The Gifts of the Spirit

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Preacher: Edward Kang

[0:00] Good morning, church. As Sean just mentioned, today is Pentecost Sunday. It's a Christian holiday where we celebrate 2,000 years ago how the Holy Spirit fell and birthed the church of Christ.

So to remember the work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we're going to take a break from our series in Matthew, and we're going to open up our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
1 Corinthians chapter 12. Today's passage is starting in verse 1 to verse 11. If you've been here for a while, you know that for us, we doctrinally are reformed, but uniquely we're also charismatic.
We practice the spiritual gifts, and we find that this is such a valuable, important aspect of being one body, to be the church of Christ. And so we're going to take time to study what that looks like, what the spiritual gifts mean.
Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, though we are weak and small, though we are undeserving, Lord, I plead, I beg, won't you pour out your Holy Spirit upon us today?
[1:28] That the Holy Spirit would indwell each and every one of us who have confessed the name of Jesus Christ, who have confessed him as Lord. That you would fill us as a church collectively so that we would be your body.

That we would step forth boldly in faith to exercise the gifts that you have given. Not to diminish them, not to quench the Spirit, but to obey faithfully.
Help us to learn humbly what your Word says. Not to dictate or impose what we think upon the Word, but that we would submit ourselves to your Scriptures and learn what the spiritual gifts are so that we would step forth in faith.
Oh God, fill us with your Spirit. Illuminate your Scriptures only by what he can do. Help us. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.
If you are able, please rise to honor the reading of God's Word. Again, 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.
[2:41] You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus is a curse.

And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit. Now, there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit.
And there are a variety of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom. To another, the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.
To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, the ability to distinguish between Spirits.
[3:47] To another, various kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Have you ever had the experience of witnessing a transformation so dramatic, so drastic, that you hardly recognize that person anymore?
I knew this guy in college. And honestly, he wasn't bad looking. But he wasn't anyone that you'd write home about either.

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It's not someone you take a second look at in the street. But after not seeing him for years upon graduating, I recently stumbled upon a photo of him. And I could not believe my eyes.
He had the glow-ups of glow-ups. He literally looked like a model now. He got super fit and muscular. Changed his hair.
[5:02] Swapped his wardrobe. Got rid of his glasses. I think he even maybe got plastic surgery done on his face a little bit. I couldn't believe, right, that this is the same guy I once knew.

But that kind of transformation, as dramatic as it was, it pales in comparison to the transformation that we see of the 12 disciples in Scripture. If you've been with us throughout our sermon series in the book of Matthew, we've gotten to see a real, honest picture of who these 12 disciples are.
They're brash. They're arrogant. They're jealous. They're petty. They completely and consistently misunderstand Jesus' teaching. They fight one another for the number one spot.
And they even try rebuking Jesus. It's honestly not a good look. But when you read through the book of Acts in comparison, by no means are they sinless, but truly there is a sudden transformation.
They're hardly recognizable. They're suddenly filled with faith, joyfully enduring persecution for the gospel, performing miracles that Jesus performed, preaching sermons that convert hundreds, if not thousands, of people.
[6:24] They laid the foundations of the Church of Christ, which goes on to transform the course of world history. For generation after generation, cultures are transformed, marriages restored, addictions healed, sins repented, souls saved.

What gives? How did they change so dramatically? How did they affect change in this world? I think the answer, finding the answer is quite easy.
Just look at what came in between the fumbling disciples of the gospels and then the faithful disciples in Acts. If you look in between, what you will find is the event of Pentecost.
That's the hinge on which this whole thing turns. Luke records in Acts 2 that on the 50th day after Easter Sunday, that Jesus' disciples were praying together when the Holy Spirit fell upon them.
And that was the day, the birth of the New Testament Church. And ever since that day, every local church has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to effect change, both in and outside of the church.
[7:48] This very church is no exception to that. Peter says so much when he quotes the prophet Joel in Pentecost. We read this earlier. In the last days it shall be, God declares, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. And your young men shall see visions. And your old men shall dream dreams. Even on my male servants and the female servants, in those days I will pour out my spirit.
And they shall prophesy. That means that you, yes you, God has poured out his Holy Spirit on you.
And he's empowered you through the giving of his spiritual gifts to carry out his mission here on earth. Whether you know it or not, whether you believe it or not, you have spiritual gifts.
And if the Spirit has granted us gifts, he will hold us accountable for how we have wielded such power. So we cannot be ignorant or misinformed about this topic.
[9:07] So to that end, that's why we're taking a break from Matthew. We'll study a passage by the Apostle Paul written to the Corinthian church where he has one main exhortation regarding the spiritual gifts.

