

Gifts
March 27, 2011
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

We have been working our way through work. We have asked the questions, “What can we do? And What ought we to do?”

Today’s sermon helps answer both of those questions. The Scriptures are clear that there are many different callings within the body of Christ. It is absolutely necessary that we work in every lawful area as we seek to see the culture redeemed by Christ.

There will always be jobs from the greatest among us to the least. And, as you would expect, the Lord even turns our ideas about the honor that ought to be given in these roles.

I am thankful that we have a strong view of affirming the least among us. We believe that God’s promises are not only for those of us adults who think we have things figured out or those of us who went to seminary to study theology in depth or those of us who are doing important jobs as defined by our unbelieving culture. No, God’s promises are in some way a warning to those who are so blessed with education, intellect, a good upbringing, an established church. God’s promises are also extended to those who are least among us. Who might they be? Well, the obvious answer is the children among us and those that join themselves to us who are childlike. Being a child has to do with ignorance, immaturity, lack of understanding and knowledge. But the Bible tells us expressly that adults are encouraged to act like children when it comes to faith.

So, it is very possible to have the most faithful among us be the very ones that are least among us. And what is God’s charge to us concerning them? To heap honor on them. We may be able to outsmart them but the real test of Christian maturity is not smarts but rather obedience.

So, God is willing that all His people have a place in serving His Kingdom. This may be in the church, but it may also be in your humble home, a basic work environment or wherever the Lord has called you to serve. And God tells the rest of us to highly honor those who are less honored by the world or by worldly minded Christians.

All of that is said to encourage you to serve God right where you are and with whatever talents He has given you. You can certainly improve your talents and your usefulness to His Kingdom but wherever you are, if you serve Him faithfully, He is well pleased and desires to bestow great honor upon you. See a man skilled in his work, he will stand before Kings.

EXEGESIS

There are a couple of key passages in the New Testament related to gifts.

Rom 12:1-11, Differing Gifts all to the Glory of God

12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Be humble in your assessment of yourself. Work hard and try to overachieve but do not think of yourself as the best or, quite literally, as God's gift to the world.

Not too high- but as God has dealt with you.

Sober- clear headed, accurate, realistic

In the same breath, listen to the counsel of others. What is consistently said of you? Great technical abilities? A good demeanor for a doctor? A pastor's heart? A deacon's sense of service to others? A zeal for the truth? Good communicator and teacher? Works well with his hands?

These sorts of comments will help direct you to find the Lord's gifting in your life.

Do not be afraid of skills and gifting tests but do be wary of *labeling*. You do not want to be pigeonholed into one job or one calling. Remember that I said that some callings are seasonal. You may be serving the Lord in

one capacity now as a preparation to serve Him in an entirely different way in the future.

All of us have multiple gifts. Do not think too highly of yourself but do not sell yourself short, either. Push yourself to achieve what you can. You can probably accomplish more than you think you can. Do not limit yourself unnecessarily.

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

Not everybody is called to the same work. Differing body parts means different work gets done. We Christians are called to do all the work that needs to get done so we need everybody to do it.

This is true of individuals but it also true of a church. Just as there are many differing gifts within a particular local body, there are also differing gifts from church to church. All churches are called to faithful worship and ministry but also have differing emphases. This is fine and represents the full ministry of the church. This is one reason we should be thankful and support all faithful Trinitarian ministries. There are many faithful manifestations of Christ's Church. The point is that it is Christ's Church and not ours.

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Prophecy- gift of preaching, which is accurately telling the story of Scripture and applying it to the lives of the hearers.

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering:

Diakonia, Service, angels ministered to Jesus. The women ministered to him. The deacons served the widows. This is a man or woman who is selfless and humble and does not need to take any of the credit for their service. Our women are very good at this.

or he that teacheth, on teaching;

This is not the same as preaching. A teacher has a knack for helping his students grasp the subject.

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation:

The ability to spur someone on in the faith, speaking the truth in love. Someone who has this gift does not simply tell others what to do. It is speaking hard truths in such a way that it is heard and received. One of our founding elders, Gordon Wilson, was great at this. He could give you a hard word about yourself without making you feel defensive. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity;

This sort of man gives because he is generous. Without self-seeking.

he that ruleth, with diligence;

Ecclesiastical and civil rulers take their roles seriously and humbly. Do you lead well? Biblical rulers don't command but they lead by example and are followed. Do you have to assert your authority as a leader? Or are men glad to follow you? Know the condition of your flocks. Manager, owner, elder, husband and father.

he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness (hilaros).

Compassion and mercy. Are you empathetic? Isn't that a great quality, cheerful mercy? We need such men and women.

Gifts

1 Cor 12:12-23 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

Let us have no room for envy. This is true within the church and it is also true of the various callings the Lord calls you to outside the church. Do not begrudge your boss, other workers, or those friends and family who have better jobs, make more money, or are highly honored. If you think this way, you dishonor Christ. He is the one that has given you your station. Are you displeased with Him?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

Without the differing gifts, the body of Christ cannot function properly.

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

God has done what pleases Him. Since this is the case, we should be thankful.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

It is all these differing gifts that actually makes the body of Christ.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

We need each other. No man is an island. Shared work is God's way.

EXHORTATION

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

We should all think this way. We need to be humble in our assessment of ourselves but we should also strive to achieve all that we can. As we do this, we should always think in the terms of what we can give NOT what we

can get. If you are working for Jesus to give to others, then you will never make the mistake of failing to bestow honors on the less honorable.

As we bestow honor on those less honorable vessels, they gain beauty. As we think of them as beautiful, they rise to our expectations. This is how the body of Christ grows and advances in the Earth.