



USING YOUR SPECIAL ABILITIES

2. "Living as One Body?"

19 July, 2020

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Welcome Church! and Welcome to Worship!

Another beautiful day to enjoy God's blessings! Greet each other (responsibly of course!) and praise God in your thoughts and words! One more Sunday and we will be standing at the door of August! Days roll by faster than CORONA infection count!

Last Sunday we start on a three week series of "Using Special Abilities entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit!"

Listen to this music and thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Believe it or not, the Holy Spirit has kept you safe all through the past week. Thank God for His work.

LISTEN **The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases**

PRAYER

Loving Father and Eternal God. You have been our Rock this past week, in whom we live and move and have our being. We learned so much about You through Jesus your Son and learned to trust you as we put our faith Him and His purpose. Please remove from our hearts and minds everything that hinders worship or dampen our joy. Create in us a deeper longing for you, a closeness which opens our lives to fuller delight and to a deeper commitment. May our hymns and prayers, our searching thoughts, and our hearing of the Scriptures, be an exercise in the Hove Love. **AMEN**

HYMN **Great is Thy Faithfulness** **553**

PRAYER for Our World

Lord Jesus, when you came among us, you proclaimed the kingdom of God in villages, towns, and lonely places. Teach us to pray as You did, for all people who need relief from incessant pain, who grieve the loss of a close one, the brokenness of a cherished relationship, and the futility of hope where there is no future to anticipate. Grant us the grace and space to grieve for our own losses, and the grace and space to allow others to grieve theirs, and for the displacement of children from their schools, which an established part of their lives.

O Lord, we pray for countries where COVID-19 cases are increasing, the United States, India, Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, Argentina, Iraq, Indonesia, and Oman.

Father, we pray continually for honest and able national leaders, for our religious leaders and essential workers, for health care workers and death care industry personnel, that scientists not be at war with politicians. We pray for the unemployed, that they find useful and rewarding work, and for ourselves as we grapple with the lies of omission from our history lessons. Receive these our prayers for this Your world. **AMEN**

READING **1 Corinthians 12:12-14 and 27-31a** **page 216**

LISTEN **He knows my Name**

PRAYER for Our Community

Father. We remember by name ... those in our community who are under medical care, convalescing, receiving treatment and resting from an ordeal. We remember by name... those among us who continue to shield themselves from this horrible virus, those who have urgent needs we are unaware of. We pray for those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, praising you for their celebration of each milestone in life, which is a gift from you. Continue to encourage us as a Church to live the life Jesus told us to, faithfully as His Church. **AMEN**

PRAYER for our Church (Let's make this a daily prayer for our Church)

God of Eternity, present among us here and now. This Church is your dwelling place in this community, planted by those who heard You, obeyed You and acted as You enabled. May we be such people, listening and acting as you build Your Church in this place.

Teach us to encounter you everyday through Your Word that we may:

Speak wisdom in love, and declare Your Truth with humility

Care with genuine empathy for the community in which we live

Draw people to You as peacemakers in Your Kingdom, and

Make space for those who need to escape from the tumult of their lives, and meet You.

Then let the empty Cross declare our reconciliation with You, accomplished by Jesus the Christ, our Lord! **AMEN**

HYMN

Blessed be the Name of the Lord

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MESSAGE

Last Sunday we started examining 1 Corinthians 12. Paul is responding to a question from the Church at Corinth about "Spiritual Gifts". Advances in the study of languages helps us discover, the phrase "Spiritual Gifts" gives us an image of something special being given to selected deserving people (gift/reward), but Paul puts it in its true context, "special abilities" given to anyone of us, by the ONLY One who can equip us with special abilities, the Holy Spirit [12:11]. The question raised by the Church is about speaking in "tongues", i.e. "languages" which are not understood by those present [Acts 2:6], for which the Holy Spirit gives someone present, the gift of interpretation [12:10b]. We also noted last time, God does not speak in riddles, nor is it His intention to confuse us; God speaks very plainly and clearly to those who want to listen to Him and hear what He is saying.

We also noted God's plan for this world: It starts with Creation when God is personally involved; He continues with His personal involvement through selected people (prophets) who hear Him and convey it to His people, until 400 years before the birth of Christ. The second part is a short-lived stage when Christ arrives to teach the law of God, preach on the Kingdom of God, and heal people of all sickness, disease and infirmity (Matthew 4:23), then

take on His main mission of first submitting Himself to death by the cruelest form of torture, the Cross, only to defeat death by His Resurrection.

