

Using Christ's Gifts in Christ's Church

Heidelberg Catechism

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Bible Text: Ephesians 4:7-16
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Let us gather together and turn our attention to Ephesians 4, the first 16 verses. Ephesians 4:1-16. This is God's word.

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

There's a book written about what is a healthy church and maybe you have asked that sometimes, that question what is a healthy church? And we could mention all kinds of things that we could do to be a healthy church, church programs, is it the way we govern the church, is it when we evangelize, is it the preaching of the gospel? Or is it something

else, we wonder sometimes perhaps. When we think about a healthy church, we should say that the preaching of the gospel is primary. That's the most important means of grace by which God gathers his church and that, indeed, God uses, by his grace, to make us healthy because the church is a hospital, is a hospital in which God comes as the Great Physician and how we need him both for body and soul, and especially in this time. But what is a healthy church? It is the preaching of the gospel but it is also especially when through the preaching of the gospel we learn to live the way Christians should live, when we are corrected in our ways and when we live out what it means to be saved. When we, by God's grace, become those, at it were, who are visible epistles, as Paul says in one of his letters, for all to read, or when the gospel becomes so one of us that we cannot but show it in our lives, that is when we see God's grace and mercy and power on display and that is what a healthy church is all about, when Christ is visible in his people.

And maybe you wonder how does it work? Well, the Catechism and the text that we have chosen for tonight we are going to explore that together. We are going to listen to the word of God from Ephesians 4:7 and 16, there we read, first of all, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Then also that last verse of that part where it speaks about all the giftings of the church and how the Lord gifts the church and then it says this, verse 16, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase," so grows, "of the body unto the edifying," building up, "of itself in love." So that's what we consider as we also hope to mention other passages from scripture to underline and to illustrate these truths, of course, and we do that together with the Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 55 at this time. Lord's Day 21, page 49.

Q. 55. What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

A. First, that all and every one who believes, being members of Christ, are, in common, partakers of Him and of all His riches and gifts; secondly, that every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members.

So one question that we would like to draw from the Catechism and also from our text, and answer that from our text and our Catechism, is this question: how can we willingly and cheerfully or joyfully use our gifts for the well-being of the church so that Christ would be visible, so that Christ would be visible in his people? That's the question: how can Christ become visible in his people?

Well, the theme them is "Using Christ's Gifts in Christ's Church," and maybe you say, "Why twice 'Christ'?" Because it's all about him. It's all about him in the church. Christ gives, he gives the gifts, and it's Christ's church as we have elaborately considered in the past weeks. Then two thoughts: gifts are given to every Christian, we focus there on verse 7 and the first part of our answer of our Catechism; and then the second point is gifts given to benefit the whole body, there we focus on verse 16, the last verse of our text, and also the second part of the Catechism.

So we are going to consider tonight the gifts that God gives to his church and we live in a world, don't we, where giftedness is celebrated. Young people, you watch perhaps YouTube videos and there's all these people that show off their giftedness. In a world like that, it's very easy to start comparing, is it not? To comparing to this person or that person, and to come away from those people that seem to be gifted and talented and to come away discouraged, and maybe there is someone even tonight saying here, "I don't have any gifts. I don't have any gifts." Is that true? Is that true? Is it true that you don't have any gifts because you don't have a living relationship with Jesus Christ? Because if you have a living relationship with Jesus Christ you have gifts. God has given you gifts.

Have you received the greatest of all gifts, first and foremost, the empowering work of the Holy Spirit? That's where we need to start tonight. Have you received that glorious gift of Jesus Christ? He is the gift of gifts, the greatest of all, and he gives salvation freely to those who ask and who come with their need and say, "Lord, I come with empty hands tonight." Let me tell you, it's grace alone. He saves by grace, not because of what you do, not because of your past, not because of your sins. It's Christ alone that you need. If you say, "I am with empty hands. I still don't have that gift of grace yet."

