

Be the Best You Can You Be

July 3rd, 2011

Guest speaker: Cathie Kelso

Scripture from 1 Corinthians 12

Here we are... our summer Sundays have begun....and vacation time is here.... A few weeks ago Reverend Kimberly asked me if I would fill in one Sunday this summer. I was happy to help out.

In chatting with Rev. Kimberly before she left on vacation she suggested that maybe I could tell you about the plan for the next several weeks.... She had meant to explain the summer series but didn't get to it in her last message. When the summer speaker schedule was first set up the plan was to have a series on spiritual gifts.

We don't often talk about spiritual gifts in church but we all have them. God gives each of us spiritual gifts. Most often God gives us many gifts but normally there will be one that stands out above the rest. One that excites us, motivates us, and a gift that when exercised makes us feel fulfilled and useful.

The gifts of the spirit are not reserved for paid accountable ministerial folk but are in all of us, lay or ordained.

Let's look at our earlier reading from 1 Corinthians:

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

A spiritual gift is meant to build, lift up, to edify and encourage, and be for the 'common good' of us all. A spiritual gift will never be fully appreciated if you keep it to yourself. These kinds of gifts are given by God, to each one of us, to be activated and used.

And just as the different parts of the human body function well when working together, so do our various, individual spiritual gifts bring harmony when being used together as intended by God. And when a spiritual gift is used and practiced...we become more confident and skilled in that gifting.

It has been a few years since I have taken a spiritual gift survey, (which is a tool to help identify your spiritual strengths). I think now I would be most dominant in administrative gifts, but a close second would be the gift of the pastor. So it's a good fit for me to be asked to talk today about the spiritual gift of the Pastor.

Scripture from Ephesians chapter 4 describes what is often referred to as the Five Fold Ministry.



"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."

These five, are but a few of the great number of spiritual gifts that God gives us. These five areas were considered to be gifting offices.

In some circles it is believed that this was always God's plan for his church ...to have a representative from each of the offices of the five fold ministry (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) working together in unison to build the church and equip its people to maturity in Christ.

We each have the ability to dabble in any spiritual gift but we will always be able to identify one gifting that is stronger than another. Even though I don't believe my gift level to be the 'office' of Pastor, in the specific area of 5 fold ministry teachings I know I am strongest in that area.

So what is a Pastor?

Some Christian definitions describe a pastor as being:

1. a clergy person in charge of a congregation
- Or 2. a lay person who exercises spiritual guidance over a number of people
3. or an archaic word used to describe Pastor was that of "shepherd".

Shepherd is the first word I think of or visualize when I hear the word pastor ...someone to shepherd, to look after and watch over the flock.

Pastors are called to serve and not be served. They are called to feed God's people, first by giving them the basic teachings of Christianity and later when more mature, making sure the flock is well grounded in scripture and in principal.

A pastor would be more likely than some to have attributes of mercy and compassion, and might be a natural counsellor and listener.

I read an article that says the Pastor will always be part of the governance of any church. "A Pastor would be an elder, who assisted by other elders, possibly with different gifts, would watch over, steer and direct God's flock....God's church".

A Pastor is not necessarily a preacher eithernot to get those two gifts mixed up. Around here we tend to use the term Pastor over Reverend (with no disrespect intended), as Pastor sometimes seems to be a little softer and more approachable title. But in reality you can be a pastor and not be the minister or leader of the church.

Often mainline churches refer to their ministers as pastors, but many ordained ministers seem to be stronger in teaching and leaderships gifts... and don't consider themselves to have the gift of the pastor.

Rev. Kimberly often jokes with me that I have more pastoral tendencies than she does. She sees her strengths as teaching, leadership...and discernment and maybe a few others...but the gift of pastor is not up there on her strength list.

I sometimes go to a church in Ottawa and their lead minister is a gifted preacher, but he is quick to tell you he is not a pastor. His strongest gifts are in evangelism and healing. He is wise and has assembled a supporting team with some members who are strong in pastoral areas... and in other gifts he isn't strong in...and that church and it's various 'body parts' work and function well together.

