

Your Gift

Romans 12:6a

Sermon Transcript by Reverend Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, this morning we are studying Romans 12:6. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith." We will probably just get the first half of the verse done today--"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them."

I'm almost certain that the great majority of us read that, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" and we automatically ignore that verse as far as we are concerned. It might surprise you how many of us think like that. We read the verse and say, "Oh, yes, we all have gifts", but it would surprise you how many of our hearts are quietly beating inside our breasts and we are thinking, "Yes, but that doesn't apply to me. I really don't have gifts." We think of ourselves as we appear outwardly, poor little individual human beings, little specks on the radar screen of history, little deviates thrown up by some impersonal process of evolution, and we think, "That's all we are. We don't have gifts. The great number of us live very unremarkable lives and die very unremarkable deaths, except for maybe a Beethoven or a Babe Ruth. Most of us aren't very remarkable in any way at all; we aren't very connected to and very noticed by any significant other that happens to be in the universe."

You may be sitting there and thinking, "They can't all feel like that!" Yes, many of us feel like that when we read this verse about gifts. Now, loved ones, that is rubbish, absolute rubbish. It is twentieth-century rubbish, sophisticated rubbish, refined rubbish, but it is rubbish. It is a misconception and a lie that you are a little, unimportant speck of humanity that has no particular gift. That is not reality. That is untrue; it is a lie and a deception. To try to disabuse your mind and mine of it and to try to undeceive us, I would like to tackle the small task of eliminating time. I would like to try to show you how to eliminate time. We will get a little philosophical in an Irish kind of way. Are you ready?

Time itself is not a reality; time itself doesn't actually exist. You know the stars that we see on a clear night? Many of those stars are not stars at all any longer--they are beams of light. That is, the star that shone the beams of light that you now see at night died and disintegrated years and years ago. What you see coming towards you is not the star at all but it is the light that that star shone. Actually, you are seeing something that no longer now exists.

It is a bit like this flashlight. If I shine the flashlight and you are not here in this room but are thousands and maybe millions of miles away in space and the batteries run out on the flashlight, it is possible that if you were far enough away in space, you would see the light that is coming from the flashlight now traveling towards you even though it had stopped shining out of the bulb or lense. There is the light and it is moving through space, and wherever you are in space you see the light, but the thing itself actually may have dissolved thousands of years before. So really, time depends on where you are in space. You see there something that actually happened thousands of years ago.

In other words, time is relative to where you are in space. It is strange, but in a way, you can probably imagine that there is a vantage point somewhere in space where you are so high up or so far away from everything and you have such powerful vision that you can actually see everything

happening at once. You can see the batteries in the flashlight that have ceased to operate -- you can see the light that is still shining from it and you can see it all at one time. In fact, it is conceivable that you can see that, in a real way, nothing ever ceases to happen. You can see that somewhere in the universe everything that has ever been done and said is still able to be observed at some point in space. So, loved ones, time doesn't exist. Past and future are illusions because of your localized position in space.

It is like that example we have used before of the little five-year-old guy who wants to see the Fourth of July parade. He is so small that he can only see through a knothole in the backyard fence. He gets his eye to the knothole and he sees one drummer, then one marcher--or if the person is very fat, just a little bit of the person--and that is all he can see passing by. But his big brother is up on the roof of the tool shed, and calls to him and helps him to get up onto the roof of the tool shed and it is amazing! Now he can see not just part of the guy who is passing or just a few of the marchers, but he can see over the fence and even the people who are at the starting point of the parade. He can see the ones who are going past him, and away in the distance he can see all the ones who have already passed. So from that vantage point he sees a whole panoramic scene before him of the past, the present and the future. Loved ones, that is reality. Time itself is just a relative thing, relative to this time-space world of ours. But it itself doesn't really exist. We are living in one great eternal present moment.

Now how does that apply to you? I'll show you if you look at John 1:1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." Now "the Word" you find by following through the rest of the verses of the chapter is Jesus. God is saying Jesus was with Him in the beginning, even though "in the beginning" is just a concession to time talk. There is no beginning. Before the world ever was, Jesus was with God; He was there with Him. Then do you see what takes place in the next verse? "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." That means Jesus made you. He made you personally. In that great eternal moment that is time, Jesus put His brain and His hands to work and He made you individually.

That is what it says--"All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made." He allowed that to be expressed later on in your mother's womb, but he actually made you himself. You are not just a chance result of your dad's sperm and your mom's seed came together. Jesus Himself made you. He allowed that to be expressed later on. The beam of light travelled through space, and here at the date of your conception you appeared in your mother's womb. But the event of your birth in some hospital here in America is only an expression of the actual fact that Jesus, Son of God the Creator of the world, personally made you. He devised and designed you exactly as you are now. He personally knows how your nose goes because he made your nose. He knows what your eyes are like because he personally designed them. It wasn't your mom or your dad or your birth or your heredity. It was Jesus Himself who personally made you.

It goes even deeper than that if you go to verse 4: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The strange thing is, any medical expert will say, "What causes our breathing and our blood circulation? The beat in the sino-auricular node. That's what causes it." But if you ask them, "Why does that beat occur in the sino-auricular node in your heart?" They will say, "I don't know. It just does. We just take that as a 'given' and we go on from there." Do you see this verse is the explanation of the beat that creates all and sustains all life in creation? "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." It is Jesus' own life that creates this mystery of life that we cannot explain. Loved ones, no medical expert can explain why life is. This whole universe is beating with a life that we do not know the origin of because that life is Jesus' own breathing. It

is Jesus' own life. "In him was life, and that life is the light of men." That is the light that keeps us all going. It is Jesus' own life. In other words, you are alive because Jesus Himself is alive at this moment. You are sustained by the life that is in him.