And it is through faith. What is faith? It is trusting, it is receiving what he gives. Trusting in his promises, trusting in his word, trusting in his character, that he for the sacrifice that Jesus Christ has made will forgive you all your sins freely. It's through faith and it's often our unbelief that stands in the way, is it not, and the greatest of sin, but even there call on Christ and he can heal even that and change that. Nothing is impossible for Jesus Christ. Come to Christ with all your need tonight. He has promised to give good gifts, has he not, the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Let's start there tonight. Have you received that glorious gift? Then praise the Lord tonight. But also maybe there is someone who says indeed and he actually really believes, "I have no gifts." Then I say tonight based on the word, as we hope to see in a moment, that is impossible. That's simply impossible. Yet you might think negatively about yourself perhaps because you're living in comparison land, you're comparing to this and that and the other thing, the other person or other, "Look at what this person has and look at what that person has and I don't have any of these gifts." If that's your case tonight, then I urge you to listen to the Catechism and I urge you to listen especially to God's word because it's glorious how God gifts his church.

It is glorious and listen to our text, "But unto every one of us is given grace." Everyone. Every believer who has come with his sins and with all his shortcomings to the cross of Jesus Christ and embraced the grace that he gives also receive the Holy Spirit and gifts specifically to be used in the church. Did you hear it? It's grace. It's grace. Every one of us is given grace, undeserved mercies. Undeserved mercies. And when we read around our text, we find out soon that it is the gift of the Holy Spirit, as we hope to see a little later.

And the same thing is said by our Catechism, is it not? "First, that all and every one who believes, being members of Christ, are, in common, partakers of Him and of all His riches and gifts." So if you're a Christian tonight by saving grace, and you are a member of Christ's, then you have gifts and you have been given those gifts to use in the body of Jesus Christ for his kingdom. When you say, "I have no gifts," then I say on the basis of the word, it's not true.

Now certainly we should be humble about our gifts, that's good, that's fine, nothing wrong with that, that's exactly what the Bible tells us. Certainly we should seek to grow in our gifts, develop them, that's good too. But we can't see that we don't have gifts, then we are denying what God gives to his church actually. Do we want to do that? Do we want to deny what God gives graciously by his Holy Spirit to his church to be used?

Children, when you get a present, what do you do? What makes your mom and dad happy when you receive a present? You open it. You rejoice in it. You use it, is it not? You're thankful for it. That actually, that honors the giver, right? Then you see maybe a smile appear on your parent's face. And so should we do with God's gift. We receive them with all our lack, with all our sin, we receive them and say, "Lord, use me. Use those gifts. Help me."

Now we're going to zoom out a little bit at this moment. We are going to look at the text and where this text is in the passage because context always helps us to understand more about our text. So that's what we are going to do. What is Paul talking about in verses 1 through 6? He's talking about one church, one church that is empowered by God's Holy Spirit, the unity of the church. We considered that last Sunday. Verse 6 is the climax. He says there, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." What word is repeated four times? It's the word "all." And then comes our verse, and "unto every one of us," each one of us, you could say, each one of us who are believers is given this grace. Paul turns in our text from the "all" of us to the "each one of us."

So he's talked about the unity of the church, we are all one in Jesus Christ by faith, and now he goes to the diversity of the church. We're not all the same. We're not all the same. The Heidelberg Catechism says it like this: we are all members of Jesus Christ, that's the unity of the church, but unto every one of us is given those gifts. Do you see that? The same focus, the church is one in Jesus Christ but we are not all the same. We're not all the same. We have the same Father we heard, and how glorious that is. And we are indwelt by the same Spirit, and how glorious that is. But there is diversity in the church of God, diversity of gifts.

So back to comparing. Let us not compare. Let us not compare the gifts with, "Oh, this one has this one, this gift, and I don't have." God didn't want us to be the same. He wants us to be all different with different gifts and he gifts us differently. So that's what comes before. Now we look what is after the text. What is Paul talking there? He shows something that is all the same, what is it? We all live out of the glorious victory of Jesus Christ. That's the summary of what we are going to hear now. Verse 7, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he

saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." What is Paul saying here? What is he talking about? He's quoting a Psalm, maybe you have recognized the Psalm, Psalm 68. We hope to sing it later, 68:18. What is this Psalm all about? It shows that God is a glorious victorious God. He's a mighty warrior and he has taken captivity captive. So all that what brought bondage, he has now conquered, and he ascends the hill of Zion as the great and glorious conqueror and he gives gifts unto men, blessings, daily he bestows his salvation upon his children.

