

## USING YOUR GIFT?

LAST WEEK I TALKED ABOUT THIS BEING A NEW YEAR FOR YOU, ME, ALL OF US. WHAT WILL MAKE IT A "NEW" YEAR FOR YOU IS A CHOICE MADE BY YOU, AND BETWEEN YOU AND GOD. **THE EASIEST WAY TO DO SOMETHING "NEW" IS TO DO SOMETHING YOU HAVE NEVER DONE BEFORE OR EVEN IF YOU HAVE DONE IT, TO DO IT IN A DIFFERENT WAY.** THINK OF THIS, THIS MORNING WE HEARD TWO READINGS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT. **FROM THE GOSPELS RIGHT THROUGH REVELATION IT IS ALL ABOUT NEW THINGS AND DOING THINGS IN A NEW WAY.**

AFTER JESUS' BAPTISM AND ORDEAL IN THE DESERT HE BEGAN A MINISTRY THAT CHANGED THE WORLD, IT CHANGED HISTORY. **HE ASKED AND HE SHOWED HIS FOLLOWERS A NEW WAY TO LIVE! JESUS CALLS TO US TO LIVE A NEW WAY.** HOWEVER, GOD IS THERE TO HELP US IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY. **BOTH OF TODAY'S READINGS GIVE US THE ANSWER.** FIRST IN ACTS AS THE SOME OF THE APOSTLES WHEN THEY PRAYED FOR PEOPLE TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. IT HAPPENS ALL THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS. IN THE GOSPEL TODAY, JESUS AT HIS BAPTISM RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT. WE ARE USED TO THINKING AFTER READING THIS PASSAGE, THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME DOWN BODILY AS A DOVE AND RESTED ON JESUS. BUT, REMEMBER JESUS WILL GO OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS AND BE TEMPTED, ARE WE TO BELIEVE GOD SENT HIS SON OUT INTO THE DESERT TO FACE THE DEVIL WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT? I DO NOT BELIEVE SO. JESUS WAS ABLE TO RESIST TEMPTATION THREE TIMES BECAUSE HE KNEW SCRIPTURE THAT CAME TO HIM IN EACH SITUATION. IT WAS A GIFT OF DISCERNMENT, A GIFT OF A WORD OF KNOWLEDGE. **I BELIEVE JESUS HAD ALL THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT AND THAT HE DEMONSTRATED THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT DURING HIS MINISTRY.**

**NOW WHAT HAS THAT TO DO WITH YOU AND ME THIS MORNING OR ANY DAY OF OUR LIVES? IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH IT!!! DO YOU THINK WE AS DISCIPLES ARE GOING TO BE SENT OUT TO DO MINISTRY WITHOUT HELP FROM GOD?** THE BIBLE, ESPECIALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT, HAS NUMEROUS PASSAGES TELLING US FIRST OF THE PROMISES. WHEN JESUS WOULD NO LONGER BE WITH THEM, THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD COME AND MAKE EVERYTHING KNOWN TO THEM AND THEY WOULD RECALL IT WHEN NECESSARY. REMEMBER MOST OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS TIME DID NOT KNOW HOW TO WRITE OR READ SO IT WAS VERY MUCH AN ORAL TRADITION.

**WE ARE FORTUNATE INDEED TO HAVE THE SCRIPTURES, BUT HOW OFTEN DO WE READ THEM TO GAIN NEW INSIGHT AND BUILD UP OUR FAITH AND OTHERS?** THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL GUIDE US AND HELP US TO DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW. REMEMBER LAST WEEK'S DEFINITION OF "NEW"? – SOMETHING THAT WAS SEEN OR EXPERIENCED FOR THE FIRST TIME. IF WE ARE OPEN AND WILLING, GOD WILL REVEAL TO US NEW THINGS AS WE ARE READY. **IT IS GOD'S DESIRE FOR US TO POSSESS "THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST", BUT ONLY IF WE WANT IT.**

**I HAVE HEARD THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A GENTLEMAN, ONE WHO WILL NOT GO WHERE HE IS NOT INVITED. ASK YOURSELF, DO I WANT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REVEAL TO ME SOMETHING NEW? WHY WOULD WE NOT? IT IS "THAT TRUST AND FEAR ISSUE" THAT CAN POP ITS UGLY HEAD ABOUT THE TIME GOD IS CALLING US WITH THE WHISPER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT? GOD WILL NEVER, EVER LEAD US TO A PLACE HE WILL LEAVE US! MANY OF US COULD GIVE A WITNESS TO THAT VERY FACT AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER WHETHER WE KNEW IT OR NOT GOD WAS WITH US THROUGH SUCH TIMES IN OUR LIFE.**

