

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 13
THE GIFT OF MINISTRY OR HELPS

Over the past several weeks, in our series Foundation of Faith, we have been focusing on Spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us to minister in the body of Christ. And, as I have said, many of these are controversial; many abuse them or negate them. But I believe there is that healthy balance and that balance is in accordance with the Word of God and not based on my feelings or what others are saying or not saying!

We have finished up looking at the gifted men that Christ has given to the Church in Ephesians chapter 4. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/teachers and teachers. We have also finished up looking at the Spiritual gifts that Paul mentions in I Corinthians chapter 12. The word of wisdom, word of knowledge, the gift of faith, the gifts of Healings, the gift of miracles, the gift of prophecy, discerning of Spirits, the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues. And now we are going to spend a few weeks looking at a few more Spiritual gifts that Paul speaks of in Romans chapter 12.

Let's begin reading in Romans chapter 12, starting in verse 4 and see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word. We are told, **“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”** Romans 12:4-8.

This morning we are going to focus on the gift of ministry or in I Corinthians 12:28 it is called the gift of helps. And these are a little different from the other gifts we have been looking at in that these gifts are given to individuals in the body of Christ to be used to minister to them. It is not just a one time or specific time gift, but I believe the Holy Spirit gives these gifts to certain individuals, just as we saw with the gifted men that Christ has given to the Church. Now, not all have these gifts but God spreads them out so that each body is able to function properly! And these gifts that God gives to us are not based on how spiritual we are but they are grace gifts. They are gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit not because we deserve them, but that is what God has chosen to do!

Now it probably is not as spectacular in our minds as the gifts of healings, miracles, speaking in tongues and some of those more outward gifts as we think of them. But these gifts are just as important and they are just as needed in the body of Christ.

I am sure if I asked you what a minister is, you all would have your own ideas, some of them would be right and some would be wrong. And so I think we need to look at what this word means so we understand what this gift of ministry or helps is all about. The New Testament uses three different Greek words that are translated into “minister” or a similar English word. And we are going to look at them starting with the word that Paul used here in Romans 12:7 to help us understand what this gift is all about. And keep in mind that all three of these words will encompass what we are speaking of here today. Also, please don’t forget that this is a supernatural ability; it is not just a person who is really good at doing something, like ministry! May we not lose sight of that fact; this is a gift of the Holy Spirit that has been given to us! So let’s look at these three Greek words so we can get some insight into what this gift is all about.

THE GREEK WORDS USED FOR “MINISTRY”

1. DIAKONIA OR DIAKONOS

The first Greek word we are going to look at is DIAKONIA, (dee-ak-on-ee'-ah) and it means servant and we have translated it into our English word “deacon.” Now a deacon was someone who took care of the physical aspects of the church. This is the word that Paul used here in Romans 12:7 and it is also called the gift of helps, as Paul said in I Corinthians 12:28. This is not a profession but it truly is a calling, and I believe it goes far beyond the idea of a deacon, as we think of it today. We should think of this gift as the laying down of our life to serve or minister to others. It is going that extra mile. Thus, we can translate this verse in Romans 12:7 like this: “or service, let us use it in our serving.”

Now here is something that we need to learn and it is often difficult. As you serve people you don't drive them like cattle, lording over them, but you led them by example as a shepherd led's his sheep. In Matthew 23:11 Jesus said, “**But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.**” It doesn't matter what position you may have in the church or in life, you are a servant. And as Mark 9:35 says very clearly, “**And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’**”

You see, we are to be a servant of all. That means those we may not like, or those that may not like us, or even those that are mean and nasty to us. A servant doesn't get to pick and choose who he is going to serve, and neither should we. We are to be servants of all! Keep in mind that we speak of this word as being servant, but the idea is a slave. But we don't like that word because of the bad connotations it has. But the reality is, we are bondslaves of Christ, He is our master and we are to follow His example, and as Jesus said in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** And that is what we are to do!

Also, we don't or shouldn't lord over people, trying to control them, for that is what the cults do. They exercise mind control and do it very effectively. Thus, a minister is nothing more than a servant of the people, giving himself to help others. This Greek word, DIAKONIA or DIAKONOS, is the most used word for “ministry” or “minister” in the New Testament!

2. LEITOURGOS

The second Greek word we are going to look at for “minister” is LEITOURGOS, (li-toorg-os') and this Greek word speaks of a wealthy person who has given himself freely to public service. He, in a sense, is a volunteer who has given himself to serve the community at his own expense. He works for the people, volunteering his time, you might say.

We see this word used in Philippians 2:25, as Epaphroditus gave himself to the service of Paul. Paul tells us regarding this servant, **“Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need.”**

Also, Paul said this, using this same Greek word in Romans chapter 15, beginning in verse 15 where we read, **“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”**

Romans 15:15-16.