It's to use your spiritual gifts, your unique spiritual gifts, for the common good of the church. In this short passage this morning, I see four facts about how and why the Spirit gives his gifts to us.
For one, he gives his gifts to glorify Christ. That's the first and primary reason why. Then he talks about how. He gives it diversely.
There's a diversity in the body. But while there's a diversity, there's a unity. The gifts are for the common good. And finally, we'll see how the Spirit gives gifts according to his Spirit, his sovereign will.
In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul has addressed a myriad of concerning issues in the life of the church. Serious issues like sexual immorality, infighting, division.
[10:11] But now in chapter 12, he begins his discussion on spiritual gifts. And I thank God that he does. Spiritual gifts really can be quite the confusing and misunderstood topic for us.

And apparently even for the Corinthians back then too. For he explicitly desires for them not to be uninformed. Especially for us today, this is a hotly contested topic in Christendom, is it not?

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Because I think for one, we all have our own personal histories, our personal experiences in the past. Some of us have memories of a high intensity, emotionally charged experience of the spiritual gifts, which then can result in a blind excitement, maybe an unchecked enthusiasm towards the charismatic.
Some of us have experiences of the spiritual gifts, some of us have experienced the abuses of the spiritual gifts, which I think leads to skeptical doubt.
But at the end of the day, all of us are called to submit ourselves to scripture, first and foremost, rather than pulling from our own experience, what we think.
[11:31] That seems to be exactly what happens with the Corinthians here. As they're pulling from their former experiences, Paul reveals a bit of the Corinthian backstory in verse two.

Now, the city of Corinth was a wealthy port city, known for its commerce, cultural diversity, and most relevant to our discussion, the worship of pagan gods.
So this is not a church filled with people who grew up going to church, going to VBS, believing in Jesus at a young age. No, this church is full of people with a checkered past.
They engaged most likely in licentious cult worship of pagan idols. It's possible that during that cult worship, they might have experienced moments of falling into a trance, an uncontrolled ecstasy of speaking frenzied utterances.
And if that's true, they might've drawn on those experiences to guide them in the worship of the true God, thinking that worshiping the God of the Bible must be like worshiping these other idols.
[12:49] Have you ever had the experience of talking to someone about your Christian faith, only to be met with the response, oh, I'm spiritual too.

It's understandable. Right? Whenever you meet somebody new, you try to find connection points. Oh, you know, I used to, I used to work in that office. I know someone from your hometown. When you reveal that you're a Christian, people try to find the same connection points.
They, they meditate. They share, they, they follow their horoscopes. They dabble with tarot cards. Oh, they're not. Oh, but, but wait, you might call yourself spiritual, but be not mistaken.
There is no overlap between those spiritual experiences and the relationship with the real living God. Why? Why?
Because only the spirit of God moves and lives. All other idols are dead, mute, lifeless. It's like saying that being, you know what it's like to be in a relationship when you've really only dated lifeless AI girlfriends.
[14:02] So, to the Corinthians, Paul is teaching them that their previous spiritual experiences of worshiping dead idols, it does nothing to help them understand true spiritual matters.

So then, what is true spirituality? How do we define it? People, whether 2,000 years ago, or people now, they're all hungry.
They're hungry for true spirituality, but they're deeply confused for the search of it. We find a simple answer in verse 3.
I think it centers on what you make of Christ. True spirituality is confessing that Jesus is Lord. That's, in fact, the central ministry and the goal of the Holy Spirit, to shine spotlight, to shine the spotlight on Christ, to reveal Him as Lord.
[15:05] Jesus confirms, so in John 16, He says, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you in all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come.

