

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 5/8/94 PM
Romans 12:8 "The Gift of Mercy"

<u>Speaking Gifts</u>	<u>Serving Gifts</u>	<u>Sign Gifts</u>
Prophecy	Service	Miracles
Teaching	Faith	Healing
Exhortation	Giving	Tongues/Interpretation
Evangelism	Helps	
Knowledge/wisdom	Administration	
	Mercy	
	Hospitality	
	Discernment	

Intro: This week we went to the Kindergarden roundup. When I think of kindergarden, I think of "Show and Tell." You bring in something that's special to you, and show it to your classmates (your favorite rock, or pet). Then you tell them about it. Showing and telling go hand in hand.

Did you know that ministry involves both show and tell? People learn best when they can see something as well as hear about it. We are to "tell" others about Christ. That involves verbal witness. But we're also to "show" others the reality of Christ.

We show Christ when we demonstrate practical love in our relationships with each other in the church. Our love for each other acts like a powerful magnet to attract people in the world to Christ.

Spiritual gifts are the means by which we can both "show" and "tell" our love for the Lord and for each other in the church.

Back in the winter, we began a topical study of Spiritual Gifts. All Christians have spiritual gifts. The moment the Spirit of God regenerates our dead heart, the moment we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ (I Cor 12:13). At that moment, God endows us with gifts.

Clarification: (Drullinger, 63) A spiritual gift is different from a talent. A talent is a native ability. A talent is an ability with which you were born. A spiritual gift is a spiritual ability. You receive a spiritual gift when you are born again.

All of us who know Christ have spiritual gifts. That's exciting. That's motivating. That's what makes ministry possible. God has something special He has designed you to do. No one else can fill the need you can.

We have already explored the first six gifts Paul lists in Rom 12:6-8--Prophecy, Service, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, and Ruling. We also looked at two mentioned in I Cor 12--Faith, and Administration.

This evening, we want to focus on a "showing" gift, the gift of Mercy.

Observation: Four out of the seven gifts Paul mentions here have to do with practical assistance to those in need of help and sympathy (gifts of ministry, giving,

ruling, mercy). What does this tell us? It ought to remind us that God's design for evangelism in the church follows the pattern of "Show and Tell."

In his book Body Dynamics, John MacArthur wrote, "The Church's witness is not only verbal. It's a witness of love and unity... The early church made an impact on their world. They had a unity of humble love. They exercised their spiritual gifts."

Proposition: This evening, as we explore what the Bible says about the Gift of Mercy, we will learn that God intends for us to be ministers of mercy.

I. What is the Gift of Mercy (Romans 12:8)?

Romans 12:8 "he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness"

The Bible is clear that all Christians are to be merciful.

Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

James 2:15-17 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so, faith, if it has not works, is dead..."

Yet while all of us are to show mercy, God has equipped some in the Body with the Gift of Mercy. This is a beautiful gift to see in action. Some Christians could never preach a sermon, but they can show a sermon. Some of the greatest testimonies for Christ ever given take place without a word ever being spoken. Such is often the case with the gift of mercy.

The word "mercy" is closely related to the word "pity." We think of pity as being a bad thing ("What a pitiful sight!"). Yet God had "pity" on us when we were "pitiful." And he calls us to have "pity" on those who are in need.

The name Mother Theresa is synonymous with showing mercy in our contemporary. For years, she has worked with the masses of the poverty-stricken India. She has done what is repulsive to others. She has picked up the dying from the streets of Calcutta and brought them to a building where they can die knowing someone cares for them. In this ministry of mercy, many die, but some survive and are cared for. Mother Theresa described her compassion ministry with these words, "We want them to know that there are people who really love them, who really want them, at least for the hours that they have to live; to know human and divine love. There is always a danger, if we forget for whom we are doing it. Our works are only an expression of our love for Christ...To us what matters is an individual...Every person is Christ for me." While I do not agree with her theology, I am humbled by her mercy.

DEFINITION: The gift of mercy is the God-given enablement to sympathize with a hurting person.

This gift enables certain Christians to get alongside of those who are in great and grievous affliction, and show compassion. The affliction may be physical. But it may involve ministering to a person who is afflicted in mind or spirit as well.

I think Ray Stedman hit the nail on the head in describing mercy with the following words: "Mercy is undeserved aid given to those who often revolt others--the deformed, the smelly, the unpleasing...It is directed to the undeserving, regardless of their condition."

One commentator suggests that with the gift of mercy, Paul has in mind the person in the congregation who is responsible to tend the sick, relieve the poor, and care for the aged and disabled. This person coordinates and organizes the "Caring Ministries" in the church. What a vital ministry!

