

Ephesians 4-7-13

The giver and the gifts!

Ephesians 4:7-13 (ESV) — 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." 9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Sermon introduction:

What is the best gift you have ever received??? Maybe it was a vacation, a lump sum of cash, diamond earrings, maybe a new car. Let me ask you an equally important question, why were you given that amazing gift?

The motives for gifts are often as important as the gifts themselves. People give gifts for a variety of reasons!

Some people give large financial gifts for a tax write off.
Others give gifts to have buildings, stadiums, or libraries named after them.
Others give gifts to the church to earn their way into heaven.
Others give gifts to put other people in their debt.
Parents sometimes give gifts to make up for their lack of physical presence.
Others give gifts motivated by genuine selfless love.

Why we give matters! This raises the question, why does God give gifts? Specifically, why does he give us spiritual gifts? This is a very important question!!!

This brings us to this morning's passage. According to this passage, God gives spiritual gifts to his church for a very specific reason. What is it?

God gives gifts to build up the body of Christ (repeat)!

We will look at our passage under two headings...

Gifts for individuals
Gifts for churches

First, gifts for individuals

What are individuals given? Spiritual gifts!

Ephesians 4:7 (ESV) — 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Paul says that "grace was given to each one..." Paul is talking about gifts of grace not saving grace. How do we know? The context of the surrounding verses. The Greek word for grace is the word *charis*, from which we get the words *charisma* and *charismatic*.

Notice that Paul says that grace was given to each one. In other words, Christ gives gifts to every Christian. This means that if you are a Christian, Christ has given you a spiritual gift. If you don't have a spiritual gift, you are not a Christian.

Wayne Grudem defines a spiritual gift as...

any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church. (Grudem, 1016)

These can be natural or supernatural. The NT lists over 20 gifts in six different gift lists (1 Cor. 7:7; 12: 8-10, 28-30, Rom. 12: 6-8; 1 Pet. 4:11, Eph. 4:11). What are some of the gifts?

Apostle, prophet, teacher, miracles, healing, helps, administration, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, distinguishing between spirits, tongues and interpretation, evangelist, pastor-teacher, serving, encouraging, contributing, leadership, mercy, marriage, celibacy, speaking gifts and serving gifts.

Each gift list in the NT is slightly different, leading many scholars to conclude that these lists are not exhaustive but suggestive. In other words, you may have a gift not listed in the NT.

Application:

Let's make some application.

It does not matter whether you are rich or poor, male or female, young or old, educated or uneducated, a new convert or a mature saint. If you are a Christian, you have a spiritual gift.

If you don't utilize your spiritual gift, the church of Jesus Christ will suffer.

One author writes,

“If you know and exercise your gift, you contribute to the vitality and ministry of the church; if not, you rob the church of a measure of the impact and influence God intended His church to have in the world. So it is crucially important that you understand, recognize, and exercise your gift.” (Stedman)

How do I discover my gift? It is not complicated. You discover by doing. You can't know if you are going to be a great quarterback unless you throw a football. This means we need to start serving.

You also discover your gift by listening to the input of others. Some people think they have the gift of preaching, but when they preach no one seems to have the gift of listening.

Sometimes Christians over think their spiritual gifts. Serve where the needs are great, and the workers are few.

I talked to someone once who said that his spiritual gift was working with junior high kids. I said, “that is great, but we don't have any needs right now in junior high ministry. But we do have huge needs in the nursery.” He said, “well then, I guess I can't serve right now.” I thought can't or won't!!! Not serving is not an option. Serve somewhere!!! It is more important to be a servant than to serve on your own terms in your specific niche.

Everyone has a gift, put it to work!!! Our goal is every member serving!!!!

If you are a member consider serving on

The sound team.

The nursery team.

The production team.

The worship team.

The security team.

The medical team.

The handy man team.

The communion prep team.

The youth ministry team.

The greeting team...

Please contact the church office.

What are individuals given? Spiritual gifts.

Who gives individuals spiritual gifts? The Risen Christ!

Ephesians 4:8–10 (ESV) — 8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” **9** (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? **10** He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

In these verses, Paul quotes from Psalm 68 to show *how* Christ was able to give gifts to the church.

