

New Hope Sermon – Serving One Another I Peter 4:10-11, I cor. 12:7

Introduction:

I've been looking forward to this sermon this week because it is another opportunity for us to confirm our vision as a church and see the blessing of following God's lead in this community of faith. Really, the whole sermon is based on what it means to be the Body of Christ. In *The Message* Peterson describes this vital concept with these words: From I Corinthians 12:12, 14, 27: *The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: each part dependent on every other part...You are Christ's body – that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything...I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, 'I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings, I guess I don't belong to this body, would that make it so?...An enormous eye or gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster.'* And Romans 12:4-6: *"The only way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him. In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole...So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be."* Then the whole Body can grow to maturity as each part does its work (Eph.4:16) and then we can do what God has called us to do. That's the great adventure.

Let's pray.

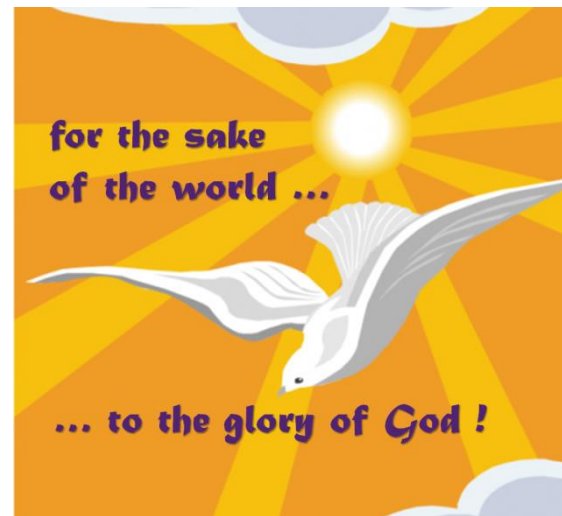
The role of spiritual gifts

Our first text is 1 Peter 4:10-11: *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so 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."* We are stewards of God's gifts to us – that means we have the privilege and responsibility to use them. God has invested in His people so we can be His partners in the world. It really is an awesome privilege.

Practically, this means the church is to look like God's many-colored rainbow, acting as a prism for His grace in the world. Spiritual Gifts are divine abilities which show God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). As the text says, The Church is a "Steward of God's Many-colored Grace" (1 Peter 4:10-11).

Peter expands the concept to say that for those with speaking gifts (encouragement, discernment, wisdom, teaching, preaching, exhortation,) God gives the words to speak. God also gives the strength to serve (in helps, in leadership, in giving, in healing, in acts of mercy), all by the provision of God's grace (1 Peter 4:10).

Our second text is Galatians 5: 13-14- *"Serve One Another In Love."* This is always God's bottom line for all our relationships in the Body. We offer our gifts to each other in love.



Our third text is 1 Corinthians 12:7- “*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*” Serving one another is for the common good and for God’s glory. So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ (Galatians 5:14)

Summary: God gives each believer Spiritual Gifts so God can accomplish his purposes In the Body of Christ and in the world with **His methods and His power.** When we live in terms of our gifts, Jesus Christ is made manifest and God receives the praise. Gifts are given for the sake of the world...to the glory of God!

Two applications for service

With that background on the role of spiritual gifts, I want to challenge us to use these gifts in two areas for serving this coming year. The first is in a commitment to the church itself – to help the church grow. Remember, we are the church of the revolving door. Often members are only here for 1-2 years before they return to their home country. This May we are losing almost 1/3rd of the church – all key members who have been vital to our life together. So we need to keep inviting new people and encouraging them to see the unique vision and purpose of the church. We also need musicians for next year and new ways to support the leaders who will disciple and pray with us.

To do that, I want us to reaffirm the vision for this church: “Our goal as members of New Hope is

- ❖ to grow into Christ-likeness in our character and life-purpose (2 Cor.3:18). *[That is a common purpose for most churches.]*
- ❖ We choose to be global Christians, living in alignment with what God is doing and wants to do in our world. *[This primary emphasis is where our church becomes unique, and why we read the scripture in many languages and have weekly community prayer in our service for the various needs in the world and nations you each come from.]*
- ❖ We worship a global God who calls us onto His team. *[We are deliberate in seeking God’s work through this Body in the world. We are partnering with God’s kingdom agenda.]*
- ❖ As a church we will nurture and equip our members so that wherever they are, they will be able to powerfully live out the role that God has created for them to love and serve God and people in His world. *[I believe God calls His people to be history makers as we partner with Him.]*
- ❖ Our core values are a whole-life commitment to Jesus Christ, as a multicultural family, where the whole Body ministers to the whole Body, within a global context. *[Our structure is not hierarchal, but based on each one ministering to the others. This is why we serve each other communion, why various ones take leadership in the service, during the week etc.]*

The second application is to write our new book as a church. This will be a practical way to live out this uniqueness of our church globally. We have a corporate vision where all our gifts are needed. The New Book is *Thinking Outside the Box: Contextualizing the Supracultural Gospel from West to East*

The goal of the Book: Our target audience is to help Japanese and Chinese Millennials – who have been exposed to Christianity, or become Christians and been discipled in the West – know how to bridge the Gospel back into the contexts of the Church and their life in the East. Then they can continue to thrive as Christians.

To do that they need to know how to bridge the supra-cultural gospel from the West to the East

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Contextualizing the Supracultural Gospel
from West to East



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Bridging means

- how we talk about what the gospel is and what it means.
- how we rethink and reframe the different meanings of sin, faith, the Bible, Jesus, truth, grace, God's honor and unconditional love.
- how we live a transformed life in community with others who have also been educated in the West.

We will look at our unconscious presuppositions of what we have heard about the Christian gospel and try to strip those presuppositions of both their Western baggage as well as the Eastern baggage that the church has put in interpreting the gospel in the East. There is a Supracultural gospel that transcends both of these approaches and we want to find that and articulate that together.

It is a big project, a cross-cultural global project and so we are all needed to write this book together. There is an African saying that 'it takes a village to raise a child.' I want to rework that idea and say it takes a church to write this book!! This fits our context because we are an international congregation with mostly Asian internationals in majority. Therefore, your perspectives will be crucial as we write a book for Chinese and Japanese millennials.

Let me tell you how I think each of you can play a role:

- Those with the gift of teaching can share stories that fit into the bridging theme or the problem of western gospel concepts that they know won't be understood in the East
- Those with the gift of knowledge can help with the research or ideas as they are being developed
- Those with the gift of wisdom can help us apply the things we research
- Those with the gift of shepherding can be sure we are applying the book to the needs of Chinese students
- Those with the gift of helps can check out books from Buswell or make contacts with key resource people, spending time proofreading, etc.
- Those with the gifts of faith can be praying faithfully for God's anointing and eventual translation and publishing – at Alex's end as well
- Those with the gift of giving can help undergird this project financially
- All of you can give feedback as we field test these ideas on Sundays. Those with the gift of exhortation can keep us focused and on track
- Those with the gift of language can help translate it into Chinese early on
- Those with gifts in artistry can draw the graphics for the book, as Sam has already started to do.
- Those with the gift of networking can help us get in contact with a publisher particularly in China and in Japan.

God has called us together into this Body of Christ to serve Him and reflect His many-colored grace to the world. I think it is an exciting time to be the church together. Will you be all-in, using the gifts He has given you for the good of the whole and helping us achieve by the Spirit what He wants to make possible in our generation and in our time? Each one of you is so significant in helping us fulfill these two areas of vision and calling. It will take a church to write this book!

Let's pray

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 3/18/18