

The Church Needs Humbly Gifted Partners

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[0 : 00] Thanks, Lisa. As she said, my name is Jesse. I am one of the elders here at One Harbor Church. And for those of you who are new to us, man, again, thanks for coming. So glad that you're here. And just so you know, we are in a series just at the very end. This is like the next to last sermon that we're giving in this series on the local church. We're going to read from three different places today. And the first one we're going to start in is Romans 12. If you got a Bible, you can open it to Romans 12 and get there. You could turn your phone on and get to your app and get there, whatever it may be. We're also going to have them up on the screen so you could read along with us. And just by way of just couching us back into what's going on, we are doing this series and the purpose of it is to really recapture God's vision for the local church. Because man, we along the way, no doubt, was we just pick up baggage and we have experiences of what we're led into like, oh, this is what it means to be the local church or this is what the local church does and what the local church is. And oftentimes what we do is we really get embedded into a style or a methodology that we can start to think like, this is it. But man, it's always good to come back to the Word of

God, to let it shape us and reform us and captivate us back to the vision that he has for his church. And so we've looked at what church is. Church isn't a building. Church is people, the people of God that he saved. And we come together captivated by who Jesus is. And that's what draws us together. And so as we're together, what we do is we gather to worship him. And then we also scatter on mission throughout the week to make him famous and share him with others in the spheres of influence that we live, of where we live. And last week we started on a thing of what the church needs. And so last week we looked at the church needs, the church's need for loving leaders. And man, the church desperately needs loving leadership. And this week is part two of what the church needs. And it's the church needs humbly gifted partners. And so we're saying humbly gifted partners on purpose. We chose each of those words very carefully. And so as I read these scriptures, really lean in and really listen to how those words are coming through in these texts. And just remember that God's word is living and active. And yeah, I'm going to go on and preach about these things, but man, like this is the most powerful part of this morning, I think. His word is so powerful. And so listen and let it encourage your heart and convict your heart and allow it to just change you. And so we're going to start in Romans chapter 12, verse 3. It says this, for by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body, we have many members and the members do not all have the same function. So we, though many are one body in Christ and individually members one of another, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, and the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness. And then 1 Corinthians 12, it also talks about this idea of gifts. And it says this, 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. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit.

To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues. And to another, the interpretation of tongues. All these, all these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

And then again, the Bible talks again about gifts in even another chapter, Ephesians 4. In verse 6, it says, But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. In saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up the body of Christ. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. This is God's word.

What you hear, and I hope you heard over and over again, kind of the repetition in these passages, is God's grace, right? God's grace that is connected to these gifts that we're talking about, and these gifts are given to his church, his people, which means God's grace means he gives you gifts. You have gifts that are from him. This shouldn't surprise us. God is a generous God. He is a good father. Look, he gave his only son to save us and to bring us into eternal life with him, and I want to say, man, for many Christians, Christians, man, we love that, but we limit God's grace to that. But God's grace, I want to challenge us today, is so unlimited that it also goes beyond that. It definitely includes that, but it goes beyond that. His favor and his kindness toward us is more than we can imagine. And it might be hard for us to imagine because we've never experienced a father like God or a leader like Jesus. If we're honest, all of our experiences have been tainted in some way. Some of us, we grew up, we didn't know our fathers or we had bad fathers. And our experiences there, what it did, it made us cautious and entrusting of that kind of role of who a good father is and what he's like. And even if some of us had an amazing father, somewhere along the way, they disappointed us, no doubt. And we carry that, and that's significant because what it does to us, it shapes our gut response today. I heard a guy say that like, the past is never dead and buried. It's very much alive. Our wounds and our experiences of who our fathers were and how they hurt us and disappointed us, you can't think that doesn't affect how you hear things, how you respond to things, how you take things in. And that includes your relationship with God the Father as well. And what we do is we grow up and we learn to hedge our bets and guard ourselves with those kind of relationships. We guard our expectations. And I think what the result is, is we know God is a good father. We know that he loves us. We know that he loves us so much that he sent his son to die for us. But still, what we do is we limit his unlimited grace.

