

So when I was a kid, my first musical experiences, I don't know how positive they were. I was fairly young. My mom signed me up for piano lessons. And as a young kid, I kind of thought I was held captive by this. I did not volunteer for it.

I just found myself in it. So I was that typical kid who did not practice, did not bring the music home, just tried to get through it. And that. That lasted a couple of years. Like, looking back, I'm grateful I was in it.

And I wish I could have had a little more maturity. Then my next movement into music, we moved. I was in fifth grade, just about to start fifth grade, and fifth grade started band. And so in the summer, actually, before school started, you went to the school and met the band director and talked about instruments. And I went and they said, what instrument do you want to play?

And I said, saxophone. I don't know why I said saxophone. I like jazz. And so maybe it was just that I just wanted to play saxophone. And.

And the band director said, well, the best saxophone players, that's good. The best saxophone players start on clarinet. That's the way to learn saxophone. So I went along. So next thing you know, I'm a clarinet player.

Little did I know he just said that because he wanted more clarinet players and maybe even a guy as a clarinet player. And then you get your instruments and you start and you practice alone at home. So you're going through the scales, you're breaking your reeds and splitting that. You're squeaking and doing all of that kind of thing. You start out, you know, the Hot Cross Buns songs with three notes in it, or Mary Had a Little Lamb, you know, in that kind of category.

But then you gather with the large group, and there's like 50 to 70 people. The whole band, orchestra is getting together at the school. And you start into

it and a few observations for when the big group happens. One is, it sounds horrible. Like the idea that you made all your mistakes at home.

Now everybody's making their mistakes, and it's nothing but mistakes. It sounds really bad at the beginning. The other thing is, I don't know what the band director, the conductor's doing up there, because no one pays attention to them whatsoever. You're just looking at the music, panicking, looking at the people next to you, trying to get through this thing. And the last thing is, there's a pecking order.

There is a Just a division of labor in that band room. Everybody learns. Like on the first, you just pick it up by osmosis the strings are the most important people in the room. And of the strings, the violinists, they are top class. They're the highest rung in the room.

And then you go all the way down the strings before you bump to the next letter, which is the brass. And at the top of the brass is the trumpets. Oh, they're so cool. And they're out there. And then you go all the way down the rungs of the brass section.

In our case, it was the tuba player. Nothing against you if you were a tuba player, but for us, it was kind of the oddball sitting in the corner. That was the. And then you dropped to the bottom ladder of the whole thing, which was the woodwinds, and the very bottom rung of the bottom ladder, that was clarinets. That's where I stood.

I share this because in many respects, it's a picture of where we're going in First Corinthians today. So we're walking through a series in First Corinthians, and Paul is taking a look at the issues of the church. And this morning he's going to introduce for us a subject on spiritual gifts that we're going to dwell in for a fair bit over the next month and a half. And he introduces this topic of spiritual gifts. And it's as if he's dropping into a fifth grade band room.

He walks into the room and it's just a noisy mess. There are people who aren't playing any instruments at all, as if they're just too cool for spiritual gifts. They're just kind of off in a corner and everyone else is just using their gifts in a hodgepodge, mistake filled way, squeaking without any. Without any unity. And no one is looking at the conductor.

No one is gazing upon the conductor of the spiritual gifts. And there's all kinds of rankings, as if, well, this spiritual gift is super important and this spiritual gift is not. So there's division and divisiveness and nothing sounds good. And Paul says, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

We're talking about a gift from heaven placed inside of our souls for God's purposes, to shine God's glory into this world. This is a big deal. We need to pause and learn what spiritual gifts are and what their purpose is. Is. He says, we've been walking through this sermon series, good news for the real world.

And we come to First Corinthians 12 today as we've been navigating through First Corinthians. And as we hit there, Paul is going to tell us that these spiritual gifts are a testimony of the reality of the living God, the powerful God, the alive God that we serve. So let's pick up our text and let's begin. In First Corinthians 12 it says this. Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit. Paul begins this reflection on spiritual gifts with a contrast between the man made religions of the world, the mute idols of the religions of the world, of deeds, of act, of legalism and law, and try to create something on our own efforts and the work of a living, holy, alive, powerful, spirit filled God who breathes through people. And he says, this is a dramatic difference in the manifestation of the Spirit of God in you.

It proves that there is a God that we serve, who is alive, who is active, who's encountering us, who's moving through us, who's impacting the world through us. This is no mute idol religion of the world. This is not us in our own charisma, trying to create something in our own power and our own strength. This is the Spirit of life, spirit of life who's come in power and he's distributed gifts to you. If you are in Christ, if you've received Christ, if you have trusted in Christ, that's not just a belief out there that that's the work of the Spirit of God in you, even in your tongue to declare the truth and the glory of Jesus Christ.

