Text: I Corinthians 12:27-31
Title: "The Spirit Way … More Spiritual Gifts"

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of a great religious festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood up amidst all the worshippers and cried out with a loud voice that everyone could hear …

John 7:37-38 - "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Are you thirsty today? I'm not talking about physical thirst, but a thirst much deeper than that. It's that realization that something is missing … something that the things and the people of this world can't satisfy. The fact is that this is the condition of every soul, whether we realize it or not. And we try to quench that thirst by drinking of this world's stagnate, poison liquid. And it doesn't get anywhere near the thirst in our soul. But Jesus said, "If you're thirsty and you come to Me and drink, something amazing will happen. The thirst will be quenched, not by something that you pour into your life from the outside, but by Someone who starts on the inside. And from within you streams of living water will flow. It's not a stagnate pool that runs dry. It's like a flowing mountain stream, flowing continuously and refreshing your soul. Now what is this? The Gospel writer explained:

John 7:39 - By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

And so it is that the way God goes about changing our lives is by His Spirit coming to dwell within us, flowing in us, giving us the life we've always wanted and the power we've always needed. And the living water of the Holy Spirit not only flows in us … He also flows through us in refreshing ministry to other people.

And this ministry is done through the use of something called spiritual gifts. And we've been studying these in I Corinthians 12. Turn to I Corinthians 12:27.

> **1 Corinthians 12:11 (NIV) - All these (**spiritual gifts) **are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.**

And all believers, with our various spiritual gifts, are like parts making up a body. That's what Paul says in …

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV) - Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

So we as the church are the body … the hands and feet of Christ. Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit as He went about His mission 2000 years ago. Then after the ascension, the Bible says that Jesus gave gifts to men when the Father sent the Holy Spirit to take the place of Jesus in this world through the church. So the ministry of Jesus is going on through His Body … and every believer is part of that activity. That is God's design. So we are all to participate in Jesus' mission through His Body the church.

Now v.28 has another listing of spiritual gifts. We studied a list found in vv.8-10 where there are nine gifts named. We come to v.28 and see some of those gifts repeated, and some new ones included. Read v.28.

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV) - And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles (we'll talk about this today)**, second prophets** (hold for when we get to I Cor.14 where there is an extensive description of this gift)**, third teachers** (today)**, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing** (we talked about these a couple of weeks ago and said that certain people have the supernatural ability to sense when God wants to heal or perform another kind of miracle, and they have the faith to pray and believe God for that)**, those able to help others** (today)**, those with gifts of administration** (today)**, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues** (hold for when we get to I Cor.14 where there is detail teaching on this gift)**.**

Next there is a series of rhetorical questions:

1 Corinthians 12:29-30 (NIV) - Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

Everyone has gifts, but not everyone has all of the gifts. God doesn't intend for all of us to have the same gift or gifts. There is unity in the church, and there is diversity as well. So we should accept the gift or gifts that God has given to us gratefully, and we must use those gifts faithfully. And we should thank God for the gifts of others.

Now let's look at the gifts that are listed here in I Corinthians 12:28:

1. THE GIFT OF APOSTLES

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV) - And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles…

Note: Now what you see here is that these gifts come in the form of gifted people who fill <u>offices</u> in the church, then there are gifted people who perform various <u>operations</u> in the church, but are not in an official office. Example: There is the office of pastor in the church which we will not study in this series. And there is a operation of pastor or a gift of pastor, where God gives to certain people the heart of a shepherd for His flock. The same is true for apostle.

- **The <u>office</u> of apostle.** These were 12 men personally selected by Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels. And that number was established by Jesus as a unique group of men who had a particular mission at a specified time in the redemptive mission of Jesus. This is recorded in ….

  Mark 3:14 (NIV) - He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach…

  Now after Jesus' death and resurrection, the role of the Twelve became very crucial to the church. The twelve were all eye-witnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus. They were witnesses of His miracles. Most importantly they were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were

supernaturally endowed with the ability and the authority to carry on the teaching ministry of Jesus.