[8 : 46] That is some of the reality that we live in. And we believe this grace that he gave all. Man, he gave all, he died on a cross long ago. His grace can mean, you can believe that it means your sins are forgiven. But we struggle with the God, with the Father whose grace means he gives us all of himself every single day, every single moment of our lives. And that is what he does.

That is who he is. And I think one of the things that we struggle with, a major contributing factor to our lack of seeing gifts at work in our lives and in the church, like we just read about in these passages, it isn't that God stopped giving them. It's that our understanding of his grace toward us isn't in line with who God is. And God, he wants us to revel in the mystery of his grace. Don't get me wrong. He wants us to revel in the mystery of his grace that saves us from sin through Jesus, right?

That grace that doesn't rest on our performance, like his acceptance of us isn't something we have to earn. It's something that Jesus earned. He paid it all like we just sang about. We don't have to do anything else. Like Jesus said to his disciples, man, don't rejoice in the things that you're doing.

Rejoice that your name and your names are written in the book of life. Man, we need to revel in those mysteries, those deep, great mysteries that the great sinner that I am still, Jesus saved me. God chose me and sent his son to die in my place so I could be his son. But he also, I think the Father also wants us to revel in the mystery of grace that says, your inheritance in heaven is so much richer and better than you can ever imagine. And the Holy Spirit is given to us. It says in the Bible as a deposit, it's given to us as a guarantee of that inheritance that is to come. It is this foretaste, and tasting is an experience. The Bible says, taste and see that I am good, not know with your brain that I am good. We get this foretaste of that inheritance now. That awaits us there. And so we're sealed by the Spirit. We're filled with the Spirit who is the fullness of God, the full experience of God who never leaves us. And he comes, and when he comes, he brings with him gifts. And he gives them to us. Which is this, when it talks about the Spirit giving us gifts, those things are experiential and tangible ways that we know that God is with us. God is put on display when we use his gifts.

1 Corinthians verse 12, 7 says, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

[11 : 57] That word, manifestation, means to reveal. It means to make an exhibition of. To each is given a gift that displays the Spirit, that displays that God is there. And it goes on to say what some of those are, right? It talks about like speaking wisdom. What is that? God is wisdom. Like that really sounds like a good thing. That's probably a legitimate thing, right? God gives some people the gift of wisdom, and he speaks wisdom through them to other people. And then it goes on to talk about speaking knowledge, words of knowledge. Well, what's that? Well, that is simply insight that God knows about, secret things that he is willing to uncover and reveal for the sake of leading us into wholeness in him and dependence on him. And to even bring some healing. Let me explain how a word of knowledge works. I'm going to talk about it, but sometimes a story does a way better job. It's a true story.

There's a guy named John Wimber. I don't know how many of you know him. It doesn't matter. He started the church Vineyard, which became a big movement of churches. But anyway, that dude just operated in the Holy Spirit in some magnificent ways. And one day he's up, and he's preaching at his church. And like, he just keeps like, as he's talking, man, God is just like this gal up front is just grabbing his attention. And God's like, while he's preaching, God is speaking to him and says, you need to tell her that God hates mommies and daddies. He's like, that doesn't sound right.

Like, get behind me, Satan. You know, that kind of thing. And God just kept on saying, no, she needs to know that God hates mommies and daddies. And so after the service, he gets her and he says like, I don't know what this is about, but God wanted me to tell you this. God hates mommies and daddies. And this lady just starts weeping. She grew up in a home where her parents abused her terribly. And they had a little game they played with her. It was called mommies and daddies. She never told a soul. She never told anybody. But when God loves his people so much that he's willing to put words of knowledge like that, to pass on a message to say, you know what?

I know what happened to you. And I hated that. And I didn't like it. But I was there. And now I'm here, despite of that atrocity, to bring you along, to let you know I loved you. And I love you. And I want to heal you from what happened to you. And the gifts of the Spirit are beautiful things. Therefore, the building up of the body of Christ. And there's a bunch more that are there. And I don't have time to get through. I just wanted to put one of them on display to see how God works through them for the benefit of his church. The point is that these gifts in operation are a way that God meets with us and shows us that he is here. Yes, he died on a cross a long time ago for our sins. And that is good.