You are instruments of the praise of God's glory, magnifying him. We are, we are part of a religion that believes not in a God far off, but in a God near, a God who is alive and a God who's working in and through us. The fundamental difference between worshipping a chunk of wood or of stone, an idol and the true living God is that God is alive. And as we come to him, he places his spirit inside of us, changes us from the inside and gives us spiritual gifts. And he goes on then in verse four.

Now, there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are varieties of service, but the same, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. Paul is going to say, hey, we need to be gazing at the conductor. We need to gaze. You see it three times in there.

He makes References of gifts. He calls them three different things. He says, first off, varieties of gifts, varieties of service, and varieties of activities. Varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. Varieties of service, but the same Lord.

Varieties of activities, but the same God. You hear the Trinity there, don't you? A beautiful Trinity passage about the Spirit and then the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. Now, we normally say them in the opposite order, saying God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Paul here specifically says Spirit, Son, and then Father.

But he's drawing us into the fact that there is a conductor. In fact, the composer of the music, the conductor of the band and the music. Music itself is all the same person. So he's saying we have to gaze on the conductor. He wrote these gifts for his purposes.

He decided what gifts to put inside of what people. You're not just picking an instrument. This instrument has been given to you by divine order. For his purposes. He's looking out at this band, saying we have to gaze at the conductor.

I like that. Spirit comes first. Not only are we talking about spiritual gifts, in many respects, I liken the Holy Spirit to music as one of the arts. In other words, of the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we ever hear God, it's the Holy Spirit we are hearing.

We hear music. If we ever feel the presence of God, it is the feeling of the Holy Spirit that. That we are feeling. We feel music. In fact, there's an interesting thing with music in which you can watch an instrumentalist or a vocalist or just anyone driving their car with some music on.

There's a place in which you play music, but there's a place where the music starts to play you and a beat starts to go through your soul. And you can feel it. If you've ever thought the steering wheel is a little bit of an instrument, you've played this before. Music starts to play you. And there's a truth there.

The spiritual gifts are instruments that we play. But in the ultimate sense, it is when the Spirit plays us and we become the instrument and the Spirit is playing us. And Paul is saying if we're going to look at spiritual gifts, we have to gaze at the conductor. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That's the starting place to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And then he's going to tell us what these gifts are there for. Verse 7. Now I'm going to. I'm going to just read verse seven. We're going to actually come back to verse seven, because this is where we're going to unpack the four most significant truths in this whole passage.

But catch what he says here in verse seven. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. The Spirit is alive in your presence. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ. He's given to you, he's manifested in you for the benefit of those around you, for the common good.

And then he's going to begin to explain what some of those gifts are. If you're sitting here and wondering, well, what are those gifts? What do they look like? How do I know what gifts are mine? And he's going to give us kind of a taster platter here of some of the gifts.

I'll share actually some of the other lists of the gifts as well to kind of give you a sampling. And as you hear these, I want you to be listening and discerning and even praying God, is this a gift you've given me? Here's Paul continuing in verse 8. Four to one is given through the Spirit, the utterance of wisdom to another, the utterance of knowledge according to the same spirit to another, faith by the same spirit to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit to another, the working of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to distinguish between spirits to another, various kinds of tongues to another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually and as he wills.

It's a work of the Spirit of God who gives us these gifts as he wills for his good and for the benefit of the people of God. Now let me take us to some of the other lists and go throughout Scripture. And part of the benefit of this is you begin to get a sense. And none of these lists are inclusive of all of the gifts. In fact, we would say that.

That even if you took all of the lists together and added them together, it's just a cloud. It gives you kind of a sense of some of the gifts that the Spirit can give. There may well be gifts that are outside of even the direct gifts listed in Spirit. But listen to first, sorry to Romans 12, which adds on to that list. I'm not going to read Romans 12.

It adds on to that list. Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving leadership, mercy. In the end of First Corinthians 12, the same passage we're in. It will actually be in this text next week. He adds on these apostles helps administration.

Over in Ephesians 4, another list of gifts as on evangelism and pastors. And then there's another list over in First Peter 4 that you can check out. And actually there's no additional gifts listed in that particular list. But this gives us a sense and the invitation of the Spirit of God who apportions and gives us these gifts as he wills. And we could ask the question, but what's a gift?

How do I know that it's spirit given? And there's maybe a couple ways to discern this. We've all been given, believer and unbeliever alike, as image bearers of God. Natural Talents in our Life Everyone who's born has some natural talents in their life, and those are a good thing that displays God's glory through all of his creation, through all human beings. And sometimes when God gives gives spiritual gifts, he turns those natural talents and he puts them in rocket fuel.