He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. But if the Spirit's goal is to bring us to confess Jesus is Lord, right, is that confession really so difficult?
Why does Paul say that no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit? Can't anyone really just say those words? Yeah, I think someone could theoretically, right, flippantly say those words, but in the biblical sense that Paul is describing, this confession is never merely verbal, just superficial.
Because that word, Lord, I think it has much more spiritual significance than maybe your first reading tells you. In Scripture, Lord is sometimes used as a substitute for the Old Testament covenantal name of God, revealed in the four letters, Y-H-W-H, a name so holy that Jews refuse to even pronounce it, to read it out loud.
So when you say Jesus is Lord, you're saying that Jesus is Yahweh, the great I am, the eternal God, the uncreated one, dependent on no one, the source of all life and existence.

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[16:47] You're confessing a personal confession. You're confessing that Jesus is my Lord. You're renouncing all other competing authorities and submitting yourself wholly to Christ.

So that's why Paul can say that no one can truly make this confession except in the Holy Spirit. Not because the syllables are difficult, but because the reality behind them is only possible by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
This is the essence of true spirituality expressed in a single sentence, that Jesus is my Lord. He is Lord over all. You might be tempted, right, to downplay just how spiritual an average Sunday service is in a gospel-preaching, Bible-believing church might be.
It might just feel so ordinary, boring, vanilla. It might seem more spirit-filled to have things like gold dust sightings or uncontrollable fits of laughter or people falling over left and right.
But that is not the standard of spirituality. True spirituality might look ordinary on the outside, but where Christ is exalted, where he is confessed as Lord with our mouths and in our hearts, there the Spirit of God must be moving.
[18:19] Everything that the Spirit does is to glorify Christ. And so the giving of his gifts is no different. The gifts operate at their best.

The church is drawn, drawn to behold the beauty of Christ, to stand in awe of him, to serve him more faithfully. That's why he gives his gifts, to shine the spotlight on him, to make much of him.
And so we must do the exact same when we exercise the spiritual gifts. So that's the primary reason why the Spirit gives his gifts. Next, let's talk about in what manner, how he gives his gifts.
And we notice that he gives his gifts diversely, as we see in verses four to six. One of the first things you might notice about these gifts is that they're just soaked in Trinitarian theology, right?
You see the Spirit, you see the Lord, whom we just confessed to be Jesus the Son, and then you see the Father God. This three-in-one God works in tandem in generously giving a variety of gifts, a variety of services, a variety of activities.
[19:35] You see that word variety repeated again and again. And I think these pairings are intentional. I think it makes sense that for the spiritual gifts, it makes sense to be paired with the Holy Spirit.

services connect well with serving your Lord, your Master. Then activities, the workings, they're energized, empowered by the sovereign, life-giving Father.
And so while there is perfect unity in the three, as they share one essence, there's really a beautiful diversity and function and role. There's a fitting parallelism, I think, in the Trinity that Sean already mentioned earlier with the Trinity and with the body of Christ, right?
Just how the one God gives a variety of gifts, services, workings, just as there is unity in the diversity of the Trinity, there is too unity in the diversity of the body of Christ, right?
To prove his point, Paul then gets into a list of varied spiritual gifts in verses eight to 10. Now, this list is not comprehensive.
[20:50] We do see other lists with other gifts in Scripture. But even in this short list, pay attention to just how wide-ranging these gifts are. Some are more natural, some more remarkable, some more permanent, some more occasional.

But this list highlights the beautiful diversity in the body. Starting off with the list, with the utterance of wisdom and knowledge, these two really are notoriously hard to define because unlike other gifts, this is the only mention of them in Scripture.
I think the best that we can do is to read them in the context of the letter and just try our best to deduce what they are. If you're familiar with the book of 1 Corinthians in its opening chapters, Paul rebukes this immature church for their craving of worldly wisdom.
A worldly wisdom which is not really any wisdom at all. So I tend to believe that those who believe that this word of wisdom is the spirit-inspired ability to proclaim Christ crucified as the true wisdom of God in such a powerful way that it moves people's hearts.
In the same realm, I think these two gifts are related to a people obsessed with knowledge, hooked on boasting, on knowing more than others. Paul teaches to the Corinthians that true knowledge does not come from the ingenuity of man, but it comes from the Scriptures, from the Word of God.
[22:29] So I lean towards understanding this gift of knowledge as the spirit-empowered ability to read, to interpret, to discern the Scriptures, and to teach them in a lucid, insightful way.

