How many of you love receiving gifts? Many people do. I haven’t come across anyone who does not like to receive gifts, whether it’s big or small, or for any occasions – birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays such as Christmas, Chanukah, Three Kings Day like we just celebrated.

Gift giving is a tangible way of showing our appreciation towards others. In fact, in Gary Chapman’s book ***“The Five Love Languages”****,* Gift-giving is one of the “love languages” which we express to one another. Not so much to the value of the gifts but the intention and the thoughts and appreciation extended towards the recipients. FYI, the other four “Love Languages” are spending **Quality Time** with one another, expressing **Words of Affirmation**, providing **Acts of Service (**that is doing things together and serving one others**)**, and **Physical Contact** with one another.

But the gifts that we’re talking about today are more than just the physical gifts that we give to one another. As Steven read for us earlier from Paul’s letter to the early church in Corinth, through our baptism of the Holy Spirit, we’ve all received God’s Gifts of Love as well as God’s beloved sons and daughters. This was God’s way of saying “I LOVE YOU”. These gifts of the Holy Spirit are not something that we could go out to buy. They are freely given to us and freely we shall share with others. They are also not meant for us to keep. No hoarding is allowed.

The gifts of the Spirit are **gifts that shape us and define who we are**. As a matter of fact, the Greek word for “gifts” (*charismata*) shares the same root as “grace” and “thanksgiving.”

All of us have these gifts, although some may be gifted more in certain areas than the others….but EVERYBODY is gifted, each according to our abilities, never too much and never too little, but just enough. The challenge for us is that we must unwrap these Spiritual Gifts, just like we unwrap our presents, in order to use them to their fullest potentials. **Discovering our Spiritual Gifts is part of our own calling and an important part of our spiritual growth! To hide or to underuse our gifts is to deny our calling from God.**

But to be honest, none of us have it all. We’re asked to be more LIKE Christ and not to BE Christ. To think that we can do what Christ has done would be arrogant. God has entrusted us with many areas of skills and abilities for the purpose of serving others, including the church. As Paul wrote ***“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”[[1]](#footnote-1)***

This is a beautiful description of what the body should be like, as we discover and share our individual gifts for the purpose of the common good. On one hand, we are all different and unique, but on the other, we belong in the same body while serving the same God aiming for the goal that is to glorify God and to enjoy God forever.

**The purpose of these gifts is not for self-promotion or self-glorification, but rather they are to be exercised in order to build up the entire community for the common good.** We all share the same boat, live through the same struggle and face the same challenges.

So what are these gifts of the Spirit and how can we get them? Well, they are **wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues.** This list, by no means, is an exhaustive one. We have these gifts already, we just have to unwrap these gifts yet. Or sometimes we refuse to unwrap them, afraid of what God may want us to do with our gifts. We are denying our own calling and purpose here on earth.

**As part of this community, we are called to make individual sacrifices for the greater purpose and mission of the church.** It’s not about what we take away bur rather what we contribute and give in. We reap what we sow so that we bear fruits worthy of our calling. We be willing to share and to shoulder our responsibilities with one another. No one can do the job by himself or herself. That’s not what the community of the body about.

Throughout Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he kept emphasizing the importance of unity within the body. **We must depend upon and work alongside with a collective mind and purpose and not be competing with one another’s interests**. Otherwise, the body will go no-where and be doomed for failure. Unfortunately this is an alarming trend among many of our churches today, regardless of what denominations or no denominations. I’ve seen and heard many ministries failed because of their vision….or lack thereof. Many of the leaders are NOT on the same page. They have their differences in opinions on how things are to be run. They are unwilling to work out their differences. As a result, division occurs and the body suffers. I don’t think this is what God has envisioned for us as a community of faith. That’s not what the gifts of the Spirit were intended for. They are meant to be used to further God’s kingdom and not destroy it.

Through Paul’s plea for unity and common purpose within the body of Christ, we recognize the diverse gifts that the body possesses. “*For just as the body is one and have many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”[[2]](#footnote-2)* The church in Corinth took great pride and celebrated their diversities. They worship together as Greek or Jews, slaves or free, males or females, rich or poor, united only by their shared confession of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Their problem was sustaining a unified vision and purpose in spite of their differences.

Furthermore, God’s ministry of diversity does not imply a “**one size fits all**” kind of ministry. God’s ministry is contextual and relevant from one place to another, one community to another. We cannot apply the same methodology. What works for one may not work for the other. In the midst of our uncertainties and element of unknowns, one thing that we do know for certain is that God remains the same yesterday, today and tomorrow! It is the same God, the same Spirit, and the same church that are being served.

Later on, we will be having our Annual Congregational Meeting. It is an important meeting for the life of this congregation as we look to reflect upon its past, while keeping our eyes focused on what God has in store for us in the future. **No one knows what might our future holds, but we do know the One who holds it.**

But this is also a time for us to consider our own calling – both individually and collectively as a member of this body. ***What brings you here every Sunday? Why is God calling you to be a part of this community? What gifts have you received from God and what gifts are you willing to give back for the greater good of the church?*** These are important questions that we must ask of ourselves as we fix our eyes upon Christ, as Christ affirmed to us “*remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Collectively as servants of God, we come to see how God puts us all together like a jig-saw puzzle and knits us all together in order to fulfill a common purpose and to strive towards a common goal. As someone once said that, ***“We may not have it all together…. but together we have it all.”***  I think that’s true for all of us who are gathered here today, as part of this community of faith, whether you are officially a member or not, whether you are ordained as an elder or as a deacon. All of us must respond to our own calling because each of us are called to use our Spiritual gifts in serving one others. This is the only way in which we may turn this beloved community into reality as Christ demonstrated to us.

Therefore let us love one another, share our gifts with one another for the up-building of the body of Christ.Proverbs 18:16 tells us that ***“a gift opens doors; it gives access to the great.”***  When we unwrap God’s spiritual gifts for us, God will reveal to us opportunities and treasures in heaven. Through the Spirit, God has promised to lead us with endless possibilities, if we are willing to take bold risks and to dream new dreams. Believe in ourselves, believe and trust in God.

May the Spirit guide us and trust in God’s faithfulness. Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *I Corinthians 12:4-7* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I Corinthians 12:12* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *John 15:4* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)