



Exodus 35:30-36:1
Believe
Use My Gifts

Rev. Brian North
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Do you remember the television show that was popular for a number of years called, “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition”? It was on the air on ABC for 9 years starting in December of 2003. If you’re a fan, and you miss it, I have good news: it looks like it will be making a return in another year or so on HGTV.ⁱ There wasn’t much that our family watched on television then – or now, for that matter – but that was one show we did watch fairly frequently for a couple years or so, starting in about 2007. As some of you probably know there was a house here in Kirkland that got made over for that show. It’s a house that’s about 5 blocks from our house, and hundreds of people volunteered their time to make that house come to fruition.ⁱⁱ Two of those people were Andy and Gayle Padvorac from our church. Maybe others of you volunteered as well.

It was an amazing and highly-coordinated effort as everyone worked toward the goal of getting the house built. All kinds of people showing up to help, from skilled laborers and contractors to people in the community who didn’t have a particular skill to offer (I won’t speculate where Andy and Gayle fall on that continuum). They were all working together toward the same goal, using whatever skill and ability they had to offer to bring the house to fruition.

It’s an inspiring real-world illustration from our own community for how God intends the Church to function together: as a team, everyone using their God-given gifts to live into God’s purposes. He has given you some kind of skill or ability, or multiple skills and abilities, to be used to accomplish his purposes. The Bible calls these skills and abilities “spiritual gifts” and in particular, they are a gift of the Holy Spirit. This morning’s belief statement is all about Spiritual Gifts: **“I know my spiritual gifts and use them to fulfill God’s purposes.”** This flows right out of last week’s message on the fellowship of the Church, where the fellowship/community of the church is with a purpose, and we’re all united in that purpose. A few weeks ago we looked at the idea that we are focused on God’s purposes – we don’t let things distract us from God’s calling on our lives and our life together as the

Church. So all these things are building on one another. And today we see that God has equipped us with spiritual gifts to be used to fulfill God's purposes. We come together as a community, a fellowship, with a purpose and you and I are given gifts by God to be used to live into that purpose.

So this morning we're going to look at a few different passages that speak to this topic. The first one is about someone who organized a team over 3,000 years ago... (**Exodus 35:30-36:1.**)

Under the leadership of Bezalel and assisted by Oholiab, the Jewish people built a new tabernacle, or sanctuary, in which to worship. Now, this is still in the time soon after the Exodus from Egypt, and they're wandering around in the desert as a result of being prideful toward God and not going into the Promised Land when He directed them. So they don't have a home country or a home city. And so this tabernacle or sanctuary that they make is portable. You might say that they're building a portanacle, or a porta-sanctuary. It's essentially a big tent. They assemble it and put it up while they're in some locale for a time, and then when it's time to move on to a new location – like after harvest season – they take it down and carry it with them. So they're going to set out to build this porta-sanctuary, and it's going to take a whole team to do it, much like the Extreme Makeover group that builds these homes.

And what we see in this passage is that God has given Bezalel and all the others who work on the porta-sanctuary the skills that they need in order to do the job. We're told that: **God “has filled Bezalel with skill, intelligence, and knowledge” to do this kind of work.** And God has also “inspired him to teach” so that he can show others exactly what needs to be done. It is God who has given him this gift. God has filled him to do all this kind of work. And then we're told that God has given skill and ability to other people too, and every one of them is called to build this tabernacle.

In other words, anyone who has skill with pounding a hammer or shaping metal, or cutting fabric or sewing things together: God wants those people to use their skills to build this “building.” That's what's going on in this passage. It takes teamwork, it takes all these people to dedicate

themselves and use their gifts for the glory of God. God has a purpose for their skills and talents that goes beyond any one of them individually, or even collectively – It’s about God.

Now, for a moment, let’s look at what it is they’re building. Biblically and theologically speaking, “building the church” means more than just building a building. A church building is like any other building until it's filled with people. Sure, there are some unique aspects to many church buildings – an organ, pews, stained glass, the cross, a pulpit...oh, wait... But those things don't make it a church. There are lots of churches that don’t have an organ or stained glass or pews; in fact, the tabernacle they built didn’t have any of those things, either. Lots of churches today don’t even have their own permanent building: They meet in schools, or community centers or in people’s homes. So what is the church made of? **People who love Jesus and are filled with His Spirit are what make the church, the church.** It’s not about the building.

Church buildings like ours are a blessing and a gift from God, and we want to be good stewards of it; but without the people, there's no life in the building. There's no worship. There's no fellowship. There's no relationship. Without people faithfully following Jesus Christ, the church building is just a building. It gets transformed into something more by the people who have themselves been transformed by God as they are united by faith in Jesus and the desire to live into God’s purposes. So they were building a building – a tent – in which to worship. And a building is occasionally used in Scripture as a metaphor about the people who really make up the Church. But the metaphor that gets more ink in the Bible is that the church is like a body.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:15-16, “...[W]e will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” In 1 Corinthians 12:12, we read, **“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12).** And then a few verses later we read, “God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part,

where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:18-20, 27). In Romans 12 Paul uses the metaphor of a body yet again.