When we think of some spirit-empowered preachers in the course of church history, one who's called the Prince of Preachers, 19th century pastor Charles Spurgeon might be one of the first

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names that come to mind.
The Spirit of God used this humble man mightily as he preached over 600 sermons a year. 600 sermons. And there was an incredible response to his preaching.
People came in droves. He regularly preached to crowds of more than 10,000 people, and it's estimated that he preached to over 10 million people in his lifetime.
Here, just one story, one example from his own pen of how he displays how the Spirit worked, preached through him. In 1857, a day or two before preaching at the Crystal Palace, I went to decide where the platform should be fixed.
[23:46] And in order to test the acoustic properties of the building, he cried, or I cried in a loud voice, behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

In one of the galleries, a workman who knew nothing of what was being done, he heard the words, and they came like a message from heaven to his soul.
He was smitten with conviction on the account of sins, and he put down his tools, he went home and found peace, resurrected life by beholding the Lamb of God.
It took one line, a mic check, a mic check for this man's eternity to be transformed. And that's not to bring attention to Spurgeon the man, but to highlight that this alone can be only the work of the Spirit.
This is what the Spirit of God can do, even in just one sentence. Next, the gift of faith. Considering that Paul's argument is that only a select group of people have this gift, we can clearly rule out that the gift of faith is saving faith that all Christians must share.
[25:01] Instead, it seems like I think that the gift of faith is this spirit-empowered, special and situational impartation of confidence, the strong conviction that God will act in a particular way.

What do I mean by that? All Christians are expected everywhere to trust in God for the explicit promises in Scripture that he has given.
But there are also many good situational things that God has not explicitly promised in his word. Like for someone to get a particular job or for someone to be healed of cancer.
The gift of faith is having the assurance that God will do something that he has not explicitly already promised. I was talking to Sean, our pastor, and he mentioned that there have been some instances where he'd be praying for someone, he'd be praying for someone to get a specific job at this place or this particular person would get into this school.
Even though the chances were really, really low, he felt a surge of faith confirming that this thing will in fact happen. And lo and behold, the few times that he's experienced that, it happened exactly as he prayed it would.
[26:23] Gifts of healing and working of miracles are next. They're probably the easiest to define but maybe the hardest to believe. I think it's so easy for us to slip into a functional naturalism where even when we theoretically think and believe that, sure, God can do miracles, but functionally, we don't actually operate as if God does anymore.

We don't really pray for healing and if we do, it's filled with doubt, with second guessing. Are we guilty of what James says?
You do not have because you do not ask. Or maybe on the other end of the spectrum, you struggle with a triumphalist expectation, right, where we assume that miracles should automatically happen when we claim them.
It's a name it and claim it theology. Neither of those are right and good, but the healthiest posture is in the middle. To be expectant, truly expectant, but not presumptuous.
To be hopeful in prayer, but submitted to God's will. I think that's the biblical posture because while certain people do have this gift, it doesn't mean that they control it like an on-off switch.
[27:46] I think the Spirit sovereignly decides when and how this gift will operate. For instance, you see in the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul, at times he miraculously heals anybody, any person ill that comes to him.

He heals them right there, right there on the spot. But amazingly, later on in Scripture, you find Paul telling Timothy to take a little wine for your stomach problems.
instead of sending him an enchanted or anointed handkerchief that could heal him instantly. Or that he himself, the Apostle Paul, struggles with a thorn in his flesh, which was likely a physical ailment.
Interestingly, the words gifts and workings, I think there really should be an S there because it's plural in the Greek. These are the only gifts that are in the plural.

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plural. Possibly hinting that Paul believed that every instance of healing and miracles was a gift in it of its own right. So healing and miracles aren't controlled, weren't controlled by Paul back then.
[28:55] And they aren't to be controlled by us today. At the same time, Paul speaks as if a select group of people really had gifts of healing and miracles.

So practically, boots on the ground, I think it makes sense that if someone needs healing, someone in the church needs healing, you then would specifically look for those people you know, the church knows, that this person has the gift of healing to get them to come and pray, to pray for healing, not as a guarantee but as really the most sensible action to take.
Next, prophecy. Too much can be said about the gift of prophecy. And if you're interested in this topic, I highly recommend checking out a prophecy seminar that we did last year. Here's Gordon Fee's definition of this gift.
Prophecy is a spontaneous, spirit-inspired, intelligible message intended for the edification, for the encouragement of the people. Prophecy, because it's a human report of a divine revelation, right, the human part, that makes it a fallible revelation of God.
So it needs to be tested by scripture. And also, we'd be wise to be very careful to make life-altering decisions based on prophecy, just one prophecy.
[30:17] And prophecy also ought to reveal the secrets of the heart. It should make you feel, how in the world did they know that?