Two week's ago, to begin the summer series, Rev. Kimberly asked Joe Martelle to speak on the gift of evangelism. Joe may not agree, but Rev. Kimberly and many others feel that one of Joe's strongest spiritual gifts is evangelism. It is an area where Joe shines.

Evangelists would often be referred to as fishers of men or ones who would round up the flock.

I remember in the past suggesting to other "Joe types" out there: "You go out and bring in the fish and I'll clean them"; or "you go round up the sheep, bring them to me, and then I'll watch over the flock." But don't ask me to be a fisher of men or the sheep herder.

Evangelism is something I can do when I have to, but is not something that really drives or excites me.

Another spiritual gifting that is not on my top 5 list is the gift of the teacher. I can operate as a teacher sometimes too but it is not one of my strengths.

A teacher to me is one who researches and easily comprehends, and is then able to share the answer to the question in the simplest way possible.

I have a friend who thrives on reading and loves digging into a topic.... well not me! Give me the Coles Notes version of the book every time!

I usually suggest to my friend that she read the book and then tell me about it....but she usually doesn't go for that. She is a teacher and has helped me learn many things in the past but she also encourages me to learn things for myself.

I give these examples so you'll realize you don't have to be everything to everyone...It's always best to identify and focus on the gifts that the Spirit has given you And then, when yours and the spiritual gifts of others are exercised together... good things will happen.

It was my friend the teacher, who started me on the collection of sheep in my office. You can't look into my office and not notice that dominant theme.

My friend never said so in so many words but I think her intention was to remind me of how God has gifted and wired me... that I would never forget that pastoring the flock was a definite part of God's gifting and purpose for my life.

So how do you go about being a pastor?

One of the most prevalent things a pastor does is to care for the everyday needs in the church family. It is definitely not a part of my written job description as Office Manager here at the church, but there are many times when I stop what I am doing, no matter how busy, and take time for people who need someone to listen and show they care. It is not hard to do at all. Listening and maybe a few encouraging words and sometimes a prayer and they are off again...but those few minutes can make all the difference. It is part of who I am made to be, and I am so happy and blessed to work in a place where I am encouraged by leadership to do this.

A few years ago I went to a church retreat in Morrisburg. One of my friends was late arriving because of difficulties at home. Later when we had some free time my friend opened up and told me how bad things were. She let loose, releasing the frustration and pain, and I spent the next hour just hugging and holding her and letting her take the garbage of her situation out. All I had to do was listen and give her some time. I didn't have to have the answers to solve her problem ... I just let her know that I cared.

I will remember this day forever; because I was able to help my friend through a rough spot... but also because I was fulfilled as I exercised the spiritual gift God had given me to use.

It's in the everyday situations where we are most often called to serve and we just need to be open and recognize when or where we are needed....whatever our spiritual gift or gifts might be.

Then there is our example of the ultimate shepherd and pastor of us all... the giver of all gifts, including the sacrificial gift of his own life for our salvation. In John Chapter 10 Jesus tells us that:



“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not yet in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.”

Can we pray:

Loving God, we thank you for the many and different gifts you give us. Today we thank you for the pastors among us. A gift from you to help us through the trials of life. And we thank you too for Jesus, the leader, pastor and shepherd of us all.

I pray that each of us would be inspired to discover and put to use your own perfect gifts to us... in caring service to our friends, families, community and most of all in loving service to you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Reverend Kimberly is planning to hold a spiritual gifts workshop in the fall so hopefully some of you might come out to discover your strengths (if you don't already know them) so you can exercise your gifts to build up others and “be the best that you can be” in your service to God and to each other.

We are all part of the body of Christ. When we work together, exercising all of our individual gifts from God..... just as God planned us to do, what a ministry we will share.

“We have this ministry
...brothers, sisters, clergy, lay,
called to service by your grace.
Different cultures, different gifts,
the young and the old a place.
We have this ministry.
O God receive our giving”

Amen and thanks be to God....

Let's close by singing this hymn together:

“We Have This Ministry” (Voices United #510)