JESUS IS SOON TO BEGIN HIS MINISTRY - BAPTIZED, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GIFTED. HIS MINISTRY IS OUR EXAMPLE. LAST WEEK WE HEARD FROM MATTHEW 25 AND WHAT MINISTRY IS ALL ABOUT – HE **FED** PEOPLE PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, HE SATISFIED THE **THIRST** OF PEOPLE LIKE THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, HE **DELIVERED** PEOPLE OF THEIR "PRISON" OF POSSESSION, AND HE **HEALED** THE SICK. THIS IS OUR MINISTRY TOO!!! MINISTRY IS NOT SHOWING UP ON SUNDAYS FOR AN HOUR. THIS IS A TIME OF CELEBRATION OF OUR LIVES TOGETHER, BUT IT IS FAR FROM THE END OF BEING A DISCIPLE.

ROMANS 12:6 SAYS *"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.."* OR 1 Peter 4:10 *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"* OR 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 *"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone."*

**EACH ONE OF US HAS A GIFT OR GIFTS TO USE IN MINISTRY. NO ONE IS LACKING A GIFT, BUT WHETHER YOU CHOOSE TO USE IT, NOW THAT IS THE ISSUE.** WE CAN COME UP WITH MANY EXCUSES NOT UNLIKE THE POEM ON YOUR INSERT. IN THIS TYPE OF POEM THERE IS A HUMOROUS BEND, BUT THERE IS ALSO THAT HINT OF TRUTH IN IT TOO. THE LAST STANZA I ESPECIALLY FIND A GOOD DOSE OF TRUTH - *"Yes, I'll serve Thee most willingly always, for the church work I'll never say nay, but please, Lord just wait 'til tomorrow, I'm terribly busy today"*!

WHEN IT IS A SMALL CHURCH, AND A LARGE "FAMILY" AS I HAVE HEARD IT CALLED, LIKE A FAMILY EVERYBODY HAS TO PITCH IN. I KNOW MANY HAVE BEEN HERE QUITE A FEW YEARS AND CAN SAY *"BEEN THERE, DONE THAT"* AND MANY HAVE SERVED FAITHFULLY. **LOOK AROUND THOUGH, WE ARE IT, IF YOU DON'T THEN WHO?**

THERE IS SO MUCH EXPERIENCE HERE, AND MAYBE SOME EXPERIENCES WERE NOT SO PLEASANT, BUT THE BIBLE TELLS US TO BE PATIENT WITH ONE ANOTHER, LET LOVE BE THERE FOR ONE ANOTHER, ALL IN ORDER TO BUILD THE BODY OF CHRIST. **HOW MANY TIMES DO WE READ DURING JESUS' MINISTRY THAT HE HAD A "BAD" EXPERIENCE, EVEN TO THE POINT THEY WANTED TO STONE HIM!!!** YOU TALK ABOUT PATIENCE, HOW ABOUT THE PHARISEES THAT SEEMED TO BE THERE EVERY TIME JESUS TURNED AROUND!!! PEOPLE CAN BE FRUSTRATING, NEGATIVE, AND PLAIN WRONG, BUT IF **WE ARE HIS DISCIPLES THEN WE MOVE ON WITH A LOVING ATTITUDE, A SERVANT'S HEART REALIZING WE ARE ALL GOD'S CHILDREN AND FORGIVEN.**

**IN ORDER TO HAVE THE BODY OF CENTENNIAL "FUNCTION" AND BE BUILT UP IN THE FAITH WE MUST ALL USE OUR GIFTS GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN US.** WE NEED PEOPLE TO SERVE ON COMMITTEES, SIGN UP FOR HOSTING, SUPPORT FUNCTIONS WHEN WE CAN, SUPPORT THE YOUTH AND LAST, BUT NOT LEAST SUPPORT EACH OTHER. WHEN PEOPLE COME THROUGH THE DOORS AND SEE THAT, THEY WILL WANT TO BE A PART OF THAT. EXPRESSING OUR FAITH IS SOMETHING WE MUST DO.