Now, I've shared this story before, that during one event for Sovereign Grace, our denomination, they invited the prophecy team from a sister church, Covenant Fellowship Church, to pray and prophesy over us.
And one of the team, one of the team members came over and prayed for me, prophesied over me. One of the first things that he said to me was that he sees that I was gifted with an analytical mind, that he sees, like, physics or something.
And, um, to be honest, I kind of questioned if he was just making an educated guess, right? Like, like, I look like an engineer, so, maybe he's just guessing.
But, he proceeded to prophesy that he saw me at a crossroads in my career. Huh. Well, that piqued my interest because just the very next week, I was getting ready to quit my job as an engineer and to start working for the church.
[31:32] He then said that God saw my struggle, he saw my fears, my doubts, but that I was making the right decision. I literally did this with my face.

And then just a couple weeks later, that same man visited Boston and he prophesied over my wife, Christine, with such clear specificity about her exact fears about ministry too.
In those moments, we felt seen. Seen by our heavenly father and felt assured that he watches over us.
He cares for me. How could you not feel that when you hear a prophecy like that? That's how the gift of prophecy can and does function so that the secrets of our hearts are revealed for the edification, for the building up of his church.
Also, such an important gift in the life of the church is the ability to distinguish gifts or distinguish spirits, rather. Again, a debated gift, but it seems likely to me that this ability can identify evil, satanic spirits when they are at work, when they're active.
[32:55] That gift is very functional. Not too long ago, Sean and I were praying for someone whom we weren't exactly sure if this person was oppressed by an evil spirit or if they just struggled with severe mental illness.

We did our due diligence. We did our due diligence. We asked a series of questions to discern for a while and while we do think that there was an explicit demonic attack, at the end of the day, we weren't 100% sure.
If we had someone who had the ability to distinguish spirits, how much clearer it would have been to know exactly what route of help to take. And finally, I'll address both the gift of tongues and its interpretation together.
As displayed in Acts 2 in Pentecost, the gift of tongues is the controllable ability to pray to God, to praise God, right?
It's language that's directed to God whereas prophecy is directed to people. So it's speaking to God in an unknown language to the speaker, whether it's a human language or a heavenly language.

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[34:08] You see the former on Pentecost where people from all over the world, all over Asia Minor, they come to hear these uneducated Galileans to speak in their own native languages.

But then Paul speaks also of a category like heavenly language in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians indicating that tongues can be spoken in a language that no earthly human can interpret, not unless you have the gift of interpretation.
Paul says so later. You can't understand it yourself. Paul says so later. If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.
Nonetheless, Paul, he wishes that all would speak in tongues for personal self-edification and it's reserved for a private prayer language that is unless it is, unless there's an interpreter in the body of Christ which is the final gift in this list that allows the undiscernible language of God to be intelligible, to be edifying, to build up the church.
So that's the list and the point of this list is that when you read it, there should be many more gifts that you don't have than you do have. It drives home our need for humility, for dependence upon others and the rest of chapter 12 Paul highlights one beautifully simple metaphor that the church is a body.
[35:44] Each part inimitable, each part indispensable. The hand cannot say to the foot I have no need of you. The eye cannot say to the ear I have no need of you.

If we were all the same parts what kind of monstrosity of a body would that be? D.A. Carson said it well. Dictators of the right and the left seek to establish their brand of harmony by forcefully imposing monotonous sameness, by seeking to limit differentiation.
God establishes his brand of harmony by a lavish grant of highly diverse gifts, each contributing to the body as a whole. Diversity in the body is a beautiful thing.
It displays the abundant generosity of the giver. But when we look at ourselves is that actually how we treat diversity in the body?
We like diversity on paper but when the rubber meets the road diversity means differences differences. And those differences can lead to friction, to conflict.
[37:03] Maybe someone in your community group has a very different personality from yours. Maybe they're more expressive, more spontaneous, more direct than you.

