have experienced this grace, which comes to us in various forms.  
It also flows out of us in different ways.

Individually we might not be much to look at...  
But bring us together and WOW...what a picture!  
He makes a beautiful picture out of us.

You notice in v11 Peter divides the varied grace of God into two basic categories:  
Speaking and service.  
Teaching and practical ministry,

The speaking gift that the apostle Peter is referring plain conversation.  
But it has to do specifically with teaching the things of God...  
Faithfully proclaiming his truths

This calls us to take seriously the things we teach and say...  
Whether that is as a parent, or leader or helper in Kidz Church, J-team, URY, CRE,  
or a Small Group Bible Study.

God is speaking through you.

Service is something we can all understand...  
it is a giving away of yourself for others.  
And we do that in humble reliance on God's great generosity.

Whether that is as an Elder or Deacon, or caretaker...whatever...  
you speak and serve in God's way, in his power.

**The last thing we note is that it is all about God...not us.**

Service to each other is always because of God, through God and for the glory of God.

He gives the gift, he empowers us to use those gifts, he brings his grace to all of us when the gifts are used and he is glorified when those gifts are used to serve.

Our ultimate goal in life is to glorify God.  
The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks  
'What is the chief end (goal) of man?

The answer is given?  
'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.'

The reason we exist is to glorify God.

He created us and all things for his own glory.  
It is plain that when it comes to the gifts we have received, and the way we use those gifts in serving others, it really is about God and not us.

### **Conclusion**

Every Christian has a spiritual gift and is commanded by God to use it.  
Let me close with a few points of practical application.

*First*, if you **do not** use your spiritual gift, you will be an uninvolved member. And frankly, that is a contradiction. Church membership implies involvement in the ministries necessary to the life of the church.

*Second*, if you **do not** use your spiritual gift, you are contributing to an overworked minority. Have you noticed that it is generally the same people who volunteer and are active in the core ministries of the church?  
If you are not doing something...then the picture is not complete.

*Third*, if you **do** use your spiritual gift, you will experience the joy of genuine community. One of the great ways in which spiritual gifts are used is in service to "one another."

And *fourth*, if you **do** use your spiritual gift, you will contribute to the expansion of God's kingdom. God is growing his kingdom.  
And one day when you get to heaven, you will have the joy of seeing brothers and sisters in Christ who are there because of the part that you played in their lives.

So the good news is not only are you uniquely gifted  
Not only does your life count  
Not only does God want to use you...  
But God empowers you.  
You can't say... 'I haven't got a gift'...it's not true!  
You can't say, 'I haven't got the power'...it's equally not true.

God will give you what you need to do the work that he calls you to do.

That goes for the elder and Deacons we installed, and each person that works in God's kingdom.

We need to serve so that God receives the glory.  
So that people will sing the praises of Christ our Saviour.  
So they will see the glory of God the Father.  
So that his kingdom will grow.  
So that each piece makes the picture complete.