

Sanctuary.

It's a good word for this space.

It comes from the Latin - Sanctus - which means holy - and I believe our intentions and our invitation make this space sacred or holy, because we desire the living God to be present with us here in the form of the Holy Spirit.

As we continue to move through the book of 1 Corinthians in worship - today our focus is on Spiritual Gifts as you heard described in the scripture passage Ann read for us. Spiritual gifts are not something our culture references very often so it might be uncomfortable or strange to think about or hear about this part of Christianity. There are only four places in the New Testament that mention spiritual gifts - 1 Corinthians - also Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4. Since 1 Corinthians was written before these others, around 55 AD, this 1 Corinthians text is probably the earliest source we have about spiritual gifts. It makes sense that we don't hear about spiritual gifts in the Old Testament, because they are an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all believers after Jesus left earth the final time and went back to heaven. This understanding of spiritual gifts wasn't available until after Jesus' resurrection and departure from earth, so it couldn't have been part of the earlier Hebrew experience.

We understand about gifts in general, so gift giving and receiving is something easy to grasp. Some of us here today really enjoy choosing and giving gifts to people. Anyone here really enjoy finding and giving gifts away? And others of us really enjoy receiving gifts - probably most of us do somewhat. Then there are others here who just have the experience of being able to get what you want or need for yourself and gifts are not really something you think about .

I remember one Christmas when I was about 8 years old. Though I was raised here in Los Angeles, most of my extended family were in Indiana. So every year when we opened gifts on Christmas morning, which was our tradition - we'd tape record - remember tape recorders? - we'd record the opening of gifts so my grandparents could participate in the joy of our gift giving from far away.

Well, I remember that year I was really into Strawberry Shortcake miniature figurines - I

remember baby Apple Dumpling, the boy called Huckleberry Pie and of course, the star character, a girl named Strawberry Shortcake- anyone remember those dolls? Well, I REALLY wanted the Strawberry Shortcake doll as I had some of the others already , but you know how it goes when something is popular they become hard to find. So my grandmother must have gotten me one of the other characters instead so when I opened it up, the first thing I said was - in my eight year old bluntness - "I really wanted Strawberry Shortcake, but I guess this is ok."

I remember my mom being furious with me for being so ungrateful and I'm sure felt embarrassed to send this recording to her mother to listen to. I felt awful about it for many years, but I did learn a lesson to be thankful for all gifts given to me in a spirit of joy.

We find in scripture that God also delights in giving us gifts. Matthew 7:11 says, "If you who are imperfect know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask." The key phrase here is - *How much more* - That God goes to great lengths to provide and take care of our needs and wants. In James 1:17 we find these words, "Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above. These gifts come down from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights...." That's a great title for God too, right? The Creator of Heavenly Lights. We're reminded here that every good and perfect gift comes from God. That desires to care for us in every possible way.

The gifts we receive from God are sometimes physical - healing - a good parking space - anyone else here pray that prayer sometimes? But we also receive spiritual gifts. The Greek word for gift here in 1 Corinthians is *charismaton* - which comes from *charis* meaning grace. These specific spiritual gifts are reflective of the grace of God. Grace, mercy, wholeness. God desires to bestow grace upon us that we might also share it with others for God's purpose.

As I said earlier - all believers receive spiritual gifts. They aren't reserved for certain kinds of Christians and not for others. As it says in verse 7 - "A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good." Probably a better word than demonstration is manifestation - that God

manifests God's self - becomes alive or real through our spiritual gifts - in every one of us who know God through Christ Jesus.

I really like how Paul begins here in 1 Corinthians 12. In verse one, right away Paul is clear how important it is for us to understand spiritual gifts - what they are, that we have them and which ones we've been given.

Paul's also very clear that though there are different spiritual gifts - having different gifts doesn't make us different from each other. In fact the opposite is true. God being manifest in us through God's spiritual gifts actually unites us, makes us one. It comes out again starting in verse 12 where Paul writes about the similarities between the human body and us as a group - or us as a body - following Christ. Though our human body has different parts - hands, feet, ears, mouths, noses - and they all serve a different purpose - one is not better or more important than another. And we feel it, sometimes severely, when one of those parts isn't able to function well or maybe at all.

As I preach every Sunday I know the importance of trying to speak clearly with my mouth and the ability of you all to hear with your ears. It reminds me of a story I heard the other day. About a married couple struggling with speaking and being heard. How one spouse asked their doctor at an annual physical, "How can I get my husband to admit to being hard of hearing?"