And there's this magnification, this supernatural amping up of natural gifts that become supernatural gifts. I can think of people in my life who are naturally merciful and compassionate, but then the Spirit of God enters into their life and it's just on steroids. There's this almost divinely appointed compassion that they bear out in their lives. And sometimes the spiritual gifts God gives us are actually not at all natural gifts. They're not there at all.

I've seen people who, before they were Christians, were just self centered people. They had no heart of service toward anyone. And then the Spirit of God entered into their life and then they had this incredible heart of service, this supernatural transformation and gifting of the Spirit of service. Greg and I were reflecting this week that I think for us, preaching and teaching are not natural gifts for us. They're supernatural gifts for us.

They were not present in our life before we knew Christ. But in his mercy, he gave us the Spirit of God and transformed us from those who are not naturally good communicators into those who are able to communicate the word of God. God gives us these gifts and he gives them through the Spirit of God who apportions them for the benefit and the blessing of others. It's not for my own good. In fact, if you catch what's happening here, if you've been with us through this sermon series, you'll recognize that this might seem like a strange turn in the text.

Last week. If you remember in First Corinthians 11, we were dealing with the issue of division that was ripping apart the church at Corinth. And you could look at this text and you're like, why did he turn from divisiveness into spiritual gifts? But it's right there in the text. He's given us spiritual gifts to bring that which is divided into unity.

You know how to bring unity in your life. Love your enemy, serve the one who hates you and despises you. Use your gifts for the benefit of those you struggle with. Divisions become heal. Unity is brought in the body of Jesus Christ and all for the glory of God.

So verse seven, which we somewhat skipped over, is the heartbeat of this whole passage. So I want to go back to verse seven in the middle of the passage says, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Now, there are four truths anchored in that single verse that we're going to camp on for a little while. To each, number one is given the manifestation, number two of the Spirit. Number three for the common good, number four.

So beginning in that text, to each, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To each. Do you hear it there? Every single Christian has at least a spiritual gift in them, if not more than one. There is no such thing as a Christian who, who does not have a spiritual gift inside of them.

It might be that they don't know what their spiritual gift is. It might be that they're not using their spiritual gift, but there is no such thing as a Christian who does not have a spiritual gift inside of them. When we come to Christ, he places his holy Spirit inside of us. He makes us new on the inside, and he gives us a spiritual gift, a piece of heaven, a tangible peace from heaven, placed inside. It's from another realm, it's supernatural, it's not of this earth, and it's placed inside of our spirit.

We have a gift of grace that is placed inside of us. It comes from God to make a difference in this world.

You see, people sometimes get really worked up over the most insignificant things. Not long ago, I remember watching someone get really upset in a restaurant because their steak was not made exactly to order. Became a big deal that evidently all the tables around needed to know about. As this steak was sent back to the kitchen to be prepared properly on Wednesday, drove off of the church, went on to Camino do Este and went north, not far north on Camino d', Este, an oncoming car was coming towards me. And out of one of the side streets, one of the bird streets, you know, the bald eagles, all those.

Out of one of the side streets, a car pulled out and totally cut that car off. Came right in front of it and cut that car off. And the driver of that car that got cut off, I'm telling you, it was a two fist, finger up, aggressive with the window open. Like, I mean the blood pressure of that guy had to be skyrocketing. All been there, we've all gotten excited over things that don't matter.

Here's the thing, there are big issues in life. There are issues that are rending families apart, dividing marriages. There are issues that are tearing apart churches and communities. There are issues of divisiveness that bring about wars in this world. There has been a war of light against darkness from the very beginning of time.

And God is recruiting people who will push back the darkness and shine his light into the world. You want to shine God's light? I suggest you get in tune with your spiritual gift. God has given you a divine gift and placed it inside of you to be used in this world. And every single person has one.

Every Christian. If you've ever, if you've ever just thought, God, you've got to do something here. There's a marriage that's falling apart and you look at it, it might be your own.

There's no human way to fix this like God, it's gotta be you. You know of a family being torn apart, parents not talking to kids, kids not talking to parents. You think, God, the only way to heal this is you. You look out at this world and you see events ripping apart tragedy by tragedy. You think the only way to fix this, God is you.

Would you come? I'm begging you to come. And God is telling us, I have given you my spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ and to push back darkness in the world. I have given you tangible expressions. If you look at the conductor and you'll start playing in harmony, you can say, well, how can we as a church make a difference in this world?