In Psalm 68, the psalmist metaphorically describes God ascending Mount Zion after a mighty victory. As he ascends, he brings his enemies with him, bound and gagged. This was common in the ANE. Furthermore, as a result of his mighty victory he gives the spoils of war to his servants.

Paul applies this to Jesus. How?

Jesus descended to the lower earthly regions (v. 9). This probably describes everything involved with Christ’s incarnation, suffering, and crucifixion (Phil. 2:5-11).

When he descended to earth, he died on the cross for our sins, defeated all of our enemies, including the enemies of sin, death, and the devil (Col. 2:15). Unpack implications. After he defeated our enemies, he ascended to the father’s right hand. Now he sits in the place of highest honor and glory.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, like all victorious kings, he earned the right to hand out the spoils of war to his loyal subjects. This raises the question, what are the spoils of his war with sin, death, and the devil? Spiritual gifts.

Let me summarize these complicated verses. At great personal cost to himself, Jesus descended to earth and defeated sin, death, and the devil. Then he ascended to heaven in victory. Because of his death, resurrection, and ascension, he earned the right to hand out the spoils of war, which in this context are spiritual gifts.

Earning the right to give us spiritual gifts was very costly.

Illustration:

I met Heidi Klubberud when I was a sophomore. My first thought was, “wow she is cute.” My second thought was, “wow, I have got to change that last name.” We were friends for six months and then we dated for twelve months. After a few months of dating I knew she was the one. So I started saving for a diamond. In the summer between my junior and senior year I worked three jobs. I saved all I could for school and a diamond. I could not afford both, so I took a small loan on the diamond. To pay it off before the wedding I worked on campus twenty hours a week. This still was not enough so I did the unthinkable, I sold my motorcycle (describe).

It was hard work, paying off that diamond. How do you think I would feel, if Heidi never wore the gift I gave her? It was very costly for Christ to earn the right to give us spiritual gifts. How do you think he feels when we don’t utilize them in the church?

Application:

When we stand before Jesus on the day of judgment, he is probably not going to ask us about the size of our portfolio, the size of our house, the size of our business, the size of our influence, or size of our wardrobe. But he is going to ask us how we used the spiritual gifts that he worked very hard to give us.

The risen Christ gives gifts to individual Christians. But what about churches??? This brings us to the second point.

First, gifts for individuals!

Second, gifts for churches!

What is the nature of these gifts? Church leaders!

Ephesians 4:11 (ESV) — 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

Not only does the risen Christ give gifts to individual Christians, he also gives gifts to the churches. What kinds of gifts? According to verse 11, the risen Christ gives the church the gift of church leaders.

Over the years, the implications of this verse have been vigorously debated by charismatics and non-charismatics. Is Paul talking about church offices or giftings? How long will these offices/giftings be around? I don't think Paul had these questions in mind when he wrote this verse. Paul is simply making the point that the risen Christ gives a variety of leadership gifts to the church. Let's look at each one briefly.

Apostles-

When the NT uses the word Apostle, it usually refers to the twelve apostles. To be one of the twelve, you had to spend time with Jesus. Since Jesus ascended to the Father, the office of apostle has ceased. Yet, there are people today with apostolic gifting. In other words, there are people who are extraordinary gifted at planting churches, leading ministries, and doing dangerous missionary work.

Prophets-

Is this referring to the gift of prophecy in the NT church? Or something more like an OT prophet? Probably the former, but again, I don't think Paul was trying to address the question of 21st century prophecy with this verse.

Paul is making that point that God gives the church prophets for their benefit.

Evangelists-

Although every Christian is called to a lifestyle of evangelism (Matt. 28:18-20), God also gives the church gifted evangelists, people like Philip and Timothy (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5) that train others in the church to evangelize their friends.

Shepherds/Teachers-

The word pastor is the Latin word for Shepherd. This means that a shepherd is a pastor and a pastor is a shepherd.

Most scholars think that the words shepherd and teacher refer to the same office. Grammatically both words are governed by a single article in the Greek. Yet the previous three offices/giftings have their own article.

Furthermore, shepherds are teachers. A shepherd feeds the sheep by teaching them God's word. The one skill required of a shepherd is teaching (1 Tim. 3:2). Furthermore, the word elder is used interchangeably with shepherd and teacher.

This means that a pastor is a shepherd, who is an elder, who is a teacher. (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1).

What is the point of Ephesians 4:11? God gives the church leaders as a gift. But why? This brings up the next question.

