

'WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?' (Teaching about Spiritual Gifts#1)
Tryon First Baptist Church, November 2, 2008

Please take from your bulletin the insert about serving places in the church. This has been prepared by your Nominating Committee.

I want to ask you this morning, "**Just where do you fit in?**" I ask because it is time to call forth a host of new servants for the new year. New times call for new strategies, and one of the best new, old discoveries is about centering any congregation's life and ministries around the God given gifts of her members. We all have GIFTS given at our salvation by the spirit of God! These Spiritual gifts may or may not be the same as natural talent. Spiritual gifts seem to come with something called PASSION. This is that desire stirring deep within that motivates us to recognize and use something we know God has put inside us. We want to use for the Lord somehow just because we love God and know this cannot be suppressed.

I. The real paradox about church is this, at times we are finding Christian servants worn out and spiritually depleted from taking "jobs" in the church that they are not equipped to do, and therefore not enjoying their church. I am not speaking about a lack of motivation or a spirit of entitlement, whereby we may become spiritually lazy or dead and unwilling to carry our load in the church. I speak about what every Christian can feel at times, when their real passions are not being used in their church life. We have to ask ourselves, where do those stirrings come from? If God put them there, then why shouldn't they be what gives us the most joy in our church? Spiritual gifts are given uniquely and intentionally to believers as essential for that church where one belongs.

What we discover about spiritual gifts we must be willing and prepared to apply to our lives and to the life of the church. This is a subject that can take any congregation weary of doing church in the same old way and turn it around for an exciting day of fresh and more effective ministry.

II. We must build the congregation from the view of Spiritual Gifts. The church is a living organism rather than an organization. As we see God continually gifting the church, we are freed from doing church as usual. We can take the necessary time to discern the work of God within and select and empower people to carry out ministries to which God is calling us. The church is always evolving because God is always gifting Her as he sees fit!

I am eager to encourage our Nominating Committee to take the time to select and enlist the people this way, to allow God to guide them toward ones that are best gifted for areas that will genuinely reflect God's desires for His people and to His world. It follows that if there are none willing or able to fill positions, then those ministries may have run their course in this church.

There may be some areas of ministry that are on the critical list and need to be placed in intensive care. These need really careful discernment, prayer and time. There are others that have been kept in the recovery unit too long and need to be sent home to stand on their own strength. Then there is the hospital board that needs to look at the doctors, to arrange for their best care, and needs to study relations between the doctors and patients, needs to see that our equipment is up to date, that we can offer the best care for our patients.

III. I Corinthians 12 can teach us 4 things about Spiritual Gifts.

1. First, verse 1 says, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning spiritual gifts." Therefore it is important to **LEARN**

about spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul writes to other churches also calling them "grace gifts." These are not the fruits of the Spirit, they are the gifts that come with the Grace that saves us from our sins. They are gifts-interests and capabilities. These are not necessarily natural talents, but passions, unique combinations of abilities and opportunities. These focus our strengths for 2 reasons, to (1) build up the church, and (2) to help us enjoy serving the Lord. We do not want to be ignorant about the things so essential to a full life. Reach for these, LEARN about them!

2. Second, verse 4 says, There are **DIFFERENT GIFTS**, but the **SAME SPIRIT** has worked these into the life of every believer. In Thessalonica, Paul and the other teachers of the gospel faced a sophisticated crowd who looked down on them as itinerant teachers, almost as gospel peddlers! They were called, "poor" and "unseemly," or unlikely to be bearing a very significant word. The Thessalonians believed what many of us fall into, that if we are serving properly, we will undoubtedly live well, trouble free with many rewards for serving God.

Paul says we are all uniquely gifted. Different gifts are given by God's plan and are not to be looked down upon when different, but listened to carefully, since each one could be God's way of moving His church forward. How often I have thought how our young folks would be amazed at the stories of faith that our older Christians could tell them. And vice versa, our young have so much within that they could tell of, much that could help the older ones appreciate fresh wind of the spirit.

3. Thirdly, verse 7 says, God has given **EACH ONE** these gifts of grace. It is by our gifts that we **SERVE THE LORD**. In other words, by our gifts we fit in, and by our gifts we take our place among God's people. This is the way we fit together. This is the way we fit into a partnership with God. Again, we dare not be

ignorant of the things that affect us so much, and that affect our Christian life so much.

4. Now the fourth point may be the most crucial for this church today. Verse 12 says, Out of our **DIFFERING GIFTS** we are made into a **UNITY**. Hebrews say that God gives testimony to His work of salvation through signs, wonders, AND through the gifts he gives us. You see, most of us have been changed by God and hardly recognize the changes. We have become gifted through God's intentional effort to bear witness to His world that desperately needs to know Him. As Christians we are different, a fact that often goes unnoticed or unappreciated.

The Church also is changed because of the changed people within its circle. She is made beautiful, the spiritual home to most of you. You called it so in our first conversations together here. Out of our different gifts this church is strong and thriving and able to give hope to the hopeless, and help to the helpless when we let them come in and be welcomed. There is life changing power in God's church. This is the body of Christ. Here all the power of the living God dwells.

So where do you fit in? You do have a place, one uniquely yours to fill which no one else can fill. What is it that you can give? What is it you sense down deep within that you would really enjoy within your church?

We must know about the gifts of God. We must know that they are as varied as the fingerprints on our hands, but they are God's work, God's plan. We each are gifted with gifts that give us the special means to serve him. We strengthen the church when we actively serve with our unique spiritual gift. And we make a unity of purpose and power as we serve with the gifts that we discern are ours by His hand.

I look back on the days before Pentecost when the Risen Christ poured out His Spirit upon His church, before the Spirit indwelt the hearts of believers, before the Spirit worked within everyone who would come by faith, before He gave gifts to His people. Standing on the hillside of Galilee, Jesus was faced with a hungry crowd of 5000 who had been following and listening to him all day. They were filled up spiritually as Jesus taught, but they were a long way from home and they were hungry.

The disciples said, *"Send them away, so they might find something to eat,!"* Jesus said, *"See what you have!"* Then He Took the loaves and fishes of one little boys lunch. and He Blessed it, Broke it, and Gave it! When all the people had enough, they collected 12 basketsful of the leftovers!

The lesson is simple...when we use our gifts, we stimulate the using of others' gifts!

Nineteen gifts of grace are listed in 4 different listings of the Apostles teaching and writings. Read them for yourself in I Corinthians 12 (2 times), Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. These are listed for you in your bulletins. How many of them can you name? Better yet, which ones can you identify as yours?! An even greater question is this, How will you use them this year?

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