Let's start with the fact of all of our spiritual gifts. Every single person that has an instrument, every spiritual gift functioning in this world might be a non-Christian who's come in here today or curious about God. Perhaps you're investigating some. You've been there, you read the news, you see a story, you

feel a pain and you think the solution to this doesn't come from this world. If there's a God, that's the only way this gets solved.

Here's an invitation. The invitation is there is a God and he's alive. He's not a chunk of wood, he's not an idol. And when you come to him, he not only washes away your sin, he places his spirit inside of you, makes you new on the inside. And He Gives you a spiritual gift, at least one to build up the church and to push back darkness.

To each is given the manifestation. Manifestation. What is, what does that word mean? It means God showing up. Now who, who doesn't want God to show up?

Who doesn't want to see a manifestation of God, Glorious, mighty, powerful, sovereign God coming and manifesting himself? You, you think about you open up the pages of Scripture and like, I want to see some of this. I want to see the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. I want to see the Red Sea parted. I want to be on Mount Carmel and watch the fire of God consume the altar.

I want to see the sun stand still. I want to be there to watch Jesus heal the lame and the blind. I want to see the thousands fed from our Savior's hands. I want to see the manifestation of God. And what Paul is saying is that God shows up like that sometimes, but don't forget that he is showing up in the gifts through the Spirit all the time.

All the time. We want the big and the loud and the, and the trumpeting, manifest presence of God. And Paul says, don't forget the still, quiet voice. God showing up in the quiet in a conversation, in an act of mercy.

I think of the story of Elijah, the prophet of God, the one prophet of God against the hundreds of prophets of BAAL taken up to the top of Mount

Carmel in a standoff of who's the one true God. The prophets of BAAL scream and cry out to their mute God and he doesn't show up. And then Elijah cries out to God and the fire of God comes and consumes the altar. That's the manifestation of the presence of God. But don't miss out on the next part of the story because then God takes him away and then he tucks him in the cleft of a mountain and he says, I'm going to show up to you again.

And how does he show up to him there in the still, quiet voice? You see, sometimes I think we miss the presence of God in the still, quiet voice, in the working out of the spirit of God, in our gifts, in our care for each other, because we're looking for the fire. One of the most encouraging things in a pastor's life is just one a you bringing your friends and then two, hearing stories of God impacting those friends. So just this week, two fun stories of people who brought actually single, in both cases single moms to church. And the story was not about or anything that happened in this room.

Actually it was about what happened in an encounter in the nursery. You can imagine what it's like to bring your kids to a strange church for the first time and the unease of dropping those kids off. And in both cases, both moms expressed just the care, the compassion, the humanity, the love of knowing their kids are being cared for. The manifestation of the presence of God. Don't miss it.

It happens in our spiritual gifts as they're poured out through us, as we care for one another. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit. Of the Spirit. Don't miss out on that. Not a manifestation of our charisma, not a manifestation of.

Of our own goodness. A manifestation of God himself in the spirit.

We don't worship a God, that there's a chasm between us and him.

God, the Spirit, comes and dwells and meets us and shows up in our gifts. Who among us doesn't want God to show up? And the Spirit of God shows up as he pours himself out through his people. Does he need us? No.

But he delights to use us. And he allows us to be conduits of his grace, of his healing, of his reconciliation, of his truth, of his kindness to family members and neighbors in our neighborhoods. Who's the answer? Not governments, not people, not strategies, but the Spirit of God moving through the people of God. That is the only hope we have.

You might be sitting there thinking, well, I don't know what spiritual gifts I have as a church. We'd love to walk through that. So part of our next step. So you'll hear every week, essentially, invitations to first step. First step is the get to know you.

Give you a mug. Just an introduction. A candle. Now a candle. Oh, yeah.

No mug. But you could still eat ice cream in other mugs. I was like, in your candle? Yeah. Not in your candle.

But then you go to next steps and next steps is part of the process we have for partnership. But in it, there's a whole section on discovering your spiritual gifts. And so there's an assessment that you take. We would be glad to walk through that. The next steps is coming up around the corner November 8th.

Occasionally we have a whole workshop geared around just that assessment called Unwrapped John or I or any of the elders, anyone here would love to meet with you to talk through and pray about spiritual gifts and try and help discover what is yours. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit. The fourth principle here. For the common good. For the common good.

I don't know when faith was pressured to simply become a private thing. Sometimes I think there's some generational forces involved in that. My mother in law, who was a dear sweet woman of God, absolutely loved Jesus in every way. But in all the time I knew her, I don't think she prayed out loud more than twice. She just didn't express faith outwardly with family or with anyone else.