**IN MY EARLIER DAYS PEOPLE WOULD AND MANY STILL DO THINK FAITH IS A PERSONAL THING, HOWEVER IF WE KEEP IT TO OURSELVES, WHAT GOOD IS HAVING IT?** YES, FAITH AND WHERE YOU ARE AT WITH IT IS BETWEEN YOU AND GOD, BUT AS IT SAYS IN I PETER 3 *"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."* THAT SUMS UP WHY AND HOW WE ARE TO SHARE FAITH.

**IS CHURCH JUST SOMETHING WE DO ON A SUNDAY FOR SOMETHING TO DO?** THEN WE LEAVE HERE AND FORGET EVERYTHING WE HEARD, SANG OR PRAYED? IT IS SOMETHING NICE INSIDE THESE WALLS, BUT NOT USEFUL OUT THERE IN DAILY LIFE?

**A QUESTION – IF CENTENNIAL WAS NOT HERE, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING ON SUNDAY MORNING? SLEEPING IN, GOING TO BREAKFAST, WATCHING TV, OR RESTING? IF WE OR FOR THAT MATTER ANY CHURCH KEEPS THEIR FAITH "LOCKED UP" THEN SOON THEIR FAITH WILL NOT BE THE ONLY THING LOCKED UP – IT WILL ALSO BE THAT CHURCH!!!**

**IF WE ARE NOT EXPRESSING OUR FAITH TO THE WORLD OUT THERE, THEN WE CAN BE CALLED SELFISH, PLAIN AND SIMPLE.** SHARING YOURSELF IS EXACTLY WHAT JESUS DID DURING HIS MINISTRY, AND I BELIEVE THAT IS ONE OF THE REASONS PEOPLE WERE ATTRACTED TO HIM. THE CHURCH HAS LASTED FOR MANY CENTURIES, **BUT I AM CONCERNED THAT IF WE CONTINUE ON THE PATH WE ARE ON, NOT SHARING OUR FAITH, THEN THE CHURCH AS WE KNOW WILL NOT LAST.**

DON'T WE WANT TO LEAVE A LEGACY? MANY OF YOU GREW UP IN A CHURCH, MAYBE THIS ONE, BUT IF WE DON'T REACH OUT AND SHARE THAT WHICH YOU ALWAYS THOUGHT WOULD BE HERE- IT WON'T BE AND THAT IS NOT A LEGACY. **THIS CHURCH FAMILY HAS A WONDERFUL LEGACY OF FINANCIAL STEADFASTNESS, BUT GOD WANTS MORE, HE WANTS YOU TO USE THE GIFT OR GIFTS HE GAVE YOU TO BUILD UP THE FAMILY AND REACH OUT IN HIS NAME.**

THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE HAS MADE MISTAKES, AFTER ALL IT IS MADE UP OF IMPERFECT PEOPLE, BUT WE ARE FORGIVEN PEOPLE, BENEFACTORS OF HIS GRACE AND LOVE. THE CHURCH IT SEEMS HAS SUFFERED STAGGERING BLOWS, **BUT IT IS HIS CHURCH AND HE HAS GIVEN US THE POWER OF HOLY SPIRIT TO GUIDE US AND HELP US THROUGH THE DIFFICULT TIMES SO WE CAN SHARE FAITH!!!**

IN Philippians 4:13 *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* AND IN Romans 8:26 *"And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness..."* WE ARE HUMAN, MAKE MISTAKES, MAY NOT KNOW THE RIGHT WORDS, BUT WE ARE GIFTED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, IF WE LISTEN TO THAT VOICE WITHIN.

HERE IS A STORY ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OUR GIFTS...

The gift of the Spirit is much too important not to share, but sometimes we don't share it. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means that we allow Him to occupy and control every area of our lives...How much of you does the Holy Spirit have? I say to my students, "Both glasses have the Alka-Seltzer, just as all Christians have the Holy Spirit. But notice how you can have the Holy Spirit and not His filling." Our goal is to live in such a way as to unwrap the packaging around the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us.

**JESUS "UNWRAPPED" THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS GIFTS TO USE IN MINISTRY. LOOK HOW DYNAMIC HIS MINISTRY WAS AND IS BECAUSE JESUS IS STILL MINISTERING TO US THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**THERE IS NO BETTER TIME TO UNWRAP THAT WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**