What is the nature of these gifts? Church leaders!

What is the purpose of these gifts? Equipping the saints!

Ephesians 4:11–12 (ESV) — 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Why did the risen Christ give gifted leaders to the church? To equip the saints for the work of ministry. Notice, it is not the pastors who do the ministry! The pastors equip the saints (i.e., the members) to do the ministry.

This is an absolutely crucial text for the doctrine of the church. In my experience, many people don't understand or appreciate the earth-shaking relevance of this text.

Illustration:

Many people think of the pastor as a bus driver. He does all the driving, while all the members sit in the seats. They are just along for the ride. He does all the work while they watch.

Others think of the church like a football game. The members are in the stands watching the pastors play the game on the field. They sit in their comfortable chairs and watch.

A football game is actually a fantastic analogy, but the roles need to be reworked. The members are the ones on the field playing the game. The pastors are in the press box and on the sidelines calling in the plays, giving instruction, and cheering them on. Who is watching the game, all the saints in heaven along with all the angels (Hebrews 11).

When I left my job at the insurance company, I stepped off the field and onto the sidelines.

The pastor's job is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. He is like the coach. You all are in the big game. Is this how you think about pastors and members? You should, because it is biblical.

Application:

How do we do this at GCF? God gives elders to churches, not to do the ministry, but to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

We equip you on Sunday mornings, we equip you through SS, we equip you through our small groups, and we equip you through discipleship.

We underwent a major paradigm shift as we planned for discipleship groups this year. Explain...

We are passionate about every member ministry.

John Stott writes,

I saw the principle of the every-member ministry well illustrated when I visited St Paul's Church, Darien, Connecticut, a few years ago... On the front cover of their Sunday bulletin I read the name of the Pastor, the Reverend Everett Fullam, then the names of the Associate Pastor and of the Assistant to the Pastor. Next came the following line: 'Ministers: the entire congregation'. It was startling, but undeniably biblical. (Stott, Ephesians)

You are on the front lines; the staff pastors are not!!! You are on the field; the pastors are on the sidelines or in the press box. You get to be part of the big game.

*What is the nature of these gifts? Church leaders!
What is the purpose of these gifts? Equipping the saints!*

What is the result of these gifts? Mature manhood!

Ephesians 4:12–13 (ESV) — 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

God gives the church gifts for very specific reasons. He gives the church leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry. He goes on to write...

For the building up of the body of Christ...

When church leaders equip the saints by teaching and modeling, they build up the body of Christ.

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God....

When church leaders equip and teach the saints it leads to theological unity. Remember from last week that “the faith” is a reference to a specific body of doctrine. Teaching sound doctrine does not lead to division, like some people think, it actually leads to unity.

To mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

When church leaders equip and lead the saints it leads to spiritual maturity and Christlikeness in the church

Here is a simple summary- The risen Christ gifts the church with leaders to equip the body of Christ for ministry which leads to mature manhood.

Application:

How do you see your role? You are not supposed to sit on the sidelines. You are in the big game. You have the privilege of telling your friends and neighbors about Jesus, you have the privilege of discipling the saints, you have the privilege of serving on ministry teams, and you have the privilege of meeting the needs of your small group.

We equip you for the work of ministry...

Conclusion:

The human body is an amazing machine. Every single part of your body has a very specific role to play.

The 206 bones in your body provide a rigid framework, that supports and protects the soft organs of the body.

Your kidneys act like a filter to remove wastes and extra fluid from your body.

Your Liver detoxifies various metabolites, synthesizes proteins, and produces the biochemicals necessary for digestion.

Your ears allow you to hear.

Your eyes allow you to see.

Your nose allows you to smell.

Your heart pumps blood through your whole body.

A body is only healthy when all the individual parts perform their unique God given functions. When the parts of the body stop performing their unique functions, human bodies end up in hospitals or morgues.

If you don't believe me trying functioning without a heart, brain, or kidneys.

The church is called the body of Christ. Jesus Christ has given each member of the body of Christ a unique gift. When each member utilizes their God given gifts, the body is healthy, strong, and mature. On the other hand, when members don't actively utilize their gifts, the body of Christ is unhealthy, weak, and immature.

Together, let's use our gifts for the glory of God and the edification of the body. Let's pray...