The doctor said, "This is what you do. When you get home, as you go through the front door say 'Where are we going for dinner?' If your spouse doesn't answer, go into the living room and say it again, 'Where are we going for dinner?' If they still don't answer, walk right into the room where they are and say, 'Where are we going for dinner?' And if they STILL don't answer, go right up behind them, speak directly into their ear and say 'Honey, I said, where are we going for dinner?' Then you'll be able to convince your spouse the need for a hearing exam. "Great!" the patient said, "That's just what I'll do."

So the patient went home, walked in the front door and said, 'Where are we going for dinner?' Without hearing anything, they did just as the doctor suggested and asked each step of the way until they were speaking directly into the spouse's ear and said

loudly, 'Where are we going for dinner?' At that, their mate turned around and resolutely replied: 'For the fourth time, I said I'm going to make spaghetti!' I think maybe the first spouse was convinced of needing a hearing exam instead.

Knowing and using our spiritual gifts - as unique individuals who make up the whole body of Christ - is a really important aspect to knowing ourselves and is TREMENDOUSLY important to the work of our local church. Without each one of us finding out what our spiritual gifts are and then being willing to use them, this church will be like a body without a part of it working well. It will limp along, but it won't be able to run the race to win it.

Now we are going to look at the different spiritual gifts and where they can be found in the Bible. This is just a very brief touch on Spiritual Gifts of course, so I encourage you to make time this week to go online using the source I printed in your insert to find out what your spiritual gifts are. The link suggested here is an inventory quiz that will give you your top 6 gifts and offer brief descriptions about each one. The inventory will take at least 5 minutes, but probably more like 10 to 15 minutes. Then pray and consider where you can either continue or begin offering your spiritual gifts here at Corona UMC. I hope and pray many of you will be encouraged to talk to me or your other church leaders about how to use your gifts in this congregation no matter how long you've been part of this church.

Spiritual Gifts are listed and categorized differently by different people, but these are the gifts described in 1 Corinthians using the inventory link printed on the Daily Bible Study Guide. Read 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10 again to be reminded of the gifts mentioned there and also read verses 27 through 31, which describes a few more gifts.

According to the online inventory on the DBSG, the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 are:

Wisdom
Knowledge
Administration
Apostleship
Shepherding (also known as Pastoring)
Faith
Miracles

Prophecy
Giving
Healing
Discernment
Teaching
Helping/Assistance
Prophecy
Tongues
Interpretation of Tongues

Without describing any of them further, as you look at the list on your sheet, are there any that you say to yourself - That's definitely a gift of mine! Or that's definitely NOT one of my gifts! If so, you might want to jot that thought down.

Another interesting question to ask yourself - if you are currently serving in ministry here at CUMC - do my spiritual gifts align with the ministry I'm already providing?

Of course I won't take time here to go into detail about these individual gifts so please do look into them for yourself the next few weeks.

There are also a few different gifts found in the other texts I mentioned. So I'll also read the ones printed on your sheet from Romans:

Leadership
Compassion
Servanthood
Exhortation

And specifically from Ephesians:
Evangelism

When I think about these gifts, there is an obvious illustration of one of them we are currently experiencing at this church - that is the gift of giving.

Even during my very first phone call in May with our District Superintendent telling me I'd be appointed here at Corona UMC, she mentioned the outpouring of one of these specific gifts - the gift of giving. She told me there was a family - Robert and Margaret Stanley - who had bequeathed a sizable trust not only to Corona UMC, but to several other churches in the area in order to provide growth and outreach of the churches.

You might not have two pennies to rub together, or you might be doing alright in your living situation right now or you might have savings and

investments that will take you comfortably through your end days. But no matter what a person's financial situation, if their gift is giving, they will often be thinking about how to disburse and share whatever they have. I think, generally, this is a rare spiritual gift, but a precious one. I'm thankful to the Stanleys for using their spiritual gift this way. In fact, a small portion of the trust has recently been used to purchase equipment so we can continue providing online worship, have an audio system and show video on our monitors since our original equipment was beginning to fail.

But pretty soon you'll also be hearing about our budget for next year as a congregation and you'll be invited to think about your pledge as a tithe or offering so we can continue meeting for worship, for classes, for children's Sunday School and for services like Sally Carlson's coming up in October. How blessed we are to have a sanctuary - a holy place made sacred by our intentions - to celebrate those saints who go before us and to worship our God.

May we all continue to share our spiritual gifts so this church thrives and becomes a place many more can find sanctuary.