That's the picture of 68, Psalm 68 here, and Paul takes this picture and he uses it here for how God deals with his church, his New Testament church, those who are in Christ Jesus. He's basically saying God in Jesus Christ has taken captive all those dark forces of evil and he is going to capture those also in your life and he's binding them, the strongman, Satan, so that he cannot destroy anymore. He has defeated sin and death and hell and the darkness in your life and he's now set you free and now he's given you also gifts so that you would serve him, so that you would serve the body of Jesus Christ, so that we do that together as a church family.

Perhaps Paul was thinking about Moses when he went up the mountain, children. Do you remember what did he go for? He went to the Lord and then he came down with, what? The law. The law. Now did those stone tables change the hearts of the people? No. Paul is saying the greater Moses, Jesus Christ, has gone up the hill, as it were reverently speaking, he's ascended on high and he comes down and what does he give? He gives his gifts of his Holy Spirit and what does he do? He doesn't give us stone tables. No, he writes the law upon our hearts so that we serve one another. How does he do that? Primarily it's through the preaching of the gospel. He gives teachers, he gives preachers, he gives pastors, he gives evangelists. That's what Paul is saying in this text so that we would understand the graciousness of our God and in that he would become visible in the church, and that he writes the law upon our hearts.

Let us not forget this, even if you tonight are here and struggling with assurance of faith or something, trust in Jesus Christ, what he has done. He is the great victor and the more you look at his victory and embrace that victory, the more you will also be able to use your gifts in the power of his strength. The more you look to that cross where he conquered your sins and when you look to his grave and you see that death is conquered also on your behalf, and you think about him and meditate on him, the one who has ascended on high on that glorious hill of Zion, as it were. Yes, heaven itself, there he is praying for his people. He is that glorious high priest and he also fills you with his gifts. Undeserved gifts, yes, first and foremost salvation, but then also those gifts that he gives to serve the body of Jesus Christ.

However weak you feel, that's not a problem for him. However weak you feel about your own gifts, however weak your faith is, he can strengthen. That's what it is all about, that you receive these gifts, each and every believer. It's his grace, his undeserved mercy that he gives that and we are called, therefore, tonight to receive those gifts with an open heart by the grace of God and with open hands and say, "Lord, help me to receive them. Help

me to be a blessing to the body of Jesus Christ because thou hast given to us the most unspeakable gift of all, Jesus Christ, his victory over sin, death and hell."

But is there someone here perhaps who says, "I know this and I believe this and I seek to embrace this but I don't think I have useful gifts. I can't speak. I can't evangelize. I can't," and maybe you can fill in the blank tonight. And maybe you think, "My gifts are kind of useless." Is that true or is that also a manifestation of living in comparison land, comparing one to another?

You value perhaps and our culture does, right, and maybe that's crept into the church a little bit too, we value automatically the more visible gifts you see but, "Yeah, you can do that but I can't." Well, that's unhelpful actually, to elevate those gifts. That's not biblical. We should not do that. First of all, find out what your gifts are and then come and use those gifts with the strengthening of the Lord, especially when you feel weak. And pray the Lord for ways, "Lord, where is it that I with my unique gifts can help the church? Or can build the kingdom of Jesus Christ?" Have you prayed about those things? "Lord, open doors." The Lord will. The Lord will give you places where you can serve.

Now let's never forget the second half of our verse because that's glorious too when we think about it, especially when you say, "Well, I'm not so sure about the usefulness of my gifts." What does the second half say of our verse, verse 7? "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The Catechism puts it like this, we are partakers of Christ and all his riches and gifts. All his riches and gifts. That doesn't sound useless, does it? Riches and gifts according to the measure of Jesus Christ. What does that mean? He gives those gifts and he perfectly measures them for each one. For this one, this. And for that one, that.

There are two passages that are very helpful to understand this. Romans 12:3 is the first one, "For I say, through the grace given unto me," Paul writes there in a chapter all about gifts and using your gifts, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly," and then listen how this echoes our text, "according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." See there, he talks about faith and the measure, and what does faith rest upon? It's according to the measure of Christ. We rest on Christ.

