

God has blessed us with our spiritual gifts

(21st October 2007 – morning service)

Magic 8 Ball – Brought to make decisions – Box claims it can predict the future.

Read some horoscopes from the newspaper

- Of course today we are educated enough not to believe in this rubbish aren't we?
- Show picture of shop in Gants Hill

- Spiritual world we live in
 - Horoscopes – Genesis tells us that God put those stars in place
 - Tarot Readings
 - Mediums
 - Palm Reading – there's a version that really can change your life, it's called "Psalm Reading" – pick a number 1-150
 - Shop at Gants Hill
 - Spiritual fares
 - Fortune telling parrot!!!

- Paul faced a similar sort of world
 - The Corinthians had been exposed to numerous so called 'spiritual' happenings. Many of the Corinthian Christians would have at some point been involved in cult religions where various forms of spirituality were practiced and all manor of so called 'spiritual' manifestations would have been witnessed.
 - In short, the Corinthians thought they knew all there was to know about things of a spiritual nature. They had been there, done that, and brought the T-shirt!
 - But Paul starts, "I don't want you to be ignorant about these things".
 - Paul tells them that they have barely begun to understand spiritual things.

- Paul points out to them that it is not from God if they hear things like "Jesus be cursed" – this may well have been the sort of thing they had heard at a religious cult. But no, the only spirituality we should have anything to do with is that which comes from the Holy Spirit. He will never drive a person to say "Jesus be cursed" but rather He will exalt Jesus and confirm Him and Lord. (hence the reference to "Jesus is Lord").

- Then Paul talks about the different kinds of gifts, the different kinds of service and the different kinds of working.
 - There are two words used for spiritual gifts
 - (πνευματικων – coming from πνευμα meaning Spirit) – Gifts are given or empowered by the HOLY SPIRIT

- (χαρίσματα – coming from χάρις meaning Grace) – GIFTS demonstrate God's GRACE
 - Both of these things mean that spiritual gifts are from God and are a means of his grace.
- Gifts are given, not earned
 - Split in the church at Corinth over the gifts and boasting
 - How can we boast about the gifts we have been given. Surely we can only boast about God's generosity and we know that God is always gracious and probably pours out more grace on those that need it.
 - - Shoe boxes – gifts that we give – how would you feel if the person who received your gift started showing off to someone who hadn't received such a nice gift as yours? Sometimes that's how we treat the gifts that God has given to us. That was certainly a problem that existed in the church in Corinth.
 - Eric and Julie gave thanks for the gift of Chanaza today. Now obviously they are proud parents and rightly so too, but they have recognised that Chanaza is a gift from God and today they have glorified God by publicly thanking him for the gift of Chanaza.
 - In the same way let us glorify God with all the gifts he has given us.
 - In those verses we see some spectacular gifts don't we. wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.
 - These are all quite remarkable and extraordinary abilities and this would have been the kind of thing that the Corinthians would have expected to see. They would have understood all of these things to be spiritual manifestations.
 - Today these are often referred to as THEE spiritual gifts but are we missing the point?
 - Story of geography students
 - In a school geography lesson, the children were asked by their teacher to come up with a list of what they thought were the seven wonders of the world.
 - What do we think are the seven wonders of the world?

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids,

2. Taj Mahal,
3. Grand Canyon,
4. Panama Canal,
5. Empire State Building,
6. St Peter's Basilica,
7. China's Great Wall.

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one student, a quiet girl, hadn't turned in her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The quiet girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help."

The girl hesitated, then read,
"I think the Seven Wonders of the World are ...

1. to touch
2. to taste
3. to see
4. to hear

She hesitated a little, and then added,

5. to run
6. to laugh
7. and to love

It is far too easy for us to look at the exploits of man and refer to them as "wonders" while we overlook all God has done, regarding it as merely "ordinary". May you be reminded today of those things which are truly wondrous.

- **Not all spiritual gifts are miraculous manifestations** of God's power.
1 Corinthians 12:28
 - It was the expectation of the church in Corinth that Spiritual Gifts were miraculous manifestations. Paul broadens the scope of Spiritual Gifts and includes things such as teaching, and administration.
 - Some of the every day tasks, some of the behind the scenes work (administration) – certainly not the miraculous public signs that the Corinthians might have associated with the Spiritual.
- Romans 12:3,
 - Paul backs this up in Romans when he says, we've been given different gifts according to the grace God has given to us. So if you have gifts

coming out of your ears then it is because God has been especially gracious to you – so thank him by honouring him with your gifts.

- Exodus 31:1-5
 - The more down-to-earth gifts are also seen right back in the Old Testament. The first example we have of someone being filled with the Spirit is way back in Exodus. Does that surprise you?
 - Bezalel was ‘filled with the Spirit of God’ to enable him to do all kinds of practical things as well as to have wisdom and knowledge and understanding. Notice also that it is God who gives abilities to the skilled workers who are to make everything God had commanded Moses to make: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant, and everything else in the tent. Also the table, the alters, the basin and even the clothes for the priest – the ability to make these items came from God).
 - Bezalel was empowered by the Holy Spirit to enable him to make all the items that God had commanded to Moses. The Tabernacle and everything in it – the ark of the covenant, the table, the basin... even the clothes for the priests.
 - These are again not the miraculous manifestations you might expect.
- Spiritual gifts are not for individual fulfilment (as would have been the attraction of non-Christian and sub-Christian groups such as the ‘mystery religions’). The gifts are to demonstrate the supreme Lordship of Jesus.
 - To be truly ‘spiritual’ a person will not be driven to self satisfaction or selfish desires of individual fulfilment but will be driven to get involved in the life of the local church as an expression of their personal commitment to Jesus as Lord and to his body (the church) here on earth.
 - “To distance ourselves from other Christians is to waver in our allegiance to Jesus as Lord” (David Prior)
 - (The **gifts** are **given** to us by God and are given to all as God sees fit – no one should boast about what gifts they have, that’s like someone boasting about a birthday present they have been given. It’s a bit of a nonsense for us to think that we should be glorified because we have been given a gift). However, the gifts do of course bring personal joy but they should be used to build up the body, certainly not to cause divisions within it – this is to go against the purpose of the gifts which is to glorify God.
- So in summary, God gives us spiritual gifts ultimately to display His glory. And how do we do that? – by using the gifts he has given us to build up the body (the church)
 - It’s about using whatever talents and skills God has given you to build others up.

- Remember that the church is described as Christ's body. In other words we are Christ's representatives on Earth and so when we are firing on all cylinders, when we're in unity, when there is willingness to use our gifts and the freedom to be able to use them, then the whole body benefits and moreover, God is glorified.
- In this church there is a vast amount of spiritual gifts being displayed regularly. Let's have some more of that!
 - God has blessed us with our spiritual gifts.
 - May we be a blessing to others.