

## **“What’s Love Got to Do With It?”**

I Cor. 12:1, 4-14, 31

Pastor Jeff Wood

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The title of the sermon matches a great song by Tina Turner. And toward the end of the sermon it will become clear how that title fits.

We’re in the season of Pentecost, the season of the Holy Spirit. Just as there was a BC and AD, before Christ and after Christ, there is a before the Holy Spirit and after the Holy Spirit. We live now where not only knowledge of Jesus, who he is, what he did, and what that means is available to us but we live now also where the Spirit of Jesus, the personal power of Jesus, is available to live in and amongst us.

Pentecost is often referred to as the birthday of the church. The gathered disciples had a shared experience of the Holy Spirit erupting in tongues of fire and speech and then they were deployed to be God’s workers and messengers in the world. This is what makes the church the church. It is the first occasion of that. So it is the birthday of the church *and with birthdays there are gifts.*

It is the Spirit, the scriptures tell us, who enable us to saying meaningfully, “Jesus is Lord.” When we do that, we become Christians; we are born of the Spirit and have a spiritual life. He gives us a spiritual birthday. So it isn’t just the Spirit who made the Church’s birthday, he makes each of our spiritual birthdays. And with birthdays, again, *there are gifts.*

The Holy Spirit was involved not only in the birthday of the church and of Christians but prior to that to Christ himself. Mary is overshadowed and becomes the first one to have Christ inside of her and then when Christ is born and laid in a manger, we have Christmas.

It's Christ's birthday and with that birthday there are gifts, aren't there?

In *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis there is a figure known as Father Christmas. In Narnia, under a curse, it was always winter but never Christmas. However, when God turns back the curse, the winter gives way to Christmas. And what is Christmas? The birth of Christ. A birthday. And Father Christmas passes out gifts. In Narnia he gives a vial of healing elixir to one of the children, Lucy; he gives a special sword and shield for Peter, and so on ... (105, Lion, Witch, Wardrobe). Gifts. They are equipment and they are tools, to be sure. But they are considered gifts as well. When Christ of Christmas is born, not just in a manger but in a person's heart, there are gifts for that spiritual birthday.

These are known as spiritual gifts. They are appropriate for us to learn about in the season of the Spirit, the season of Pentecost. And remember, somewhere along the line here, we're going to figure out what love has to do with these.

The NT discusses these gifts in I Peter 4, Eph 4, Romans 12, and I Cor 12-14.

We read.

Ok, we just read one of the selections in the NT about spiritual gifts. Here's what you should know about the information gleaned from all the passages about the gifts.

- The lists of gifts (mercy, prophecy, giving, administration, etc) we find vary but none of them exhaust the Holy Spirit's **repertoire**. So he gives these and then some.
- You can imagine the gifts like **atoms** that can stand alone or be variously configured into molecules, hydrogen/oxygen or H<sub>2</sub>O. Gift of mercy plus the gift of simplicity might make a missionary molecule or a

gift of administration with a gift of teaching might make a pastor molecule.

- The gift is not a trinket to be admired or a knick-knack to be set on a mantle and dusted but a **tool** which should get used in doing God's work.<sup>1</sup> My first Bible I kept in a box. It kept it pretty but keeping it there meant I didn't use it that much. The gifts are not to be in a box.
- The gift requires **support** ... a soldier isn't sufficient for battle just because he has a gun, he's sufficient for battle because there's another with a supply truck and another with a set of maps and another with binoculars ... our gifts and lack of gifts brings us toward one another.

Gifts very often need to be unwrapped. (come with a gift wrapped box). There are different styles of opening presents, aren't there? Some just rip and tear. Others neatly slice where the tape is and fold the wrapping paper up for future use. I want to ask, "How do we unwrap the spiritual gifts?" This is to say, "How do we learn about our gift or our God-given tools or role?"

First, it takes **other Christians**... remember Samuel and Eli ... he heard something (that much little Samuel had right) but the source of it he had wrong. He thought it was Eli but it was really God. To figure out the source of the voice and how to respond he needed Eli's help. We need each other's help. It often comes as, "You are really good and effective at ...." (After being

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<sup>1</sup> A frog hopped into a bank and sought a loan from the bank's officer, a Mr. Wack. His first name oddly enough was Paddy, Paddy Wack. The frog offered some Hummels and other figurines as collateral. The officer wasn't quite sure what to do with this so he asked the boss who said, "Look, it's a knick-knack Paddy Wack, give the frog a loan."

beside each other in a worship service a guy asked me, “Has anyone ever told you you have a beautiful voice?” I answered, “No.” He said, “I didn’t think so.” Others will give us feedback and help us find our gifts ... or avoid our weaknesses!)

Second, it takes **trial and error** ... the Samuel and Eli story tells us this as well for it took a couple of encounters for Eli and Samuel to figure it out ... trial and error, that’s how we learn most things. When I do accounting for the church, I don’t find myself as effective or fulfilled as when I do Bible teaching. It may not be easy, the Bible teaching, but I find myself saying, “Next time, I’ll do this or that.” I’m ready to do it again and improve. Accounting, not so much.

Third, never forget that the **bottom line** is service to Christ. True enough, look at the design of an eagle and you don’t want to see him paddling in a pond. That’s not his gift. On the other hand, and this is what we don’t want to forget, in football, the bottom line is getting the football across the goal line. Normally, the guys who are fleet of foot carry the ball and the guys who are huge, tank-like guys, block. They’re built differently and have different gifts. But if the ball squirts out at the lineman’s feet, he doesn’t send for a running back to pick up the ball. *He* jumps on it. Do whatever is necessary if a job presents itself to you and no one else is there. Do it unto Christ and ask for the power of Christ ... and do it in the manner of Christ.

On some computers there are shortcut buttons ... an icon on your computer desktop which keeps you from manually opening different programs and scrolling through your layers of electronic archives ... it is an express lane to a file.

In the passage we read about gifts, it extends to chapter 14. So twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. Right in the middle is what? I Cor 13. About? **Love**. ... We

read I Cor 13 without its context. But its context is spiritual gifts and taken together what we are told is that the engine between the tires of spiritual gifts is / the pb in the sandwich of spiritual gifts is / the story between the bookcovers of spiritual gifts is / the guts of spiritual gifts is love ... and the shortcut button is to ask in any given situation with any given person, what does love tell you to do? How would you express love? We are hardwired to see things differently and some will, with their eyes of love, see that what is needed is to clean the bathroom, to pray in faith, to give some money??? Act in love and, though you may not be able to name your spiritual gift, more importantly, you'll most likely be using it.

What would Paul say to Tina Turner and her question, What's love got to do with it? Well, when the it is spiritual gifts, it has everything to do with it.

Now go, and serve in love in the power of the Spirit. Amen.

*If you would like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you, the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call. [pastorjeffwood@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjeffwood@gmail.com)  
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