

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
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Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts, Part 2

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

Christian, You Are Gifted!

You have the gifts:

- 1. The church needs you to have*
- 2. That God wants you to have*

**Hymns: 484 – Borning Cry –
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All Scripture quotations from the NIV

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 –

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

People sometimes go through a “searching” time in their lives.

For example, a young adult might have many questions about themselves:

- Who am I?
- What’s my style?
- What do I like?

- What do I want to do with my life?
- Where will I end up living and calling home?
- Whom will I marry?

Perhaps some of you here today are going through that phase. Others of you aren’t troubled by those questions at all!

As we continue this sermon series called “*Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts,*” we’ve reached the point where we need to do some searching. Last week we rejoiced that God is the Giver of spiritual gifts. Today as we look in 1 Corinthians 12 we ask, “What spiritual gifts has God given to me?”

Let’s examine the verses before us today considering the theme: “**Christian, You Are Gifted!**”

- 1. You have the talents the church needs you to have**
- 2. You have the talents God wants you to have**

We read in 1 Corinthians 12: “*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.*”

Here Paul lists of number of spiritual gifts. But before we list these gifts, let’s note some important things:

- First, let’s remember that many of these things are activities that we

all are to be doing! For example, the first gift Paul mentions is “wisdom.” We wouldn’t say that only some Christians are supposed to be wise. All of us are to grow in spiritual wisdom.

- However, Paul makes it clear that some of you have an aptitude for wisdom. Some have been blessed with a special measure of it.
- Also, as we go through this list, it would be helpful for you to think of Holy Trinity members that you know who have these various gifts as we marvel at how God has blessed his church!

We’re going to group these spiritual gifts in our text into two different lists today. Let’s first see talents that God has given his Church for all-time.

The first spiritual gifts on our list is “wisdom and knowledge.” Paul lists these two in the same sentence, so it’s possible that he means these are the same, a unit – wisdom and knowledge. Or, the possibility exists that these twins have different nuances.

Knowledge means that a person grasps the facts. They understand the information. Spiritually speaking, they know their doctrine. Wisdom can have the nuance that a person knows how to apply the facts to a situation. They can take the information and make a good choice. They apply the doctrines to real-life situations. We have examples of such wisdom in Scripture. We can’t help but think of Solomon, who was gifted by God with a special measure of wisdom as he reigned as king. We think of Joseph in the OT who made the right decision when Potiphar’s wife tempted him and when a plan was needed to save the world from starvation during a great

7-year famine. Thank God for his blessings of knowledge and wisdom in the Church!

Secondly, we see the gift of faith.

This does not refer to saving faith. A rich measure of faith does not mean a person is “more saved” than another person. This is speaking of a “mountain moving” faith, as Jesus taught about in Matthew 21: *“I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt... you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.”* Do you know such a person? This is the person who possesses an unwavering trust in God, no matter how bad or difficult the situation might seem to be. This optimistic faith says, “God will find a way when we don’t see a way!”

A pastor friend of mine told me of a church council meeting he sat in. The meeting had deteriorated into a “worry session” over what money the church didn’t have and how the church was going to survive – How would they keep from locking the doors for good? One of the men on the council said, “What about having some faith in God being able to take care of us?!” The pastor mentioned what a refreshing thought that was to hear from one of the leaders. Have some faith! This attitude is a gift of God.

A third all-time gift Paul mentions is the gift of prophecy. The broad definition of this word is proclamation and teaching. This goes beyond the gifts of knowledge and wisdom that were mentioned before. After all, a person might have a lot of knowledge and even a great bit of wisdom in applying knowledge, but don’t have the gift of teaching these to others in a clear, understandable way. It’s a gift!

Paul also mentions the gift of distinguishing between spirits. This is an interesting gift that John also writes about in

his first letter: *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (4:1)* This gifted person has the aptitude to hear teachings presented and discern true teachings from false teachings. Have you ever known someone who had contact with a religious group or school that is not in our fellowship because of false teachings, and they’ve been influenced by them? The person mentioned by Paul is not easily swayed by charisma or logic, but knows true and false teaching when he sees it. This would have been a great blessing in the early Church, since the NT hadn’t been completed yet.

Paul also mentions some gifts in these verses that seem to have been used by God for a particular time and place. Before the New Testament had been completed, God at times gave visible, powerful signs of the Holy Spirit’s power to confirm the message that his apostles were delivering. After the completion of Scripture, these gifts’ purpose were not as vital and don’t seem to be used as they once were. In churches that claim to have special charismatic gifts today, we see many doctrinal problems and errors. This leads us to question their claim of a special connection to the Holy Spirit due to their orthodoxy. The People’s Bible makes this comment on charismatic gifts: **“These gifts were granted to believers only when and where the Spirit willed, even in the days of the apostles. Certainly God has always been able to perform miracles of healing through whom he wills, but it is another matter for an individual Christian to prove that he or she has that power today. Many so-called “miracles” are counterfeit. Sober-minded Christians also question whether miracles of healing are as necessary today... “**

It is good for us to recognize these gifts that God has given to his Church in the past for his purposes. **Paul mentions the gift of healing.** This gift was given to certain apostles at certain times, prompted by the Holy Spirit to confirm the message they brought. Remember the beggar at the Temple that Peter and John came across as they came one day? By the Holy Spirit allowing them to heal the man in Jesus’ name, they profoundly changed his life and the lives of those who witnessed it. God also used it as an extended confrontation with the Jewish leaders who opposed Christ in the early Church. And remember Eutychus, the young man who sat in a window while Paul preached late into the night at Troas? (Read Acts 20 if you don’t!) He fell and died as he fell asleep, and Paul raised him from the dead. Do you think that miracle served its purpose of confirming Paul’s sermon that night?