So let us think, yes, soberly about our gifts but also let us realize that he gives, and that's the second passage here, 1 Corinthians 12:11 says it like this, God works all these gifts by one and the same Spirit, he says, "dividing to every man severally as he will." So he divides as he will. He does it his way, what he thinks is best for us. And he perfectly knows what is best for us. Soberly, we need to think soberly about our giftings, humbly, according to the measure of our faith, but then also realizing that he gives exactly what is good, and then to be content with what he gives. So humility, absolutely, need for growth, always, yes, absolutely, but let us realize Christ gives these gifts. He gives them and let us receive them as gifts of Jesus Christ, our gracious Redeemer, our gracious Savior.

Then the riches that the Catechism talks about, those riches. He gives riches and gifts. Ephesians talks about riches all the time, filling riches, the riches of God's grace, riches in Jesus Christ. Do you remember chapter 1, he pours out all those blessings upon his people. Not too long ago we heard it, those are the riches, the gifts that he gives. Then Paul prays that we know the exceeding greatness of his power toward us, what he has done, what power he has for us. You see riches, gifts, grace, and then he prays also that we are filled with the love of Jesus Christ. The love of Jesus Christ. Oh, the length and the breadth and the depth, those are the riches and the gifts that he gives.

So it's all about that God would fill our emptiness and that he would use it for his glory. Verse 13 in chapter 4 also talks about it, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Fullness of Christ there again. Riches. Stature, the height that Christ wants us to come. The stature of the fullness, the maturity that Christ wants his body to reach. These are the riches, these are the gifts, and they come, beloved, from infinite resources. Infinite resources. You can't ever exhaust the God who is infinite, full of grace and full of mercy and full of power. You can't possibly empty God. Then we come to him with our emptiness and we draw from the exceedingly abundant, from the one who can do exceedingly abundantly above what we think and pray for.

That's the God we serve. Isn't he glorious? He can do so much more than we think and pray for, so much more than we can imagine, and he shows that in Jesus Christ, didn't he, conquering death, sin and hell for us. We just heard it. And if we, beloved, who are evil, the Bible tells, right, by nature, know how to give good gifts to our children. Children, you like, generally you like what your parents give, right? They know, they have asked you what you would love to have for your birthday, and we try to give good gifts, we try to give food to you, we clothe you. We know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more the heavenly Father will give good gifts to his church. Good gifts. Gracious gifts. Not useless gifts.

If you say tonight they are useless or you think they are useless, then I ask you, are you perhaps hiding your gifts? Hiding your gifts, not using them? Or are you perhaps crippled by something, fear or something? Or negative thinking about yourself, not thinking soberly in the measure that Jesus Christ looks upon us and sees us as acceptable in the Beloved? Are we perhaps not embracing what he gives? Who we may be in Jesus Christ? If you say tonight, "Well, I'm afraid sometimes my gifts are useless," is it perhaps because we are seeking honor for ourselves and not honor for the King? That might be a hurdle too. That might be a hurdle too. Or are we simply like the rest of the world, discontent, we want more, we want different, we want something, and we are not resting in the way God gives and supplies and is leading our lives?

I urge you to look away to the Giver, to the Giver, the Giver of all good gifts tonight, who gave his only begotten Son so that we can be saved, so that we can be purified, so that we can be set free from all our sins. That great Giver tonight, look to him. Will he not with him freely give you all things you need? He will. He will. Will he not finish that work which he has begun in you? He will. He will. He never forsakes the work of his own

hands. Will he not out of his abundant riches in glory supply all your need in Christ Jesus? That's God's word. We may plead that tonight.

So let us not look as what we don't have but what we have in Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ. Let us delight ourselves in the Lord tonight and he promises to give us the desires of our hearts. Let us be thankful of what he gives. That honors him. But perhaps you think, "Well, nobody wants me." Or maybe you're listening here tonight, "and nobody needs me." And maybe you say, "Well, but when I was trying once something and then I was not appreciated and I just have a hard time to get over it." What if you feel that your gifts have not been appreciated or feel that they are not needed, or you have had a situation where they did not respond kindly to your attempts, should you then throw in the towel? Should you therefore give up? Should you therefore pity yourself and say, "Never again"? Or worse, become angry, bitter? Does our text say something about that perhaps?