Their teachings then became the Word of God for the church, since they had no Bible other than the OT. The teachings and writings of the Twelve then became the core of the NT that we now study. And their ministry was confirmed with signs, wonders and various miracles, just as Jesus' ministry was confirmed in that way. This was important so that their unique authority would be established, and their inspired words would be revered as Scripture.

Acts 2:42 (NIV) - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So when those men died, that office of apostle ceased to exist. But the Twelve are forever the foundation of the church.

Ephesians 2:20 – (The church is) **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

That is the unique office of apostle. Now throughout the NT there are other people who are called "apostles," but it is clear that they are not the same as the Twelve designated by Jesus. When the Twelve passed off the scene, the operation of the gift remained though the office didn't.

- **The <u>operation</u> of apostle.** Many others in the NT are called "apostles," but it is clear that they are not one of the office of the Twelve.

Romans 16:7 (NIV) - Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent on a mission" … a missionary. This is the missionary gift. This can be done cross-culturally, or within a particular culture. This may take the form of church planters. They could be someone sent by a church as a representative.

2 Corinthians 8:23 (NIV) - As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are <u>representatives</u> of the churches and an honor to Christ.

The word for representative is the word (apostoloi) is the word from which we get our word "apostles," and it means messengers to or from churches. When we send our missionaries to work with other churches in various parts of the world they are our representatives.

So I believe that this gift still legitimately exists in the church in the form of those who have a passion to take the Gospel of Jesus to other cultures and to lay a foundation for churches in places where there are no churches.

We are blessed in our church to have people who are here training at SWBTS to be missionaries and church planters. This is an exciting aspect of our church that is rather unique. We need to

embrace these men and women and invest in their lives, for we are investing in the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

Now the next gift we come to is …

2. THE GIFT OF TEACHING

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV) - And in the church God has appointed … third teachers…

So once churches are established by apostles (missionaries and church planters) then prophets and teachers are given to the church to get the church established in the Word of God. Now again, I'm not punting on prophets. I promise we will get to this in detail in I Corinthians 14. But let's look at teachers.

> The gift of teacher or teaching is mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 where it appears with the gift of pastor. It is also mentioned in Romans 12:7.

There are people with this natural ability (school teachers), but the spiritual gift is someone who is supernaturally gifted and empowered to communicate God's Word to others. It is the special attribute to communicate Biblical truths in a manner through which others can learn and understand these Biblical truths and be built up in their faith. A person who has the gift of teaching will likely also have the gift of knowledge.

Jesus was a phenomenal teacher … the greatest teacher. Want to see this gift working? Look at the Gospels and read the teachings of Jesus.

In the book of Acts we are introduced to a husband and wife team that were teachers, named Priscilla and Acquilla. They had a powerful impact on a skilled preacher by the name of Apollos. But as gifted as he was, he had some gaps in his doctrine.

> **Acts 18:26 (NIV) - He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.**

This gift is so very important in the church because the Word of God is so very important to the ministry of the church.

Colossians 3:16 (NIV) - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom…

I Timothy 3:2 says that pastors, as leaders of the church, must be able to teach. The mention of this gift in Ephesians 4:11 may be connected to the gift of pastor … pastor/teacher.

Titus 2 explains how older women are to teach and to train younger women.

APPLICATION – This is so absolutely essential in the church if we are to be the people of God whose lives are lashed to the Word of God. We are blessed as a church to have some really gifted teachers. And I believe the stability of our church is due to the careful, faithful teaching of the Word of God in small groups and in larger contexts.

> The gift of teaching can happen in a setting with children or with seminary students. Teaching can be one on one. We have a disciple-making ministry in our church where people teach new believers one-on-one.

Note: I want to go to the gift of administration, then come back to the gift of helps last.

3. THE GIFTS OF ADMINISTRATION

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV) - And in the church God has appointed … those with gifts of administration …

The word for "administration" was originally used to describe a person who pilots a boat or a ship. So the gift may be related to the gift of leading mentioned in Romans 12:8.