That is a rock solid foundation that is unchanging, a truth that we hold on to. But he is here with us today, moving and working in our lives in this moment. His gifts in operation, that's how we see him.

[15 : 29] Sam Storms, who is a theologian I highly respect, a great teacher and pastor of a church, he puts it this way. His gifts are God going public among his people. His gifts are God going public among his people. And that's why we want the gifts. It's another way we get to experience God's grace and see him. And the more we see him, the more we know him, the more we are built up, which is what we are supposed to do with God's gifts. Use God's gifts to build the church and serve others. You know, it's tempting to see those gifts in operation and see like, whoa, those are amazing things and then want them for the wrong reason. Here's a great story that illustrates that. Acts chapter 8. The apostles go into this town and they are not only preaching the gospel, they are doing miracles. And they're seeing healings and they're laying hands on people and people are receiving the Holy Spirit. And it talks about this whole episode. It says, there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him from the least to the greatest saying, this man is the power of God that is called great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip, as he preached good news about the kingdom of

God in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. And even Simon himself believed. And after being baptized and continued, he continued with Philip and seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. It's easy to be amazed by the gifts. Now, when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now, when Simon saw that, the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money saying, give me this power also so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. And it goes on to say, Peter and John are like, no man, you want it for the wrong reasons. You want it for yourself. You want it so when people look at you, they're amazed at you.

Now, it's easy for us to stop and think, man, we would never be like that. But it's easier to get there than you think. It's easier to get there to use God's gift for your own benefit. And a very simple and common way we misuse them is like what we see here. We want the praise of men. And when you have a gift from God, it is tempting to use it for the sake of getting the praise of men. I have to check my heart all the time when it comes to my teaching gift.

When I get up in this pulpit, it is a way of me ministering to you, but it's also a very dangerous place for me too. Because what I can start doing is I can start using my teaching gift to say, give me some love.

I want you to look at me and I want you to praise me. I want you, you know, what I'm doing is I'm using you to get something from you and I'm using my gift in that way. And really what I'm doing is, is I'm taking God's gift of grace and actually robbing it of all grace. Because if I teach or preach to get something from you, for you to give to me, I'm not preaching and teaching in grace.

[19 : 15] That is a transactional relationship. And so I have to guard and check my heart. I don't do this for you to come and say, hey Jess, great job, man. I love that. Really needed that.

Man, I think you're the best. I think you're amazing. You're way better than that person over there, but I have to guard my heart against that. I preach for the audience of one. I have to remember I have to do that for God's glory. And I want this to be a free gift to you guys. Nothing in return.

Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 10 verse 7, and proclaim as you go, he said to them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.

What did he do? He empowered them. He gave them gifts and sent them out. But he says this, you received without paying. You got that gift I just gave you. You got that power I just gave you.

You didn't pay for it. Now you give without pay. What's at the heart of that? He gave them all those things. They received it freely. And he says, give it with no strings attached. But there is another way we can also misuse God's gifts, and that's just by not using them at all, right? We can withhold the gifts God put in us because we feel insecure. We feel our gift is insignificant.

[20 : 38] Or we're just indifferent. And we don't prioritize being together with the community of God and using those gifts to bless them. There's other things we would rather be doing. And so what happens is we either bury the gift, which is when Jesus actually gives a parable about that. It's not a good thing, right? He goes, it says like a guy went away to receive a kingdom. Then he was going to come back.

And while he was away from this field, away from his house, he gave three servants different levels, different minds or different talents or different gifts. And one of them didn't put his gift to use.

He said he went and he buried it. It did not go well for that servant when Jesus came back. Don't bury your gift by not using it.

And I think a lot of us excuse ourselves saying, well, you know, Jess, I just don't know what my gift is. Fair enough. Fair enough. But you have, you ever thought how you're going to figure out what that gift is? Unfortunately, when you get saved, the Holy Spirit doesn't come down and give you a certificate with the gift of like, by the way, here's your gift. Doesn't work that way. Would really be nice.