We transition to verse 16 but I start reading at verse 15 for context, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part." Now that's much to take in, difficult sentence, but the picture is simple. Christ is the head, we have seen it before. He is the control center of the body, the church. Now let me try to rephrase it like this: Christ is at work fitting and joining the whole body together. He is providing nutrition for every little part so that every little part can function as best as possible. And he enables the body, empowers the body to grow, to make its own growth possible through the building up of itself in love.

He empowers so that the church would be built up and matures. He's at work and he's the one who makes the body function well together. Every joint, every muscle, every organ, every member has something to do in this body and he's in the process of making it function better and better, empowering it through his Holy Spirit. But perhaps you say, "Well, how is that an answer to my problem of feeling unappreciated?" If that is your question, well, the gifts are received from Christ, let me say that again, and he empowers and the focus should therefore be on him and on the people we are serving.

So that everyone does his own part, it says as well, functions well, in our text, and that's what the Catechism points out, is it not? We see it as our duty to readily and cheerfully employ our gifts. Our duty we do out of love, yes, out of for what he has done, but we do that regardless of appreciation. That's not the most important thing, that shouldn't be the most important thing for us regardless of what kind of response we get. Why? We need to look a little higher. We need to look to the one whom we serve again, to the Lord himself. Does he always get appreciation? No, he doesn't. Does he always get glory and thankfulness and when we are outside of Jesus Christ, do we give him our all? No, we don't. And even after grace, are we always thankful the way we ought to be to him who gives daily, as we sang together, daily gives all these graces to bear our burdens? Who is Jesus? He's a man despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, the Bible tells us, and

it was not because of himself, it was because, what does it say in the Bible? It says that he went about doing good.

We need to look to him and find our comfort and take up our cross tonight if that's your question about appreciation and how people respond, and then say, "I will take my yoke, the yoke of Jesus Christ, I will take my cross and I will follow in his footsteps and I will look to him when I struggle, and I will count it my privilege to serve him, my glorious Master, and follow in his footsteps and account it my duty. And I will learn by the grace of God to not look at the frowns of men and the smiles and the frowns of men, but I will look to my Master. It's sufficient when he smiles at me. When he frowns at me, I know he's my Master."

But let us think a little deeper about this also and now we transition and listen to a chapter you know probably very well, the picture of the body and the head in 1 Corinthians 12. Children, the right hand is there doing a function, but that's not the same as the left hand, that's not the same as the ear, that's not the same as the eyes, that's not the same as the invisible organs in the body, right? Is it therefore not part of the body? Yes, it's all part of the body. That's what Paul was talking about in that chapter, not the whole body is the eye, not the whole body is the ear, but just as our text says, in my own words, the body functions well together, is empowered all by Jesus Christ. And then Paul says in that chapter he says but the manifestation of the Spirit, the Spirit is given, why? Given to every man to profit with all so that all would benefit. All would benefit.

How does it work? How can we do that cheerfully? How can we do that willingly? How can we do our duty? It's forgetting about ourselves, that's the most important thing. And learning to focus on Jesus Christ and therefore out of focusing on Jesus Christ, we focus on one another. That's what our text talks about when it talks about fitly joined together and compacted by every part, every joint, which every joint supplies. And we live in a culture that doesn't know what that is. We need to watch out for YouTube's, Christianity. Can I call it like that? It only does it for the outward things, for the appreciation, and the Lord Jesus speaks very plainly about that and he says, "If you do it all for men, then you have had your glory right there." And if that's the case, if we struggle with that, or if we have truly sinned in that way, let us confess it tonight and say, "Lord, cleanse me from those sins and make my focus right." My focus right.

Now these words "fitly joined together and compacted" comes from the word harmony. So let me give an illustration here. Yes, we have the illustration of the head and the body that function together and everything is supplied by the Lord, but also think about it in harmony. What do we think about, children? We think about an orchestra, don't we? You have a conductor, you have musicians, you have musical instruments, you have music and you have the audience. It is the Lord Jesus who by his Spirit, as it were, stands before the orchestra and every member, each musician, as it were, needs to keep his eyes on the conductor, right? When you're in a choir you need to keep your eye on the conductor, to obey the directions of the conductor, to keep time and when he changes rhythm, then we need to change rhythm. When he changes volume, then we need to change volume. That's what a conductor does.