Administration is the supernatural ability to make decisions to efficiently accomplish a task. It is the ability to steer God's people into effective channels of service by understanding the resources needed to accomplish a task. There are people in the marketplace and in institutions who have this skill, but it is also a supernatural ability given to people for the doing of God's work. These are people who love to organize and bring order to situations.

1 Corinthians 14:40 (NIV) - But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Jesus did things this way. He went about His mission in an orderly way. He appointed twelve apostles. When He fed the 5000 He had them sit in groups so that they could be served in an orderly fashion.

> In the Bible we see people like Joseph and Daniel who are given great responsibilities to organize and lead. I think of Nehemiah who organized the rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

Again the church cannot accomplish its mission without leaders and people with the gift of administration.

Now the last gift I want to talk about this morning is…

4. THE GIFT OF HELPS OR SERVING

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV) - And in the church God has appointed … those able to help others …

If you don't have the gift of helps or service and someone comes to you with a need for assistance, your first thought is, "Who can help this person?" If you do have the gift of helps or service, you immediately think, "I can help this person."

The word that is used here means to take a burden off of someone else and place it on oneself. I believe this gift is one of the more common gifts in the Body, and it is not given the appreciation that it deserves.

> "Helps" is probably the same gift that is called "service" in Romans 12:7.
>
> "Helps" or "service" is the ability to joyfully (not reluctantly) work alongside others to help them complete their tasks. People with this gift may like to be behind the scenes. They would just as soon others not know what they do; they're content to serve in the wings. They find joy in alleviating the burdens of others. They're always looking for people who need help, so they can humbly serve and assist them.

APPLICATION – Now there constantly are needs in the Body for people to serve. And some of these don't require the gift of helps or service, just a willingness to help or serve. If you'll look in your worship folder there's a tear-off section with some urgent needs for people to serve. Take a look at that. If God lays one of those on your heart, fill out that slip and place in the offering basket or take it to one of the kiosk in the Welcome Center or the sanctuary foyer.

CONCLUSION

Now all of the gifts are used to help or to serve others.

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV) – Each one should use whatever gift he has received to <u>serve others</u>, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

But even at that, there are those in the Body of Christ who have a supernatural enabling to help and to serve others.

1 Peter 4:11 (NIV) – If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Note: Why is it important to serve "in the strength that God provides"?

> First, it's important because if you merely serve in your own strength people will be helped, but no nearly as powerfully as when you do it with the strength that God provides by His Spirit.
>
> Second, if you serve in your own strength, and not in the strength God provides, you will grow weary and resentful. And you may burn out.

Third, when you serve in the strength God provides, the ministry you give results in praise being given God … "so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ…"

Note: All of us are to serve others because that's what it means to follow the example of Christ. It isn't optional. However, some of us are supernaturally gifted at this. God puts it in your heart and on your heart to do something for someone and it goes like a laser right to a need, so that when the person receives that help, they say, "Thank you, Lord." That's what I Peter 4:11 means … "so that in all things God may be praised…"

EXAMPLE: One person that I believe has the gift of helps or service is Janie Milam. It was incredibly used by God several years ago when Nan was very sick, more sick than any of us knew. But that weekend my mother was getting married. (My father had passed a way a few years before and she was marrying a wonderful man.) I had to go, but I hated to leave Nan alone; she was so sick. So I called Janie, who is one of Nan's best friends and I asked her if she could come by and check on Nan. She did once in the day. But she had an impression that she needed to go back by and check on Nan. As it turned out, Nan had developed what we later learned was bacterial meningitis. She was slipping away. Janie felt impressed to go back by our house and she found Nan barely conscious. She somehow managed to get her out of bed and to the emergency room where the doctors ran test and discovered the serious, often fatal, illness.

That's how this gift, and all spiritual gifts for that matter, works. It goes like a laser to a need and the help that is given is a miraculous intervention of God. And when it is all done, we give glory and praise to God for what He did.