Actually it goes even further into a dangerous kind of statement from John 1:4: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Then verse 6: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world." Some of us say, "Yeah, that may be so with some men. It may be so with the Churchills or the Beethovens or Babe Ruths, but it is not so with me." Loved ones, it is.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. Jesus' life enlightened your life. You are "every man". It doesn't say, "He is the life that enlightens every fly or every bird or every animal." But it does say, "He is the life that enlightens every man and woman." However small and unimportant you think yourself to be, it is Jesus' own life that keeps you alive.

Have you ever looked at the footnote in verse 4 (in him was life)? The footnote says, "Was not anything made. That which has been made was life in him." That is really a better translation of the Greek. Not "in him was life", but "that which has been made was life in him." In other words, what you are, what you have been made, was actually life in Jesus. It goes very close to the Eastern religions' belief that we are nothing but an emanation of a deity, that we are the deity come out, and that eventually, after this physical life is over, we will sink back and be absorbed in him.

It is almost that, and yet it is not that, because the Bible states clearly that you are a separate creature, a separate creation from God Himself. Jesus actually made you, and yet the spark that keeps you alive receives its charge from his own life. Loved ones, there is part of Jesus in you. There is part of his breathing, there is part of his electricity, there is a part of His Spirit in you, and that is what keeps you alive. You are in a real sense what Luther said, "a little Christ"; you are a part of Jesus Himself.

Now Jesus does not make unnecessary journeys. He has made a journey in you here to earth. He has designed you and fitted you so that he can do exactly what he intends to do to complete his creation here in this world. He does not make unnecessary journeys in you, nor does he come in you without hands and feet, nor does he come in you without the gifts that are needed to achieve his purposes. Loved ones, that's it. If you are just a poor little human being here with no particular connection to the Owner of the universe, then maybe you don't have any gifts, but that is not what God says. God says that you are actually part of His Son Jesus. His Son made you personally and designed you carefully, and He Himself has come back to earth in you--"That which was made was life in him." His life is actually in you, and he has come back to the world to complete his creation through you.

Loved ones, that is who you are. You are not just some little speck on the radar screen of history; you are not just some little deviate thrown up by an impersonal evolutionary process. You are part of the Savior Himself who made the world. He has come back in you to this earth to complete his creation. He has not come back in you without the necessary equipment. That is why we say, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." You have a gift not because you are just a human being, but you have a gift because you are part of Jesus. And you have a gift that is different from all the rest of us. That is why Jesus sent you. There is no point of doubling up for the sake of doubling up, so he doesn't double up. He sends you because you are able to do something here that none of the rest of us can. Or, rather he in you is able to do something that he cannot do

through the rest of us.

Brothers and sisters, that is true, truer than anything in the world. There is nobody like you. Jesus has come back in you to do something in this world that none of the rest of us can do. That is why we say so confidently, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." You have a special touch that you can give the world that none of the rest of us can give. He can't give it, she can't give it, I can't give it; but you can give it. Just you. And Jesus has come back to give it through you.

Now if you say, "Will other people notice it? Will God use it to supply me with all that I need in life?" Maybe. Maybe you will be involved in some occupation that isn't connected with the gift that he has given you. Maybe he will use that to supply your needs, but he will supply your needs as he promised. He may supply them through your exercise of the gift that he has given to you, or he may supply you through the job or the occupation. If you say, "Will everybody acknowledge it and know that I have this gift?" Do you know Robert Graves? [English poet, 1895-1985] I'm sure a few of us know him. He is 86 now and lives in Majorca in the Mediterranean. He is one of the most famous English poets that has lived in this century. There are 140 volumes of his works. He wrote I, Claudius and King Jesus, yet how many of us know him? But he has received a gift from God. Not only do most of us not know him, but when you think of the two-thirds of the world's population that are found in Asia and Africa, you would say that very few people know him. No, people might not recognize your gift. Actually your mom might not even recognize it. Nobody might acknowledge it.

This is probably the most famous book next to the Bible. It is 'Imitation of Christ' written by Thomas a Kempis. [1380-1471] Thousands of Christians for the past five hundred years have regarded it as the book next to the Bible at level of inspiration and depth of insight into God, and any serious disciple of Christ has the book, 'Imitation of Christ' in their library. Thomas a Kempis died in 1471, aged 92, unknown to anybody except the brothers who were in the same monastery as himself. Nobody knew him; nobody recognized that he had written this book. He never knew how famous it would become. No, nobody might acknowledge that you have that gift. Nobody might recognize it; nobody might know it except you and Jesus.

But loved ones, you have come to this earth with a unique gift that Jesus has given to you, not for yourself, but so that he could achieve what he wants in this world through you. The amazing thing is that that applies to everybody--those who believe and those who don't. Paul Getty had the gift even though he used it for his own glory. God's gifts are given without repentance, so you have a gift that you can use for the purpose that Jesus gave it to you to fulfill, or you can use it for yourself.

Loved ones, don't listen to that verse, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" and dare to say, "I have no gift." Your Jesus personally made you and personally gave you a gift and that is why you are here. That is why you are precious, each one of you, precious beyond anything else in the universe; precious above everything else, because your Savior has come back in you to do something here. I thank God for you.

Let's pray.

Dear Father, we thank you for each other here this morning. Thank you for each dear face and each dear heart here. Lord, we thank you for them because we know we are entertaining an 'angel unawares.' We know, Dear Jesus, that you are in the person in front of us or next to us. You have

come here in that person to complete the creation that you started. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for yourself and thank you for each other.

We pray, Lord, that next Sunday and in the coming weeks you'll reveal to each one of us how to recognize our gift and how to exercise it in a way that pleases you and makes this world the perfect place you made it to be for that final day when you come in glory.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us throughout this week.