

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

"All the gifts we need"

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-13, Acts 2:1-4

Rev. Steve Filyk

May 31, 2020

Songs/Hymns: 293 Come, thou almighty King (1-3), 382 Spirit of God, descend upon my heart (1,3,5)

During this time of physical distancing,
There's been a lot more screen time at the Filyk's.

Amy and I are using Zoom for work.
The girls are going on-line to for school assignments
And to keep in touch with friends.

And we are all watching a lot more TV.

One treasure that Amy and I stumbled upon,
Was the sports documentary miniseries, "The Last Dance",

a 10-part series
giving "an in-depth look at [basketball's] Chicago Bull's dynasty
Through the lens of [their] final championship season
in 1997-98."ⁱ

Those who know something about the history of the Bull's
will understand that a lot of this story
centers on Michael Jordan's role on the team.
You might call it a vanity project.

This is understandable.
Michael Jordan was a spectacularly gifted player.

To quote one article:

“He could blow by defenders for a dunk or layup in traffic,
he could drain shots from beyond the arc,
pull-up for a midrange jump-shot,

and he also had perhaps the best post-up game
for a guard that the game has ever seen...

In his 15 seasons, MJ won an incredible 10 scoring titles,
which is a league best...”ⁱⁱ

Even contemporaneous superstars recognized
His unique abilities:

“Magic Johnson said, "There's Michael Jordan
and then there is the rest of us.”ⁱⁱⁱ

As you watch the series, you note how Michael gets all the attention.
The fans are cheering for *him*,
The media is focused on *him*.
His gifts and abilities capture all the attention.

PAUSE

Today is Pentecost.

It is the day we celebrate as the church’s birthday.

On Pentecost many years ago,
The Holy Spirit swept through an upper room
And gave Jesus' disciples astonishing new abilities.

They proclaimed God's wonders in other languages.
Peter preached his first sermon.

When people witnessed this event,
Thousands joined the community that day.

On Pentecost many years ago
the disciples received the gift
That Jesus had promised: the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit bestowed a variety of supernatural graces
On the newly formed church:

Gifts of support,
gifts of speech,
gifts of power.

These gifts were blessings.
They helped the fledgling community prosper.
They enabled the Gospel message to spread.

But these gifts also became points of contention.

Paul's letter to the church at Corinth devotes a number
Of chapters to this topic:

He explores the nature and purpose of these gifts
And also addresses the conflict swirling around these gifts.

It seems that among the Corinthians
(and you have to read between the lines),
It seems that among the Corinthians
That gift first seen at Pentecost,
The gift of speaking in tongues was highly valued.

Those who had this gift boasted about their abilities,
And saw it as a mark of special status.

And so, gifts that were meant to strengthen the whole community
Became a means of tearing them apart.

People began comparing themselves with each other.
Depending on the gift they had been given,
Some were feeling superior and others were feeling inferior.

I don't think it is much different in the modern-day church community.
We tend to prize those gifts that are front and center.
We laud those who are blessed with gifts of speech.

At the same time, we tend to ignore
Those gifts that operate in the background,
Those many gifts of support.

We ignore them to the extent that many
Who are blessed with gifts of hospitality, mercy, service
Don't even think of their abilities as a spiritual gift.

But what does Paul have to say about these gifts of the Spirit?
I think there are at least four important points
That we can take out of today's passage.

First of all, it should be noted
That the gifts come from God.

Paul notes:

“There are different kinds of gifts,
but the same Spirit distributes them

There are different kinds of service,
but the same Lord.

There are different kinds of working,
but in all of them

and in everyone it is the same God at work.”^{iv}

This fact that these gifts come from God,
Takes away an opportunity for boasting.

If it is a supernatural grace that allows us to empathize
With the suffering of others,
Or allows us to connect with others through speech,
Then we should not claim it as our own.

Paul first notes that spiritual gifts come from God.

Secondly, he argues that each follower of Jesus
Is given a gift of the Holy Spirit.

There is no-one without.

Paul says it like this:

“Now to *each one* the manifestation of the Spirit is given...

To *one* there is given through the Spirit

a message of wisdom,

to *another* a message of knowledge

by means of the same Spirit,

to *another* faith

by the same Spirit [and so on].”^v

If you think you were absent,

On that day when the Holy Spirit

Was doling gifts, you need to think again.

The Bible says it clearly.

“To *each one*” ... a gift is given.

If you can't recognize in yourself

A supernatural endowment, maybe you should talk about it

With a friend or neighbor.

At our Bible study this past Thursday

we started talking about the different gifts

That are evident in our church family.

It was interesting to note

that while it was easy to see the gifts of others,

We had a harder time recognizing these gifts in ourselves.

But just because we haven't recognized it
doesn't mean we don't have it.

According to the Bible we've all been given a gift.

And this gift is meant for everyone.

That's Paul's third argument.

(Forgive me if I'm sharing them out of order.)