I mean, she served in the church office faithfully once a week, but she didn't express faith. Today I feel lots of pressures in which faith is being pushed to be a private thing.

Faith is not a private thing, specifically spiritual gifts. So the gift of tongues not going to go into what that is. In fact, we have two weeks in chapter 12, a week in chapter 13, we're going to have two weeks in chapter 14 to just have a whole week on prophecy and a whole week on tongues because of how Paul deals. So we'll come back to this in the future. But setting aside what tongues is, I will say this today.

The gift of tongues around the whole world is primarily used as a private thing just between a person and God. I can promise you that no spiritual gift is given to primarily be used as a private thing between us and God. It is given for the common good. To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. All spiritual gifts exist to build up the body of Christ.

I picture, you know, kind of a, with a glasses theme, you know, us walking around with large goblets full of gifts of the Holy Spirit. Hey, here, taste a little of mine. And hey, I will tell you, if we're ever in a room with multiple desserts, I'm a sliver of each person. I'm going to just, hey, can I taste some of yours? Can I taste some of yours?

Can I taste some of yours? We, we partake of the Holy Spirit together through his gifts because he's given us tangible expressions, treasures of his presence in spiritual gifts in each other. And we share in those and we share in those

together. And then that overflows into this world back to the the picture of darkness and the battle of light and darkness. The most tangible thing we can do, the starting place of shining the glory of God is functioning with the spiritual gifts he has given us.

And he has given every single Christian at least one spiritual gift. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Now how do we apply this? Three quick principles to take away in a practical way. The first is gaze on the conductor.

We need to gaze on the conductor. Paul spends a fair bit of effort saying that the conductor, the composer, the Orchestra of all of this goes to God. He is the author of the gifts. He decides who gets the gifts. He.

He places the gifts. This is all a God thing. We need to gaze on God, fix our eyes on God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit to receive his gifts for his purposes. We need to gaze on the conductor. By the way, our gifts are not supposed to function just individually.

Our gifts function corporately together. And the only way, the only way a band sounds good together is when they're all in harmony, following the same conductor. Number one, gaze on the conductor. Number two, seek and share spiritual gifts. Seek and share spiritual gifts.

Seek them. Seek them out. Discover what your gift is, fan it into flame and use it. And then beyond that, like, ask for more gifts. Look through the list of scripture.

Consider what God is doing. Say, I want more. Give me the gift of healing God. That, like, they have to be geared for him. This is not a dream of Superman powers, but God, give me more gifts.

My birthday is later this month, and already a couple of times Deborah's looked over at me, say, I need a list. Give me a list. Without a list, you get underwear. Like, give me. Give me a list of what you want.

We have to go through lists of gifts of the Holy Spirit, reading the miracles of scripture. We have to more of that God. I want more miracles. I want more healing. I want more supernatural power.

I want more gifts. Would you pour gifts in me? Pour gifts in a brother or sister around me. Pour your gifts out into this world. Every time we cry God, it's only you can be over the smallest things of life, insignificant things.

Today in fantasy football, John is playing me.

And the only chance he has is a miracle of God. Guys, it's true. Please, please bring prayer. Yeah, he's 05. He hasn't won a game yet.

And it's not looking like it's coming anytime soon.

I joke, but we all have him right there in our lives.

Principalities of darkness are sowing seeds all over this world. There are countries at war. There's devastating tragedies. There's brokenness of government in our own lives and our own relationships and our own families. There is hurt that human beings can't heal.

God has given us spiritual gifts. Seek them, share them. More of that God. Gaze at the conductor. Seek and share spiritual gifts.

And finally serve others. Serve others. That's why the gifts were given. They're not. They're not simply for our own benefit.

And it's so easy in this world to have our vision on our own little lives. God wants to expand that serve others. Use the grace gifts, the spiritual gifts that we have to pour out the grace of God to others, to build others up. To shine light and push back darkness. Gaze at the conductor.

Seek and share spiritual gifts and serve others. Would you pray with me? Lord, we do want more of you. Every single one of us has heavy things real close to home. And it needs you.

It is true only you can heal. Only you can wash away sin. Only you can break the power of guilt, the power of fear, the power of shame. Only you can set people free.

And so I ask that you would stir your gifts inside of us as a whole church.

That building each other up and shining light and pushing back darkness would become increasingly second nature as your supernatural power flows through us. So come, Lord Jesus, fill us with your spirit. Come, holy spirit, fall on us like the rains of Tucson this weekend. Immerse us in your power for your glory, for the good of everyone around us. In the precious name of Jesus, we pray.

And everyone said together, amen and amen. Let's go ahead and stand as we close in song.