

GIFTS OF GRACE

A. GIFTS OF GRACE (1 PETER 4:11)

- We recently discussed the topic of miracles and why we don't see them anymore. Last week we considered how we cannot produce anything unless we are attached to Jesus, the True Vine. Today I'd like to put this together: we may not have miraculous abilities, but we have gifts, gifts of grace that come from God to be used to His glory.
- The majority of the world may not appreciate you, but it needs you. I appreciate Peter's approach. He's saying 1) **The world doesn't get you because it doesn't have you anymore.** 2) So don't act like the world. 3) Do so by the gifts of grace, given by God, to glorify God.
- Many, not all, but many in our country are panicking right now. Their eyes are focused on this worldly king, if you will, and not the King of Kings. They're worried about who the current president is or is not? What will that mean for me and my kids? What is that person doing or not doing? Who's to blame for problems in our country, etc? It's all focused outwardly and typically because they're terrified about their own lives - how will they be affected. However, that's not how we're going to approach this.
- What I love about Jesus (and so do you) is that His love is unique and unexpected. His love was pure - for the Father and the world. His actions were centered around others and not Himself. He left His home with God and emptied Himself only to surround Himself with sinful people in a sinful world. He suffered. He came to save through suffering. That's what Peter wrote, "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh".
- So, with that being said, we're going to focus on the gifts of grace given to us by God in order to bring light to the world and each other. I think that's what we need to consider. To borrow the words of a past president, "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." (JFK). I do appreciate that statement. What can we do for our country, for the world, for each other . . . for God? What can you do? Well, you can take your gift and use it responsibly - as Peter wrote, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:"

B. LIVING SACRIFICES (ROMANS 12:1-8)

- **1-2:** I thought of an old motown group, "The Temptations", when I read this passage. The spirit of their song "ain't too proud to beg", finds its home in Paul's words - **I appeal to you.** Paul wasn't above them. He wasn't above pleading for their faithfulness. Then comes the word, "therefore." Know what we're doing? We're looking back, not at the mercy of God, but the mercies of God. Yes, it's not some one time merciful act. He's merciful all the time, because He is a merciful God. This points back to all of what Paul had said thus far, but I can't help but point out **Romans 11:35-36**, "'Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?' For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."
- **3-5:** Not to think too much of ourselves - God has gifted you. Let's just remember that. As one brother wrote, "*I suspect that great people are those who really do have a genuine realization of not only their gifts but of the fact that they are gifts and that it is not so much they who have the gifts as it is that the gifts have them.*"
- Is the common saying, "10% do 90% of the work" correct, or do you think we're looking at gifts the wrong way? What if their gifts are just not as obvious as others? What if we're expecting everyone to kind of look and do the same? But, is that what we're taught? (**1 Corinthians**

12:27-31; Ephesian 4:11-12). We don't all want to be an eye - neither does God want it that way!

- **6-8: The Gifts:**

- **Prophecy** was clearly a miraculous ability. Not all of these are.
- **Service** - listen, there are many aspects of Christianity we could discuss, things that all must do and have. We all need to love, be gentle and kind. We all need to be servants, but some of these **duties**, to be blunt, are simply carried out better with some people. Some had a gift of serving and were known for it. Like the 7 chosen in Acts 7. Makes me think of 1 Timothy 5 and the widow.
- **Teaching** - I'm not that preacher who will pressure others to teach or preach. Why? Because not all have the ability. Shouldn't we all teach? Yes, to a degree and in a certain setting, but not all need to fill the role of a teacher or preacher. There's a skill set that's needed for it. Can I say that? You know it's true!
- **Exhorting** - exhorting and teaching can overlap, but I tell you what: some people just have an ability by their words and attitude to really build and encourage others up. You spend time, for example, around Lisa Rowland and she'll build you up. You don't want to disappoint her, because she's so encouraging. Same thing with Jennifer. I'm bringing up our sisters in Christ, because many times we think of men the majority of the time.
- **Contributing** - I'm not ready to say this shouldn't be understood as contributing in general (we can all be in a position to give), but God has blessed some with finances, etc. more than others, and they are expected to give liberally. They are to do so generously because God has given them this gift.
- **Leaders** - We're going to talk about God's desire for men who wish to serve as elders soon (something we want at North Collin), but listen - a wise leadership will look at the flock and become familiar with the different gifts. They'll help individuals see their abilities and put them to work. We need to help each other see this as well. They'll do this with zeal because they desire to help!
- **Mercy** - many see this as being kind to those in vulnerable positions (sick, older, misery, etc.). There are those who need help and attention and it's not always the easiest of situations. It requires kindness, wisdom and help with extreme patience. There are some people who are just better suited at comforting others . . . and we desperately need them. I've seen others do this while their own brethren were totally unaware. There they were doing what majority of the congregation didn't - they had an ability and desire for it. They did it cheerfully. Could you imagine needing someone to show you kindness during difficult times, but coming across worn out/frustrated?

Listen, the text goes on to mention not only our behavior among each other, but the world in general. We've got to take these abilities and love and share them with the world. We've got to apply many of these abilities to them as well: serving, teaching, exhorting, contributing, mercy, etc. We've got to invest in them, ask how they're doing, do what's not expected. They may not be fighting with you, and so they don't seem like enemies, but we're not on the same page. So, what do we do? We do what's not expected - turn our attention and care towards them. How will you do this week? What's your talent?