God, having accomplished His and Christ's purpose, the third stage of God's history is the release of the Holy Spirit, who has been active all through history, but introduced to us in the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb (Matt. 1:18). The Holy Spirit guards Mary, Joseph and Jesus from Herod's anger and continues to keep Jesus safe until the time He surrenders to death on the Cross, a foretelling of His role after Christ's ascension.

Paul had to establish the supreme role of the Holy Spirit before addressing further implications of their question on "special abilities".

This morning, lets re-acquaint ourselves with Jesus the Christ who IS and ALWAYS WILL BE, the Author of the Church. He opens this section with a clarification, The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. He does not say, ...so it is with the Church, because the Church is the body of Christ and united as one with Him. We cannot talk about the Church as separate from Christ, coming from somewhere to be united with Him. When we say, We the Church..., we imply ... and Christ is our Head whom we follow.

The Church is a body with many members, yet is is only ONE body! It can be many denominations coming together as one body, as long as each denomination acknowledges and worships the one and only Risen Christ, who is the Head of the Church. Unless the denomination's symbol is the empty cross, we cannot declare our common belief that Christ accomplished His work of defeating death. If a denomination focuses on an indispensable, central role of their leader and leadership, then they stand in the way of Christ and the "body of Christ" being ONE.

So how do we get into this body that is ONE with Christ?

We may come from different parts of the world, disparate regions, contrasting occupations, diverse levels of wealth and social standing, but we come into this One body which is united with Christ, through the door of baptism, into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

As we noted several months ago, our Christian journey begins with Baptism by water, a personal decision to discard our former identity and take on new identity as a follower of Christ, and further along in our journey, in our quest to know God better through His Son Jesus our Christ, to be Baptised by the Holy Spirit, to become an instrument by which God's will is accomplished in this world, for which, the Holy Spirit gives us "special abilities".

In the closing verses of chapter 12, Paul brings together his teaching on special abilities, and being one body with Christ as the head, in command.

In the early part of his response to the question posed by the Church at Corinth Paul said, A special ability is given to each of us so that we can help each other (v.7) which he expands (v.22), some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most

necessary. And the parts we regard as less honourable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honourable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honour and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad.

Paul then connects the list of special abilities (v.8-10) to a series of questions which helps us accept diversity in the Church, together as Christ's body, of which each of us is a part (v.27)

“Are we all apostles?

Are we all prophets?

Are we all teachers?

Do we all have the power to do miracles?

Do we all have the gift of healing?

Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages?

Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages?

Of course not!

So you (*plural - the Church*) should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts” (v.29-31).

This is addressed to the Church! Your gifts are chosen for you by the Holy Spirit. You may desire another gift, but unless the Holy Spirit has desired it for you, you will not get it. BUT as a congregation, we can earnestly desire helpful and higher abilities, which edify and help others. This is the purpose of the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives us.

The next time you stand in front of a makeup or shaving mirror, remind yourself that Jesus is the Head of the Church. Without a head, there is no leadership and without leadership there is no direction for the church to journey. Many Churches have lost sight of this very important fact, and instead look to the Minister or Pastor to be their leader, sometimes a doctrine or theology to be their guide, and even use the physical and monetary resources God has put at their disposal to guide their own thoughts., follow His teaching and direction.

The next time you stand before an a full length mirror, remind yourself of two connected Truths: 1) everyone's body functions well when it acts as a coordinated whole, and 2) your body functions best when connected to the True Head, the One to whom you have surrendered your will - after all we do pray “Our Father, the One whose home is heaven ... Thy will be done, on earth as it is Heaven.

When all of us are praying, God's will be done, this is the ultimate One Body experience which brings joy to God and all of Heaven.

Can we make this a goal for us as a member of the body of Christ as we continue on this series? **AMEN**

LISTEN

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me

PRAYER

Father, was Puccini's music for his ears alone? Or was Starry Night only for Van Gogh's eyes? Are discerners of spirits better than those who prophesy? Is it better to be a healer than a preacher? Was Mother Teresa more important than the Priest who held the door?

Is red a better than blue?

Each and every special ability, all of them is given to each of us by the Holy Spirit. Each ability is for the common good of all. Lord, help us not to struggle with that which we cannot understand, rather to surrender ourselves for the glory of Your Kingdom. **AMEN.**

HYMN

We are one in the Spirit **532**

BENEDICTION

Praise You Holy Spirit, for leading us and keeping us in unity! Father, we dedicate this week to pray for the deepening of our unity in Christ. He has overcome death and called us into new life in the Spirit. And so we pray:

AMEN.

As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please drop off your tithe envelope and offerings on the plate at the back of the Church, remit directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope in the Church's postbox.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS IN TITHING AND GIVING

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THANK YOU.