Paul then mentions the gift of “miraculous powers,” or miracles. Similarly, these were granted to serve the same purpose as healing.

Then Paul mentions the charismatic gift that confused the Corinthians more than any other gift: The gift of speaking in tongues and interpreting those tongues. At Pentecost the disciples were given the special ability to speak in foreign languages they had not learned. This showed the Holy Spirit’s power and also allowed the many visitors in Jerusalem to hear the gospel in their own language. At another profound time Cornelius, a Roman centurion whose family were believers, was encountered by Peter. To teach Peter a lesson about salvation for the Gentiles, God granted them the gift of speaking in tongues, which were foreign languages they had not learned. Peter later reported back to the other disciples, *“The*

Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.” (Acts 11:15) It “confirmed” the presence of the Holy Spirit, just as it was intended to do.

Today is a good day for us to recognize a few other gifts that God grants, which he reveals in other places in Scripture. Romans 12 tells us: *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.... If (a man’s gift) is serving, let him serve... 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.*

Another gift revealed here is the gift of serving. This is the same word used for the situation when Stephen and other “deacons” were appointed in the early Church. Perhaps you remember how their service of waiting on tables was needed so the apostles could concentrate on the spiritual ministry of the Church at that time. These men had the gift to take care of the surrounding details related to church functions. Such “service” was a great blessing in furthering the spread of the gospel and the growth of the Church. It was truly a gift of God!

We also hear about the gift of encouragement and showing mercy. Have you ever viewed these as spiritual gifts? Some people do indeed have the gift of perceiving when someone needs a friend to talk to or a shoulder to cry on. Some have the knack of finding that certain special word of encouragement when someone else is down. The classic example of showing mercy in Scripture is the Good Samaritan, who lent aid when needed.

The gift of giving. This certainly is a privilege that we all have. We all

contribute our firstfruit offerings to the Lord for use in our church. We all do this out of love and thanks for the Savior who gave his life on the cross so that we might have eternal life. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 8, *“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”*

God tells us that some have the gift of extreme generosity in their giving. Think of the widow’s mite in Luke 21. She had virtually nothing to live on, and yet brought her offering to the Temple for the Lord. Jesus even commended her gift of generosity to his disciples. Some today have this gift as well. I remember having a casual conversation with a church member in Wisconsin who found out that the Youth Group was \$120 short in trying to get funds for a stereo in their youth room. He came back later that afternoon and dropped off an envelope at church. He had gone to the bank and gotten the \$120 they needed. That’s a spiritual gift!

Romans 12 also mentions the gift of leadership. It is true that some are “born leaders,” even in the church. Some have the gift of rallying the congregation and inspiring them to action. One of the best Scriptural examples is from a book that you may not have read in a long time: Nehemiah. Nehemiah coordinated the return of the Israelites from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. He had vision and energy! Perhaps this would be a good book for your reading list sometime soon.

One final gift is worth mentioning. Later in 1 Corinthians 12 **Paul writes about “those with gifts of administration.”** The gifts of organization like Moses had, or his father-in-law Jethro who encouraged

delegation, is a gift! I thank God that there are those among us with gifts of organization in money matters and carrying out the planning, in order to keep our congregation running smoothly!

If you think that's all the gifts there are, and are wondering if we missed one you might have, remember that this is not an exhaustive list by any means. Someone here today might say, "I work with my hands. There's no "spiritual gift that I have to offer." Listen to what Exodus 31 tells us: *"The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri... of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab... of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you: the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent - the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand - and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests.."* God called these gifts of the Holy Spirit too!

Today we can thank God that he still provides the gifts that Holy Trinity needs in all these areas. Looking back to the past, we have had pastors here who had different gifts for different times in our history. When this church was just beginning in 1964, the Lord sent seminary graduate Pastor David Bode here with gifts needed at that time. In 1978, Pastor John Henning

began a long service in our church with his unique strengths. In 1994 Pastor Buchholz came with his unique talents that our church needed at the time. **All along God has also brought members into our congregation with unique talents that have been needed by the church.**

That leads us right into to our second point today. What about you? Paul closes these words by writing, *"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."* It's interesting that Paul uses the present tense in that verse. The present text in Greek indicates a continuing action that goes on and on. Even today, the Holy Spirit is continuing to give these spiritual gifts to God's people.

Now it's "searching time." What gifts might you have to use for God's service out of love and thanks for your Savior? Psalm 139 says, *"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made... All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

This part of the sermon isn't too lengthy, because this is for your thought and consideration. Now is the time to examine yourself. This is important because we could have a sinful attitude in a few ways:

- We sin if we are unaware of our spiritual gifts and never try to identify them. Paul says they're to be used for the "common good."
- We sin if we identify how we've been uniquely gifted by God and choose not to use our gifts for his glory. How unfortunate that would be!

- We also sin if we chafe in jealousy over gifts that someone else has that you do not have. In Corinth, as we said before, people desired the flashier gifts: healing and speaking in tongues. Some had jealousy over this, even though Paul taught them that speaking in tongues is a lesser gift on the spectrum! How sad it would be to feel anger at God because you don't have musical gifts to offer. How sad it would be to feel resentment because you wish you were richer so you could give more.

May we be led to contentment as we identify the talents God has given us to use!

As we close our "searching time" today in examining ourselves for the gifts God has given, let's never forget the reason we can offer them to his service. It is not guilt. It is not duty. It is because Christ loved us enough to serve us with his unique identity as the Son of God! He served as our Savior when no one else could. He has given us forgiveness and a purpose in life.

Praise God today for the gifts he has given you! May you put them to use for him. Amen.