



*“FILLED WITH SPIRITUAL GIFTS”

Biblical Text: I Corinthians 12:4-11

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Sunday evening, about 8:30, I was still working on how to do better with **“love, joy, peace, and kindness,”* and the news hit my phone, Facebook and television at the same time. A gunman opened fire on a Las Vegas music festival, killing more than 50 and wounding 200. *** I have been try to make sense – not of what happened. We all know what happened – once again, assault weapons, or ones rigged like them, took innocent lives in America! No, I’ve been try to make sense of what to do now.

We continue to be a deeply divided nation, doling out political blame, arguing about what should and shouldn’t be covered by the **second amendment. We can’t even agree that praying for the victims is a good thing to do, judging by our criticism of those who made those prayers public including this verse from Psalm 34, ***“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and rescues those whose spirits are crushed.”**¹*

Well, if this isn’t a time to pray, I don’t know what is! Surely the heart of God is breaking for all the times, and there are so many, when life is snuffed out by assault weapons and gun violence. But I am also praying that Washington and the American people will finally say, *“enough is enough!”* Please dear God, let it be now!

We are an intelligent, gifted nation and people, if we will work together. **I believe that we can use this event to find a better way.* And if we don’t, our children and grandchildren and our future will continue to suffer. God help us do something!

Today’s message is related. **I want to focus on a common but often misunderstood teaching - that each one of us as Christians are, **“Filled with Spiritual Gifts.”***

We get the wrong idea about this all the time. **We equate “gifts” with the abilities or talents that we see in superstar athletes or musicians or actors and actresses, or politicians, or people in the news. So, we think that if the famous and most “gifted” people do something it is important, and that what ordinary people like us do is not.*

But nothing could be further from the truth. **Every Christian is gifted by the Spirit for the work of God. Every person has something of worth to contribute to the whole. **If enough of us get motivated and work together, amazing things can happen.***

Like the “Fruit of the Spirit” spiritual gifts come with the package every believer receives when we come to follow Jesus. Listen to Acts 2:38-39: ***

¹ Psalm 38:14, [Holy Bible, New Living Translation](#), Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

***“And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.”²**

But unlike the “Fruit of the Spirit” the gifts of the Spirit are multiple choice. **All** the gifts are given to God’s people. Say “all” with me. But no one person has all the gifts.

Look at what it says in our text from I Corinthians 12:4-7: ***“⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ ...varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ ...varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the outpouring of the Spirit for the common good.”³**

And then in verses 8-10, Paul illustrates, gives us “for instances” and examples, of those gifts, although not an exhaustive list... *** “To one is given wisdom ... knowledge ... faith ... healing ... the working of miracles ... prophecy ... discernment various kinds of worship languages ... or their interpretation...”⁴**

*There are some strange ideas about spiritual gifts. Idea that some are “better” than others. Or that those with certain gifts are “more spiritual” than others, or that only some of us, the really special ones, receive the really important gifts. **Ding, ding, ding – wrong, thank you for playing.** There’s nothing about that in the text.

God gifts everyone you included! And there are tools which can help you online (*bulletin and website.*) Finally, Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 are where to start – they list nearly 30 different gifts.

Look at verse eleven. ***It makes it clear that the gifts are not imparted but activated. And it makes it clear that the Spirit’s distributes the gifts! “All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually as the Spirit chooses.”⁵**

Back to verse 4 – ***many gifts, but one Spirit who distributes the gifts to us. And we all are gifted. When we all use our gifts, life blossoms into what God intended. ***

I am convinced that is true in the Church and in the culture around us. We have incredible wisdom and intelligence when we pool those gifts and quit worrying about whether the right things will help our portfolio or get us or our favorite politicians elected or reelected. Imagine what would happen if we used those gifts for the benefit of others and those who come after us? What if we let what was right motivate us?

I love Rick Warren’s reminder: ***“Spiritual gifts were not given for your own benefit, but for the benefit of others, just as other people were given gifts for your benefit.”⁶**

² Acts 2:38-29, *New International Version*. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

³ I Corinthians 12:4-7, *New Revised Standard Version*. Copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ I Corinthians 12:8-10, paraphrased by the author based on the *New Revised Standard Version*.

⁵ Ibid. I Corinthians 12:11, *New Revised Standard Version*.

* I am convinced that the use of the gifts of “ordinary” Christians who believe and obey could speak far more loudly than all the sermons of religious leaders like me or politicians who stand in front of a microphone but have often forgotten to serve the most vulnerable in this great nation. What might happen if we really used our gifts?

I love the clear instruction of Romans 12:6: * **“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...”**⁷ What if we actually did that? Whoa...

We are a people of incredible gifts. What’s holding us back?

Is it our fear of actually taking a stand or going out on a limb, or really doing something? Or is it that maybe Marianne Williamson’s often quoted words are true.

* **“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.”**⁸

Are we afraid to think of what we might be able to do? God has gifted us, in this congregation with greater than average intelligence, more than average economic ability, and we are about as politically diverse a bunch of people as I know. * We have more political clout than we know - and we each can do something so the world tilts toward a better place! **Why don’t we do so?**

* **“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...”**⁹

What if we actually did? Here’s my prayer. Don’t let this moment pass without some decision about what you can do. You can’t do everything. I know it. But incredible things can happen when we get off our motivation and each do what we can do.

Amen!

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⁷ Romans 12:6, English Standard Version of the Bible. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

⁸ Quotation is a cutting from *“Our Deepest Fear”* by Marianne Williamson from *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles*. Copyright © 1992 HarperCollins; 1st edition.

⁹ Romans 12:6, English Standard Version of the Bible. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.