And the thing that gets reiterated several times in these passages is that every part of the body is important. The head – Jesus Christ – is certainly important, but so is the hand and the eye and the foot and all the parts in between. We see it in the passage from Exodus, where people with all different skills and abilities and materials to offer come together and work together to build their porta-sanctuary...their tabernacle. A couple people are mentioned by name, but it takes the whole body of believers working together, united by the mission God gave them, for them to accomplish God’s purposes. And it’s the same today.

So what’s your role? Where do you fit in to the mission/purpose of God?

To be clear on the mission, Jesus states it most clearly when he tells the disciples, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” What is your part and my part in living into that?

The Holy Spirit of God gives gifts to us when we have a relationship with him through faith in Jesus, and the gifts are to be used to live into God’s mission. The passages we’ve looked at this morning go on to talk about the gifts of the Spirit, or Spiritual Gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 reads, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.”

9:30 - In just a few minutes we’re going to hear these words as a part of ordaining and installing new elders and deacons.

11:00 – earlier in the service we heard those words as we ordained and installed new elders and deacons.

1 Peter 4:10 says, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.” And

Romans 12:6 reads, **“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Romans 12:6)**. So these are gifts of grace...gifts from God our heavenly Father, through the Holy Spirit. And we are admonished in Scripture to use our gifts. The implication, therefore, is that we know what the gifts are that God has given us.

Scripture explicitly labels 20 of them in the three passages in the Bible that list the gifts of the Spirit – in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. They consist of: exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, prophecy, service, teaching, administration, apostleship, discernment, faith, healings, helps, knowledge, miracles, pastor, speaking in tongues, interpreting speaking in tongues, wisdom, and evangelism. Then there are a few others that are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, or are clearly illustrated as a special gift from God; even if some of them aren't labeled as a “Spiritual Gift” in Scripture, that seems to be what they are. So in addition to the first 20, there are the gifts of celibacy, hospitality, missionary, voluntary poverty, and then the gift that no one ever asks for and no one knows they have until they have to use it: The gift of martyrdom. It's the only gift you're guaranteed to use only once. Anyone here think they have that gift?

Put it all together, and there are somewhere around 25 or 26 Spiritual Gifts, though some people might count as many as 30 or so, and some might count as few as 20. But the point is, **God gives you one or a few of these gifts to be used for living into His purposes and bringing Him glory**. Now, you'll notice that some of the gifts aren't explicitly Christian, such as leadership, teaching, administration, and others. We all know non-Christians who have talent in these areas. We might say they have a gift. What sets the Gifts of the Spirit apart is that God gives us a desire to use the gifts He's given us for His purposes and His glory. Some of them are more obviously that way...they're more overtly “spiritual” in nature but even those that aren't, when paired together with our faith and fueled by the Holy Spirit, they become a powerful tool to be used to bring God glory, and to accomplish His purposes.

And so: We need to know our Spiritual Gifts. There are a variety of ways to discover them: through experience – simply getting into ministry and seeing how God uses us; we learn what they are through the affirmation from

others, from our own understanding of ourselves...some people maybe “hear” God in some way and they know what a gift is they have received from Him. There are Bible studies on the Spiritual Gifts that help you to know yours, there are books you can read and surveys you can take – even online – to help you discover what your gifts, if you don’t know. So there are a variety of ways to learn what your gifts are that God has given you. If you don’t already have a strong sense of your Spiritual Gifts, I would encourage you to take the time to know how God has blessed you with the Spiritual Gifts He’s given you. They’re good gifts from a good God who loves you deeply! You want to know what they are! They’re not like the gifts you get under the Christmas tree, especially at a White Elephant gift exchange. You never know what you’re going to get, right? I remember about 5 years ago at a gift exchange like that, someone got a VHS machine. It made for great laughs, but it’s not a gift that many people are going to want nowadays. I mean, in my household, we’ve almost moved beyond the DVD player. We definitely don’t have a VCR anymore. God’s gifts aren’t like that. **God’s gifts are good, they’re useful, and they’re for a purpose.**

And then God invites you to use your gifts for His purposes. How tragic if we don’t do that, right? The Church needs your contribution. The body of Christ is not complete without each person contributing their part. Just as a body isn’t only an eye or only a hand, God hasn’t brought us together to all be feet or arms or ears. Each of us is a different part, with different gifts needed for the body of Christ be vibrant, full of life, and glorifying God. Just as God used Bezalel and everyone else who had skills and abilities to accomplish the task before them, God has a purpose and a plan to use your hands and your feet and your time – and mine, too – in a way that goes beyond anything that you or I could imagine. **You and I have a purpose that God intends for us – and it’s not for our glory, but for his.**

Whatever your gifts are that God has blessed you with, I pray you’re using them for their purpose within the body of Christ to build up His Church.

Let’s close this morning’s message together by joining our voices as one to read together this statement of belief about Spiritual Gifts: **“I know my spiritual gifts and use them to fulfill God’s purposes.”** I really hope and pray that this is true for each of us; and if it’s not, that it would be our heart’s

desire for this statement to be a reality in our lives. Achieving the mission for which God has called us – together as a church and individually in our own lives – is too important not to make our contribution. So let's know the gifts God has given us, and use them to fulfill His purposes. Let's pray...Amen.

ⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extreme_Makeover:_Home_Edition

ⁱⁱ <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/eastside/kirkland-familys-home-gets-extreme-makeover/>