So it's our task to be focused on the Conductor first and foremost. That will give harmony in the body so that there comes a beautiful piece of music that is played in love, the body is built up, is edified in love. A lovely piece of music. And Christ becomes visible, yes, audible in the church, as it were. And let us have an audience of one, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. An audience of one. We do it for him and for his glory and then there will be wonderful music, then there will be music that pleases the ear of our sender, Jesus Christ. And that's how the body matures, when we see more and more that the body works together. Everyone has his part to play in an orchestra. In the body, every organ has its part to play. And every part is valuable. Every part is valuable. Paul says it there, even in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians he says even those parts where you say, "Well, maybe not so helpful." Even the most uncomely parts, not the most beautiful parts. Paul says, "No, no, no, those are beautiful too the body needs as well."

And as we see that more and more, then the body matures and maybe you say tonight, "Well, these questions are helpful but how should I use my gifts?" Maybe you say, "Well, I can't speak in public. I'm an introvert. I'm not good at evangelism," to come back to those things. "I'm not good at," what? Maybe you have something else that you say, "I can't do that." What does our text say? Our text say indeed in context that God has given, first and foremost, pastors, teachers and preachers and evangelists to the body. That's the context of our text, but then verse 16 says also when every member supplies something to the body, it will make increase of the body and it will be built up, it will be edified in itself in love. Yes, that's especially through the preaching of the gospel that God builds us up, and it's especially through those gifts also of talk but not primarily not, that's not all. There's more than other gifts that God has given to the body. We read other chapters in the Bible, Romans 12 for instance, there's a gift of prophecy, service, teaching, encouraging, leadership and mercy. Peter talks about the gift of hospitality. And he says there is a multi-colored, and I say it in my own words, manifold grace of God is bestowed upon the church. It's multi-colored.

Children, when you go to the outside and, well, the leaves are falling but some of those trees are so beautiful and we have enjoyed those red and yellow and all those different colors. The trees are not all the same, we see that, right? But they make for such a beautiful beautiful landscape, and so it is in the church. There's the different gifts. There's two broad categories, can I say it like that? There's the gift of speaking and there's the gift of ministry and Peter speaks about those. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, that is, serve, let him do as of the ability which God gives. So when you speak, you need to speak God's words, and when you minister, you do that in the power of the Lord. Why? So that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

So those are the two broad categories, there's gifts, speaking gifts, the more obvious gifts maybe, and there's the ministering gifts. Where do you find yourself? How do you use your gifts? Maybe you can send a card to a lonely or a sick person. Maybe you are doing prison ministry. Wonderful. Maybe you are the one who can visit and encourage one another. Maybe you're rather more working behind the scenes, the audio, or the cleaning,

or the cooking, or the repairs, or the building. Whatever it is. Or maybe you especially use the gift of prayer for one another. And we've seen in our church how this functions very well, especially last VBS when people, other people were not coming and then other people stepped in and we see how that functions. Wonderful. Wonderful.

God is teaching this to us and has taught this to us also. Maybe you have those teaching gifts, use them. Use them. Evangelism. But let us always have the focus on Jesus Christ and his glory. Let us always keep in mind that when we serve there's only one thing we need to do, point to Jesus Christ, the love of Jesus Christ. His love was serving love. His love was committed love. His love was dying love. His love was love to the very end. His love transformed people and he did so both in word and deed. He did so.

So when we serve, beloved, there will not be a cup of cold water that is not unobserved by the Lord. However small it is, not a cup of cold water goes unnoticed. And even more precious, when we have done these things, we do say, yes, we are unprofitable servants of ourselves and yet he says something very precious, "When you give cold water in the name of a disciple and you do it for my honor and glory in the name of a disciple, then you've done it to me." Isn't that precious? When you see someone needy and you reach out and you use your gifts and even maybe you feel a little awkward in the beginning, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. You have an opportunity to serve your Lord and Master Jesus Christ who served you so well with his cross and with his grave, and here even now in heaven through his Spirit, pouring out his Spirit upon you.

That's how we serve. That's how we joyfully serve, for the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ. Let us trust him. Let us use our gifts and let us trust him especially who is able to do exceeding, abundantly above what all what we ask and think according to the power that works in us. Unto him be glory in the church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages world without end. Amen.