Maybe they're more analytical, more planned, more measured. But instead of appreciating the way that God made them differently, you feel the need subtly to compare, to compete, to correct.
Are you the kind of person who can look at other people's differences and to genuinely celebrate them? Or perhaps someone in the church serves in a very different way from you.
Some serve more publicly with more visible gifts, others more in private. Some seem to easily serve, flawlessly serve, while you feel like you're struggling through it all.
Do others' giftings, different from yours, make you envious, make you insecure, haughty or proud, when they should really drive worship and thanksgiving for the diversity in the body?
[38:16] The differences between brothers and sisters can pull us apart when they really ought to bring us together. Because the reality is we need one another to be the church of Christ.

I don't know about you, but I often feel overwhelmed by all the demanding needs around me, both inside and outside the church.
There is just so much to do, so much ministry to do, so many hurting people, so many people to disciple, so many people to evangelize to.
Then I cycle internally between two unhelpful responses. Number one, I just feel really guilty all the time for not doing what I think I'm called to do, always dropping the ball.
Number two, I resort to a compassionless, loveless rejection of any need because, hey, I'm overwhelmed. But God never intended for one person to do all the work of the church.
[39:24] As theologian Kelly Capuch says, it takes the whole body of believers to reflect the one Messiah. We need to link up arm in arm and do the work of ministry together.

together, everyone has a part to play, to use your unique spiritual gifts to minister to one another and to this weary world.
And I see that in this very church. I thank God for that. When I see the multifaceted, multi-gifted body do ministry and meet needs, so often far better than I could do, than I'm gifted for.
So I praise God there is true and beautiful diversity in the gifts that he gives. For though they're diverse, though we are very different, we're all aimed towards one united goal.

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It's for the common good of the church. Verse 7, to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. Each one of you have received a manifestation of the spirit, spiritual gifts.
[40:39] And that is essential for the proper functioning of this church. Do you believe that? Do you believe that you are spiritually gifted if you are in Christ and you are empowered to do great ministry?

It might sound like the humble thing to do, right? To deny like, oh no, I'm not so gifted. But if it is objectively true that you have spiritual gifts, if the spirit of God is living within you, that's not humility. That's laziness. It's selfishness. It's cowardice. It's a missed opportunity because the gifts, as we've seen, and as you might have experienced, they are a powerful reminder that our God is not aloof or distant.
He doesn't keep us at arm's distance. But that when you hear a prophecy, a piece of information that only God can know, when your body is healed of a debilitating pain, when you are forced, when you are encouraged to look to Christ by a word of wisdom, you see on full display, you see it, you know it, that with all of who you are, every fiber of your being, that God loves you, God knows you.
You might wonder then, how do I know what gifts do I have, right? I don't think I have any gifts. By simply meeting the needs around you in the life of the church, you're going to be placed in various kinds of circumstances, with various needs.
[42:21] So when those needs come up, try, try to encourage that brother or sister who is depressed. Evangelize the lost, organize times of fellowship, pray for your church, and ask if the Lord, ask the Lord if he would have a word of prophecy to share.

Pray for healing, pray boldly for healing, and see if the Spirit works through that. And over time, as you serve in various different kinds of contexts, God's love, I think a pattern will emerge.
The body around you will then start to confirm that you have these particular spiritual gifts. And, right, if you see someone who's especially gifted in one area, it's your duty too to just encourage that.
Take time to compliment, to encourage that, right? Say, hey, I really think that God has gifted you in that area. You're really good at this. Right?
Serving the church is a means by which we learn how to serve the church. As we learn then how the Spirit has gifted us, we remember that with really great power comes great responsibility.
[43:37] These gifts are not for our personal aggrandizement. Each and every single one of us will have to give an account to the Lord on how we use the gifts.

Right? With the most gifted of us having to give the greatest testimony. We have the greatest burden. We must use our various gifts not for ourselves really but to care for one another, to edify one another, to strengthen one another, all in self-forgetful, others-focused love.
Right? The fastest way, I believe, to make your spiritual gift, to abuse it is to make it about you, to make your prophecy about you, to make your service about you, to make your teaching about you.
But hear Paul's famous words at the start of chapter 13. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
[44:54] If I give away all that I have and I deliver up my body to be burned and have not love, I gain nothing. So use your unique spiritual gifts in genuine love for the good of those around you.

