

St. Mary's Sermon Series

Luke 7: 36-50

**Spiritual Gifts:
Gifts of Faith**

Over the last few weeks we have begun to look at the gifts of the spirit:

Spiritual gifts have a two-fold purpose within the church:

1. To glorify God who is the giver of the gifts. (1 Peter 4:10-11) The proper use of spiritual gifts never draws attention to self but, as the Holy Spirit who gave them, points to Christ.
2. To enable believers to edify one another in the church (Ephesians 4:11-15)

The Gift of Faith - In believers, this gift is to be differentiated from the essence of faith itself.

I love both giving and receiving gifts as I am sure many of you do also. Gifts in bags are exciting!

Among other things I also love good shoes, as some of you have noticed. I had to buy black shoes for ordination as I couldn't use my lovely patterned ones. After looking around I found some show shoes, which are advertised as 'good for the sole' shoes – very apt for ordination. I used to tell Robert that I needed to buy shoes from a certain shop because I needed the bag to use for sermons. I am actually down to my last bag so I feel I perhaps need another pair of shoes.

My 'Faith Bag' is from Faith shoes! If I had a gift of faith in my bag I might have the following items:

- Bible.
- Cross.
- Home Communion Kit? The Eucharist is a very important part of my faith.
- I might have a CD to enable prayer or praise.
- A photo/picture of someone who has encouraged me in my faith.

Our own faith bag would probably contain those things that sustain our trust and belief in God because:

- Without faith we cannot please God.
- Without faith we will have NO joy.
- Without faith we will not see God work in our lives.
- Without faith no one can be saved.

- Without faith, Satan rules our heart.

However, I think the '*Gift of Faith*' is too big to fit into a bag. It is given for a specific event or time so we cannot just browse around a shop or browse around the Bible looking for it. The added extra special '*gift of faith*' is the ability to trust that God will work specifically for us as we pray about something...

- To move a mountain.
- To fight and defeat an enemy.
- To give you an ability (like Samson prayed for the strength to push apart two support pillars in a Philistine Coliseum).

Here is one example of a gift of faith:

My friends were in Wales and driving round a mountain pass when they suddenly found themselves being approached by a large truck. They thought they would be crushed by the truck but were given a gift of faith and prayed for safety. They drove a few more metres and suddenly there, ahead of them, was a passing point where they found safety from the truck. For the rest of their holiday they drove on the mountain pass each day and could never find the passing point where they were able to pull in. God had moved a mountain for them.

It was quite hard to choose a reading for this morning as many passages can depict the gift of faith, but in the end I chose Luke 7: 36-50 showing the gift of faith in a sinful woman.

In considering the woman's actions it first made me ask a couple of questions:

Why did you or I come to church today? What was it that motivated us to get out of bed, get ready and come into this building today? Maybe we came because we always come as part of our Sunday routine - it has always been that way and we see no reason to change it! Maybe this is our first visit to the church and we're not really sure why we came.

Maybe we came to church out of a sense of duty – because it's something we feel we ought to do and therefore we are here, perhaps not every Sunday, but often enough to satisfy our sense of duty. Maybe it's because of our Faith and because we want to come and worship God. I am sure there are many different reasons for our being here today.

In the reading today, we read the story of a woman whose motivation to see Jesus and worship Him was very bold and extravagant. Some people questioned her motives and questioned the way in which Jesus responded to her.

She had heard about Jesus she had met Jesus and was building up a belief and faith in Jesus, but I believe it was a '*gift of faith*' that enabled boldness to go and wash Jesus's feet. This sinful woman, through an instantaneous gift of faith, was able to demonstrate that Jesus was there for the sinners. Through this, her sins were forgiven thus glorifying Jesus in enabling those who were also there to begin to recognise who Jesus really is.

The gift of Faith is the Spirit-enabled ability to recognise what God wants to do in an impossible situation and then trust Him to get that task accomplished.

Certainly everyone has been given a measure of faith, but God blesses and enables some people with the capacity to envision – with confidence – what He is going to do in His Church.

Paul epitomized this gift of faith on the ship to Rome:

Everyone had given up hope, and the ship itself seemed ready to sink. Yet Paul showed boldness of Faith and proclaimed that God's word would be fulfilled and that everyone would be saved. God was there in that situation just as Paul said he would be. God can overcome every obstacle when the gift of faith is demonstrated.

Kenneth Bearding (2006) and Joel Comiskey (2009) both cite a man named George Mueller (1805 – 1898) in demonstrating the Gift of Faith:

George Mueller felt a calling to take care of orphans - but God showed him how to do so without ever asking for money:

One morning George, with no food to hand, had prayed, 'Father we thank thee for the food thou art going to give us'. After this there was a knock on the door and there stood the baker. He said that he had woken about 2 am and felt the need to give bread to the orphans. A few minutes later the milkman arrived saying that his cart had broken down and the milk would spoil unless the orphans took it.

Mueller put all his trust in God and, over a sixty year period, cared for some ten thousand orphans by faith alone.

Our everyday faith grows by reading and believing God's word –

Faith is increased in the believer (Romans 10:17) as they learn and believe.

The gift of faith is not obtained by works, but is a GIFT for a specific purpose. The supernatural gift of faith is the extraordinary capacity to believe that God will do something specifically for you – i.e., work miracles on your behalf.

This kind of faith was found in both the Old and New Testaments.

- Moses before Pharaoh – a supernatural kind of faith
- Elijah praying that it not rain for 3 ½ years
- Moses parting the Red Sea
- The apostles standing up to the Sanhedrin

One of my own testimonies of a Gift of Faith happened about 15 years ago when Robert received a £4000 tax bill. As we didn't have the money to pay the bill we both prayed about

it. Two days later I received a cheque for £4000 from the company in which my pension was invested. The company had been floated on the stock market (I had no idea about this), and anyone who had monies in the company received a share of the proceeds. Of course, I would have loved to have spent the money on something else, perhaps some shoes, but it was received as an answer to prayer and sent for a purpose.

“We thank you Lord for the gifts of the spirit and we pray that you will give us boldness to use the gift of faith in given situations, and enable us to have the ability to trust that you will work specifically for us as we pray.

Amen”

Liz Murray

Bibliography:

Comiskey J (2009) *The Spirit Filled Small Group*. CCS Publishing

Berding K (2006) *What are Spiritual Gifts*. Kregal Publications.