But what he's given us is church community that can recognize your gift and call it out in you, which means you have to be in community to know your gifts and to grow your gifts.

[22 : 10] That is why Paul couches his teaching, all of his teaching on gifts in the context of the body, right? He said it through, I mean, you see the body throughout those passages we read. 1 Corinthians 12 12. In verses 12, it says, for just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one spirit, we were all baptized into one. Jews are Greeks, slaves are free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. For the does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the that would not make it any less a part of the. And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the. That would not make it any less a part of the. If the whole were an eye, where would be the sense of ear? Do you get what he's getting at? Like body, body, body, body, body, body, body, body, body, body. I mean, it is like, okay, Paul, gotcha, man. We're all part of one body, many members, one body. It's important. Look, I can stay home, and I can play my guitar very terribly, and sing even worse, and say to myself, I got a musical gift, okay? But that doesn't mean that is how God gifted me. And this is where humility comes into play, because I have to go, and I have to say like, man, guys, here's my musical gift. Thank you, Jesse. Maybe in heaven when God fixes all that, right? But we don't get to pick the gift we want. We come and use the gift we got. And the church community you're in helps you see what that is. But this is where we have to add humility onto humility. We have to see the gifts in each other, and the diversity of gifts in each other, and celebrate the gifts that we see in each other. We should be helping each other discover those God gifts, and call them out in each other. So the more time I spend with Elliot, the more clear it became to me that, man, this guy has a gift of wisdom. Like, he really does, right? I've got some wisdom, right? I'm not saying I'm like dumb and I like any of it, but man, the gift, when we talk about the gift of wisdom, man, it just elevates that thing to another degree.

Man, he has insight into situations, especially when the waters are a little murky, and you're just like, gosh, how do we navigate it? And then Elliot will come and say a few sentences, and you're just like, wow, that really brought some clarity about what's really going on here, and what the proper way forward is. And it helps us navigate correctly the way forward. You know, Bob and Pat Bangle, I don't know if you know them, but like, man, I love going to them, and saying hi to them. It's like, they are spending time with them. They are people that have the gift of faith. Now, I know we all have faith, right? We're all spent, but the gift of faith, again, it's elevated when it's given by the Holy Spirit. And so when you're around them, they have such this belief and faith and trust in God and all that he can do. You're just like, yes, I need to be around that, man, because it elevates my faith. It blesses my faith. And I can go on and on with so many other people in this room.

The point is, is the more we are around each other, the more we see God's gifts leaking out of each other. And this is what I want us to do as a church. When we see that, man, we should call it out, and we should celebrate it in each other. It's a good thing, because you don't have everything, which makes us thankful for the body. You know, we have to realize that. One of the most freeing things that I stepped into is realizing and celebrating my limitations. Really, it is so freeing to realize that I stink at a lot of things and I'm only good at a few things, because I can only get there, and I can only get there in realizing that because I was rooted in a church community that had a solid gift theology. They understood how this worked. It taught me that I don't have to be everything for everyone, right? It was okay. That's why we are in a gifted body. Like, all around this room is a multiplication and a variety of gifts that means that, you know what? Like, you are good at things that I'm not good at, and I am good at things that you're not good at. Praise God, we need each other, right? I don't need to be great at administration, because just because I'm the site elder of this particular One Harbor site, I can celebrate that Alan is better at it than I am, and I could say, Alan, help me administrate, man, and he can do that. There are so many gifts in this body, and that I think still can be called out and need to be called out and put to use, so you know why?