Yet, for the most part, caring ministries are personal rather than official ministries in the church. You can't program mercy. It comes from the heart.

Example: Several of you are involved in Compassion Ministries which care for the physical needs of suffering patients (nurses, Paramedics, Nursing home personnel). I admire you. You have a great opportunity to "show" the love of Christ. And you are a challenge to the rest of us to show mercy.

II. How is the Gift of Mercy Used?

Notice the qualifying phrase in v 8, "with cheerfulness." That is, the person who exercises mercy must exhibit a cheerful and agreeable disposition. When he/she shows mercy, it's done with delight and spontaneity.

Permit me to ask you three questions. All three have the same one word answer.

1. What did Jesus say was to be the trademark of His disciples, in Jn 13:34-35? ("By this will all men know that you are my disciples. . . love")

2. In Gal 5:22, Paul lists 9 virtues which comprise the fruit of the Spirit. What is the first virtue mentioned as the product of the Holy Spirit's ministry? ("The fruit of the Spirit is...")

3. Every time spiritual gifts are mentioned in the NT, they are listed in connection with what theme?

Examine the following verses.

Romans 12:9 "Let love be without hypocrisy"

Ephesians 4:2, 15, 16 "increase unto the edifying of itself in love"

I Peter 4:8 "Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves"

***I Corinthians 13:1-3** "Though I speak with tongues. . . and though I have the gift of prophecy. . . and though I have all faith. . . and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor. . . and have not love, it profits me nothing."

Love! Agape love!

Spiritual gifts are the tangible means by which love is expressed in the church. How can we follow Jesus' instruction and love each other? By using our spiritual gifts! When we use our spiritual gifts, it is an expression of love.

When we use the gift of encouragement, we are demonstrating love. When we use the gift of service, and the gift of teaching, and the gift of giving, we are benefitting others--that's love.

What's more, it's meaningless to use our gifts if we are void of love for each other. That's exactly what Paul said when establishing the parameters for the use of the gift of mercy, in Romans 12:8.

Romans 12:8 "he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" The word translated "cheerfulness" could literally be translated "hilariously". It suggests an attitude which

is pleasant and sincere. When we show mercy, there are to be no hidden motives. No regrets.

Can you think of a biblical example of someone who portrayed mercy?

Biblical Example: (Luke 10:25-37) One day, a Jewish man, while traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, was attacked, robbed, and severely wounded. He was left for dead in the dusty street. Along came a dignified priest. But he didn't want to get involved. Next came a respected Levite. Same story. Finally, along came, of all people, a Samaritan--a despised half-breed in the minds of the Jews. Jews and Samaritans harbored bitter hatred and racial prejudice towards each other.

But you know what this Samaritan did. He showed mercy to the man in his need. Jesus said that when the Samaritan saw the wounded Jew, "he had compassion on him" (Lk 10:34). He cared for his wounds. He layed aside his own concerns, and took time to transport him to an inn. He footed the bill for his recovery.

The Good Samaritan was a Minister of Mercy. He sympathized with a suffering person. He did what he could to help. He had no ulterior motive in showing mercy.

In man's eyes, what did the Good Samaritan gain for his act of mercy? There was nothing to be gained. His action was unpopular. He could never receive credit for his kind deed. Who could he tell? His fellow Samaritans would have called him a fool for such actions towards a Jew. And the Jews hated him anyway. He would not receive any remuneration for his act of mercy. He portrayed selflessness.

Application: What are some ways the gift of mercy can be used in WBC?

Ministries within the Church:

--Hospital Visitation (do you visit? If not, why not?)

--Ministries with Shut-ins and residents in Rest Homes (Metalic Club)

Ministries outside the Church:

--Ministries with Alcoholics (why does the church leave the ministry of recovery up to A.A., an organization that merely talks about a "Higher Power", when we know Who that Higher Power is!)

--Ministries with the handicapped, deprived, hungry, the ill, and others that society labels as misfits and outcasts

--Ministries in Jails and Psychiatric wards

God intends for all of us to be Ministers of Mercy. And to show us how, He has placed the gift of mercy in WBC. Some here tonight have this gift. When you exercise that gift, you make an important contribution to the church. You model mercy for us. You motivate the rest of us to be ministers of mercy.

Response: "I want to get involved as a minister of mercy. But how?"

1. Tell the Lord tonight.

2. See our Compassion Ministry Coordinators (Kathy, Becky). Furthermore, each SS class has a contact person to coordinate the Care Ministries. They have a list of people right now who need mercy (recovery, shut-ins, etc)
3. Be on the lookout for opportunities.