

Osaka International Church

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Message – 'UNWRAPPING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS'

Introduction

Well, it's Christmas season. I suppose many people in Osaka are wondering what all the worldwide commotion is all about. I was raised in a home where we talked about the real meaning of Christmas but did little to display it in the way we lived. Christmas morning around the Christmas tree was a highlight of the entire year. I remember one Christmas Eve when our parents asked my brothers and me to show our appreciation for the gifts we would find under the tree in the morning by putting what we received last year under the tree that night. We went back to our bedroom to get these gifts and I asked my brother where they were and he said to me "forget where they are... I'm wondering what they are'. One thing Japanese people have over me is their ability to wrap gifts. Often my gifts look like I have wrapped my lunch. Today I want to focus on something beyond the obvious. The coming of Christ in the flesh of course is the pinnacle point in history up to that time. Remember, Easter is yet to come with the ascension of Christ into heaven and the Holy Spirit being sent to us. (John 3:16, Romans 6:23). (Acts 1:8). I want us to focus today on part of the reason the Holy Spirit came. As Christians, we have the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. At the time of salvation, the Holy Spirit enjoined us. Part of His ministry in our lives is convicting us of sin, instructing us, being our guide and taking our prayers to God the Father in a perfect way. And today's topic.... The giving of Spiritual gifts. Some verses concerning this...

SLIDE I Corinthians 12:1, 12:11

12 Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Message

Regardless of whether it is the Christmas season or not, many people lack purpose in their lives. So perhaps, as we unwrap our spiritual gifts, we can discern our purpose. Today I want us to consider a passage in Scripture that helps us understand the unwrapping of our spiritual gifts.

SLIDE Romans 12; 1-8.

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. **2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. **3** For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. **4** Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5** so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **6** We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. **7** If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; **8** if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Let's begin to unwrap this passage.

SLIDE Romans 12: 1,2

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. **2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will

Paul calls believers to experience an ongoing transformation. Basically these 2 verses suggest to us that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. If I can boil this down into one sentence it could be best said that we should be transformed into a new way of thinking and this is a Christian transformation under the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The first new way of thinking is revealed to us in verse 3:

SLIDE Romans 12:3.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you

SLIDE – The first aspect of Christian transformation is HUMILITY.

The first aspect of Christian transformation is humility. The prevailing thought of the day according to the Greek philosophy was that we should think of ourselves as superior and that would not allow for a sense of humility in our lives. So part of the process of being transformed into a new way of thinking is that we should think of ourselves as less important than the next guy. God gives us a great reminder from His Word concerning the pitfalls of thinking too highly of ourselves.

SLIDE PROVERBS 16:18

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

The second aspect of Christian transformation is found in verses 4 and 5 of our text.

SLIDE ROMANS 12:4, 5

4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5** so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others

SLIDE – The second aspect of Christian transformation is THERE IS UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

Three observations I can make concerning this are

SLIDE – UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- Our body has many members

I like verse 5 where it says “so in Christ, we who are many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. The really great thing about being Christians is that the same Holy Spirit who indwells me, indwells you. So that’s why the Scripture can say that each member belongs to all others is because we are joined together by the Holy Spirit.

SLIDE – UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- Our body has many members
- Every member is important

In the apartment complex that we live in, there is a group of workers called the JS workers and as I watch them, regardless of what they are doing, they each seem to take pride and function well as a team. Some of those team members are called simply to sort out garbage, some are called to rake up leaves, and some are called to wash floors but they seem to work well with a sense of harmony.

SLIDE – UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- Our body has many members

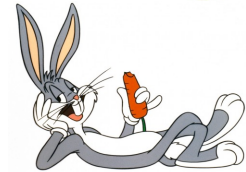
- Every member is important
- Every member depends on the other members.

No part of the body of Christ can do everything. Let me illustrate this for you:

Once upon a time a group of animals got together in the forest and decided that life would be much better if everyone could do everything, so they began a school. The animals in the school were a duck, a rabbit, a squirrel and an eagle. They adopted an activity curriculum of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, all the animals took all of the subjects. The duck was excellent in swimming; in fact, better than his instructor but he made only passing grades in flying and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to drop swimming and stay after school to practice running. This caused his webbed feet to be badly worn, so that he became only average in swimming. But average was quite acceptable so nobody worried about that... except the duck.



The rabbit started at the top of his class in running but developed a nervous twitch in his muscles because of so much makeup work in swimming.



The squirrel was excellent in climbing but he developed constant frustration in flying class because his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the treetop down. He developed charley horses because of overexertion and only got a C in climbing and a D in running.



The eagle was a problem child and was severely disciplined for being a non conformist. In climbing classes, he beat all the others to the top of the tree but used his own way to get there... by flying.



The point of the story is obvious, like the animals, every person has his own set of special but limited set of capabilities. Trying to operate outside of those capabilities produces frustration and discouragement. We each operate best within the Kingdom of God when we function according to God's sovereign design for us.

It is important, therefore, to focus on your primary gifts and do not try to do all things within the body.

The apostle Paul has shown that Christian transformation produces humility and that there is unity in diversity. Now we will see how this works together in a practical way, because

The third aspect of Christian transformation is that it produces ministry.

SLIDE – The third aspect of Christian transformation is IT PRODUCES MINISTRY

SLIDE ROMANS 12: 6-8

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. **7** If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; **8** if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Verse 6A says since we have these gifts, each of us is to exercise them accordingly. (NASB version)

(Brian – read verses 6b-8)

Three primary benefits of exercising your spiritual gifts.

SLIDE – Three benefits of exercising your spiritual gifts

1. God will be glorified

2. Others will be edified

3. You will be satisfied

#1, God will be glorified. All we do should glorify God. (I Corinthians 10:31).

#2 others will be edified – gifts are given to build up the body. When you don't use your gifts, your fellow believers will be deprived of your unique ability to serve the body through your gifts. Imagine God owns a restaurant and all the different functions of the restaurant are kind of like our spiritual gifts. The restaurant only functions when all the jobs are being done. So within the restaurant there are people responsible for being the waitress, for cooking, for running the cash register, etc. now imagine someone comes into the restaurant and orders the most basic order – toast and when the waitress gives the instruction to the kitchen 'we need one order of toast' yet there is no one there to make toast. So the person who is responsible for keeping the refrigerated products in order says to himself, 'well, I'll try to make toast' so he puts 2 pieces of bread into the refrigerator and waits a couple of minutes. And takes the bread out and gives it to the waitress and she takes this to the customer. How disappointed he will be.

#3, You will be satisfied – knowing and using your gift will allow you to discover your purpose for living. Sometimes we wonder what our purpose is within the body of Christ. Our spiritual gifts allow us to be satisfied there because we have a sense of fulfillment and joy when we serve others. Your spiritual gifts are really your job description given to you within the body.

Conclusion:

Let me make this point. There is a difference between a talent and a gift. Talents are a result of genetics and or training while spiritual gifts are the result of the Holy Spirit's presence in our life. What I'm really trying to tell you is this... unless we are born again Christians we do not have the Holy Spirit and therefore we do not have spiritual gifts. Before our salvation, the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives was to convict us of sin, and therefore a need for a Saviour.

SLIDE – John 16:8

⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

So let me conclude by saying this:

SLIDE – Spiritual gifts are given to Christians

SLIDE – If you are not yet a Christian, God has gifts waiting for you to open.

SLIDE When you are functioning in your gift, ministry will be a joy, not a burden.

So, unwrap your gifts and use them for God's glory.

Can I conclude today by asking you as Christians. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? Or will you give the same answer my brother did when we went to search for our Christmas presents from last year.. what were they?