So the whole body benefits. When that happens, what we do is we all experience more of God's grace. That's what happens. If you are just relying on me to experience God's grace, you're just going to get a little bit of it. When we come and we say, man, Lord, use me. I want to be poured out by you, used by you. Man, the Lord has a lot more channels to be pouring his grace into his church, and you know what? The more of us that are being poured into and poured through, the flood of God's grace begins to hit us more and more and more, and we live in it deeper and deeper and deeper. It is a beautiful thing. So how do we get there? I think that brings us back to where we started, and this is kind of where I want us to end and respond. It all begins with us opening our heart to God the Father. It begins with us believing his grace is more than we think it is. It's more than we know now. It is richer. It is deeper. It is more beautiful than what we think. It goes further than we dare think. It forgives more than we could hope. It gives more than we could ever fathom, and it never runs out. And as the band comes up, this is how I want us to think about this. If we could all stand, I had written a different response, and then this morning in time of prayer, I felt God wanting us to respond this way, so I'm hoping this was him. This is how I want us to think about

God the Father. When you're born as a child, your limbs are like this. Your arms are always grasping and reaching for the people that are around you, right? And then as we grow older and life hits us and we get wounded, this slowly starts to become this. We start to guard ourselves. We start to protect ourselves. And we end up bringing that, I think, into our relationship with God. We come to him more like an MMA fighter in the ring. Or we come and we're saying like, well, God, I don't know. I need to know, are you opening up your arms? Because I'm not going to do that until I definitely know. I'm not going to be vulnerable. Like nobody teaches martial arts like this is how you should walk towards an opponent.

[30 : 28] Why? Because all your vital organs are here. Doing this means vulnerability. Doing this means stepping out of your safe place.

Doing this means opening yourself up. And you and I cannot experience the fullness of the grace of God coming to him like this.

Are you good? Are you good? And I want to say this to us. If you're waiting for God to know if he's opened his arms, he died on a cross like this.

And his arms are ever like this to you and to me. If you're wondering if he's trustworthy, if you're wondering if he's good enough to believe that he could possibly use you and give you gifts, this father is better than you can imagine.

He is more trustworthy than you and I can ever imagine. He sent his son. Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. Father, we have a good and generous God.

[31 : 56] We have a good and generous father. What I want us to do and invite us right now, whether you are struggling with your faith, maybe you're here and you're not yet a Christian and you're thinking, man, is this really good enough?

Is he really worth putting my faith in? I think for all of us, what I want us to do and invite us to do, I'm not forcing you. If you're in that place, I just want you, as I pray for us, just to raise your hands as a symbol of vulnerability, as a symbol of saying, you know what, God, I'm coming to you, arms open.

I'm coming to you, trusting that you are good. This might be the first time some of you have ever raised your hand in your life and you said, ah, that's not for me.

I'm not gonna do that. Why? Why? Why? God is inviting us.

This isn't like experientialism or some kind of emotional manipulation and the Psalms talk about lifting holy hands and raising holy hands to him. It is saying, you know what, I'm gonna let go.

[33 : 09] I'm gonna trust in you, Father. I want us to close our eyes and I want us to invite any of you who want more of God, who want to take that further step into his grace and saying, you know what, Lord, I want more.

Man, lift your hands. Lift your hands with me. Amen. Father, you see these hands.

You see our hands raised and I pray you would meet us. As we step in and say, yes, Lord, I want to be vulnerable with you.

You are a good Father. I want more of your grace. I want to know you more and deeper. I want to trust you more. I want to let go of protecting myself and limiting you.

Lord, fill us. Holy Spirit, fill us. Lord, you taste and see that I am good. There's an experience, there's a knowledge and a knowing that can only come as you fill us.

[34 : 20] And so we ask for that and I cry out for that and you would work in our hearts right now. For those of us who are in this room that are lifting our hands to you for the very first time for salvation, we celebrate that.

We celebrate that. Father, thank you.

You are good. Thank you that your grace is better and deeper and richer and more beautiful than we could ever hope or imagine.

May we know that and live in it more and more. Amen. Let's do communion together before we respond with some singing.

And we do this and we take this as believers because it reminds us of God's grace. We didn't earn the right to be able to take communion.

[35 : 33] This reminds us that we, you and I, were bought with the price. Jesus, he gave it all. He gave it all so we could be one with him.

And this is a beautiful expression of our oneness with him. He loves his body. He loves his church. He loves you and me so much. He loves this togetherness that we have so much.

He gave everything. He gave it all. He held nothing back including gifts. And so this brings us back to how wonderfully immeasurable God's grace is.

His body that was broken for you and me. And his blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Let's eat. Let's drink together celebrating our King. Oh, God.