We ought to be careful to use these gifts as they're intended because the last verse of our passage today, verse 11, it reminds us of the fourth fact of these spiritual gifts.
They, they're not from us. You cannot buy them. You cannot work your way toward them. You cannot practice your way to them.
You cannot swap out your gifts to get the one that you actually want. They might not match your personality or your preferences, but the Spirit gives gifts according to His sovereign will.
In other words, we receive these gifts by the grace of God alone. Hence, the name gifts, they're gifts. Undeserved, unmerited, these spiritual gifts are received freely.
[46:07] and deep down, we know, we know that these gifts must be given by grace because frankly, we are not people who deserve them.

Because of our sin, we're not people who have proven ourselves worthy to be used by Him in such miraculous ways. when you take an honest look at yourself, if you're humble enough to admit it, don't you see that there is a lot that needs to change?

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Don't you see an ugly heart full of pride, selfishness, anger, malice, envy, bitterness, lust?
And if you lived long enough, you'll know how hard it is to change. So much content you read online these days is all about change, how to get yourself to change, tips to change your body, your lifestyle, your financial circumstance, your mood, your productivity.
I bet that for most of us today, there is at least one thing that you're actively working to change about yourself. maybe you're able to change yourself so dramatically that you're unrecognizable on the outside, but can you really make yourself change on the inside?
[47:41] Can you really change your sinful nature? I see my own ugly heart and so I've tried to change myself again and again.

Part of my testimony is that I've tried but failed again and again and again. But the good news of the gospel is that once we were dead in our sins, once we did not find any way to change, but that God has made us alive in him by the power of his son, by the power of his spirit.
We can now rest easy because Jesus Christ has died to take away all of the sin, all the ugliness. he has paid for all that and resurrected on the third day to forgive us of our sins and to change us from the inside out.
It's because of that work of the son, God has sent his spirit, the same spirit that resurrected Jesus from the dead, to now resurrect us to new life, a transformed life in Jesus Christ.
God has not, it is not by our own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling in us, can we now live lives holy to God, a changed life.
[49:02] Brothers and sisters, don't you remember who you once were? Your changed life is the clearest evidence that the Holy Spirit is in you.

And if he is in you, God has deemed you worthy to receive power from on high. The Holy Spirit has empowered you to effect change in this world and in the lives of those around you.
What a grace that is. Do you ever stop to reflect on the fact that God, he chooses to incorporate his church into his ministry?
When we're so messy and we're so weak that we can partner with God, co-labor with him, we can do this together for his glory.
Doesn't it not amaze you that he chooses to give his gifts when we know that we have and we are and we will? We'll bungle it up time and time again. Some of us have despised prophecies and quenched the spirit from our hard-hearted skepticism.
[50:14] Others have struggled with cowardice and laziness when we ought to boldly use our gifts in love of others. Still others have made their gifts about themselves as a means to promote their own reputation, their own image.

And yet while we botch it up for the hundredth time, the good father, he doesn't take away our gifts but he reinstalls us, invites us yet again to be faithful to his work.
So today we celebrate the birth of the Christian church on the day of Pentecost, the day in which the spirit has filled his disciples to empower them to turn the world upside down.
So to close I ask one simple question. Why not us? Why not us? If Christ forgave us of our sin, if the same spirit resides in us as he did in the disciples, why can't we turn this neighborhood of East Cambridge upside down?
Why can't we in partnership with other gospel preaching churches in the greater Boston area see revival? Why can't we see manifestations of the spirit in miracles of healing regularly in our midst?
[51:38] Why can't we hear the interpretation of tongues? Why can't we prophesy so that unbelievers in our midst will surely testify God is in this place?

Why not us? Why not you? Brothers and sisters, how will you use the gifts that the spirit has given you?
Let me pray. Father, we pray for that. Pray for your indwelling, for your filling, for your outpouring of your spirit so that we can truly be all that you have called us to be.
That we could transform this world, that we would be faithful to the work of ministry, to share the gospel and see revival, see transformation, see regularly manifestations and see baptisms and conversions here in this very church.
we pray for it, oh God. We pray bold prayers because we know you can do far more than we can ask or even imagine. Father, please help us, help us to look to you.
[52:47] We are weak, we are insufficient on our own, but we thank you that the spirit empowers us so that all the glory would redound back to the father. We want to glorify him and him alone.

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So empower us, not for our own glory, not to us, but to your name, oh God, be the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
Amen.

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