Paul says: "Now to each one

The manifestation of the Spirit is given

For the common good."^{vi}

For the common good.

Ultimately none of these gifts are meant for individual enjoyment,
But instead are a communal blessing.

Sometimes they are meant to bless those within the community
And sometimes they are meant to enable the community
To further its mission.

But in every case these gifts are meant to be enjoyed by all.

Have you ever found yourself envying the gift of another?

Well next time you do,

consider that the person's gift

Is there for your benefit

as well as the benefit of others.

It is not a private possession for the holder.

God is ultimately caring for us when the Holy Spirit
Blesses another with an extraordinary gift.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given by God.
The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to everyone.
The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the benefit of others.

And finally, the gifts of the Holy Spirit
Are shared according to God's plans.

Just consider Paul's words:
"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit,
and he distributes them to each one,
just as he determines."^{vii}

Sometimes as individuals we feel inferior
Because we don't have the gifts of others.

Sometimes as church communities we feel
That we are without the necessary gifting to thrive.
"They are growing because they have gifted teachers.
We don't... poor us."

And yet what does the Bible teach us?
The God who bestows gifts,
Is giving them according to God's plans.

That is God has provided us with the gifts we need
For the ministry that God has called us to now.

No gifts of evangelism?

Maybe God isn't preparing us for revival.

Lots of gifts of service?

Maybe God want us to use these gifts
To bless our neighborhood.

If you were listening careful to today's reading you'll have noted
That it is not just gifts that are given to the church,
But ministries are given to the church.

"There are different kinds of gifts,
but the same Spirit distributes them
There are different kinds of service,
but the same Lord."^{viii}

Even as we are struggling to find our mission,
Maybe the best approach is to start discerning
What sort of gifts God has blessed us with.

Which brings me back to the beginning.

I mentioned that Amy and I watched "The Last Dance",
That sports documentary miniseries,
About the Chicago Bulls.

Anyone who watches it will notice
The focus on Michael Jordan.

But it isn't all about him.

Each episode takes a look at the supporting cast,
The rest of the team.

Michael was an extraordinarily gifted basketball player.

But there wouldn't have been a dynasty
Without the coach, Phil Jackson.

After Chicago Jackson proved his worth in Los Angeles
Winning five titles as coach with the Lakers.

It has been said about him
that he is a "true players' coach—

someone who can truly connect with players on a personal level...
[and that] This philosophy ultimately led him
to become one of the most influential
coaches in sports history.^{ix}

Michael was extraordinarily driven.

But Chicago wouldn't have been such champions
Without Dennis Rodman.

It has been said about Rodman that

"[He] was so versatile that he could guard centers,
forwards, or guards equally well...

[And] 1991 on, he established himself
as one of the best rebounders of all time..."^x

Michael could shoot from any point on the court.
But he wouldn't have had so many points
Without Scotty Pippen.

And it wasn't just that he is "remembered as one of the greatest
defenders
To ever play the game,
and one of the most versatile
And agile players overall..."

As Bull point-guard Steve Kerr noted:
"He was a perfect complement to Michael..."

Michael was the [driver]
You had to be ready every day for his criticism.

Scottie would put his arm around you
and make sure you were OK.
He is a kind soul."^{xi}

Michael Jordan was an extraordinarily gifted player.
But without the gifts of his teammates and coach
The Bull wouldn't never have reached such heights.

Some gifts that God gives, shine more brightly than others.
But all those gifts
Are ultimately meant for everyone's benefit.

So what is the gift God gave you?
Are you using it for the benefit of the church and for God's glory?

May it be so. Amen.

ⁱ “The Last Dance’: The untold story of Michael Jordan’s Chicago Bulls” May 19, 2020

https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/28973557/the-last-dance-updates-untold-story-michael-jordan-chicago-bulls

ⁱⁱ Jonny Hughes “10 Fascinating Facts About Michael Jordan” <https://www.goliath.com/sports/10-fascinating-facts-about-michael-jordan/>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Legends profile: Michael Jordan” NBA.com staff <https://www.nba.com/history/legends/profiles/michael-jordan>

^{iv} 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV

^v 1 Corinthians 12:7-9 NIV

^{vi} 1 Corinthians 12:7 NIV

^{vii} 1 Corinthians 12:11 NIV

^{viii} 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 NIV

^{ix} Alexander Trataros “The Last Dance: Phil Jackson was a true player’s coach” <https://hoopshabit.com/2020/05/04/the-last-dance-phil-jackson-coach/>

^x “Dennis Rodman” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Rodman#Legacy_in_basketball

^{xi} “Scottie Pippen” *Wikipedia* and Steve Kerr quoted on the Lowe Post Podcast as noted by

“He was beloved by everybody’: How Scottie Pippen lifted Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls”

https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/29150878/he-was-beloved-everybody-how-scottie-pippen-lifted-michael-jordan-chicago-bulls