In other words Paul gave his life to the service of Jesus Christ, serving the Gospel message to those who were lost, and in this service to man, God was being worshiped. Now the church has picked up on this and we use this to describe or denote a public worship service. They call it the Liturgy. The dictionary defines Liturgy this way. It is “prescribed forms or ritual for public worship in any of various Christian churches.”

And what has been done out of this idea is the priest or minister has been placed above the common people. He is the one who can communicate with God for he has a direct line, while we don't, the common people don't is the idea. And when we see that occurring what ends up happening is you will see man worshiping man instead of God. There is nothing wrong with respecting a person's position, but we must remember that the best of men are men at best! And more importantly God does not want us worshiping any man, He does not want us to worship any of the saints, He does not want us to worship any of the angels, He does not want us to worship even Mary!

Now that may be shocking to some of you, but hear me out on this. In Revelation chapter 19 John is given a vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb, and it is an overwhelming experience and we read in verse 10 of Revelation chapter 19 as this angelic being is giving him all this information, **“And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! . . .’”**

Not too difficult to miss the point here! Also, in Revelation chapter 22, as John has just seen the culmination of human history, the establishment of the Kingdom Age, the creation of a new heaven and a new earth in the eternal state, we read beginning in verse 8, **“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, ‘See. that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’”** Revelation 22:8-9.

You see, the only one we are to worship is God, and yet in the church today we see an establishment of a hierarchy that is there to control the people, and this hierarchy are the only ones who can read and understand the Scriptures. That is totally wrong. Jesus died to set us free from spiritual hierarchy. In the Old Testament it was the priest who could intercede before God for the people and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the presence of God, and only once a year, on the day of Atonement, after a long ceremonial cleansing that he went through. He was, in a sense, the mediator between God and man.

But, as Christ paid the penalty for our sins and died on the cross of Calvary, He cried out, “**It is finished**” or “**Paid in full.**” And when He did this the veil in the Temple that separated man from God was torn from top to bottom. This veil has been estimated at being some 18 inches thick, and thus, no man could have torn it, but God alone, who opened the way to His throne, His presence, through Jesus Christ. It is as Hebrews 4:16 says, “**Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**” We can not do that outside of Christ!

Thus, we don’t need anyone to come before God for us, because we all have access to the Father through Jesus Christ. In Fact, Jesus, in John 14:6 said, “**. . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**”

And yet, in the church today we have ministers that are lording over the people, standing in the way of God, being a mediator between God and man, when Jesus is our mediator!

Is this a big deal? You bet it is, so much so that Jesus addressed this in Revelation 2:6 as He was writing to the churches in Asia Minor. We read, “**But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**” What are the deeds of the Nicolaitans, for Jesus says He hated them. The word, “Nicolaitans” comes from two Greek words, NIKAO, meaning, “to conquer” and LAOS, meaning “the people.”

Thus, the word means, “to conquer or lord over the people.” And they are considered the forerunners to the clerical hierarchy that was superimposed upon the laity while robbing them of their spiritual freedom. That was the very thing that Jesus died for! In I Peter 3:18 we read, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”** And now we have separated God by another mediator, man, even though Paul said in I Timothy 2:5, **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”**

And as much as Jesus commended the Ephesian church for coming against the deeds of the Nicolaitans, by the time we get to the church in Pergamos, which means, “mixed marriage,” we read in Revelation 2:15, **“Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”** You see, the very thing that Jesus hates has been incorporated into the church, and it continues on today!

Let me say this, ministry is not about special treatment, it is about serving! Our example is Jesus, the creator of heaven and earth, God. And remember what He said in Mark 10:45, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** Jesus literally gave His life a ransom for us; He was the ultimate example of being a servant. And He asks us to follow in His footsteps, not necessarily dying, but to give of ourselves daily, ministering to others and yes, there may be times that it will cost us our lives!

The other thing we need to remember is that being a minister, being a servant, being a slave, doesn't make you a super saint, as some would like to think. In James 5:17 we are told that, "**Elijah was a man with a nature like ours . . .**" Even Elijah had a nature like ours, he was human! But, as you minister to others I will say this, God will hold you to a higher standard than the people because you are leading the people. In fact, James 3:1 says, "**Brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**" In other words, those that are speaking for God better live what they teach, they better bring forth the Word of God correctly and not add to it or take away from it, and your life should match up to your words!

And so, the idea here with this Greek word, LEITOURGOS, is no matter where you are you are a servant, volunteering to serve others at your own expense. And this may not necessarily be monetary in nature. It could be with your time, your resources, whatever, but it will cost you!

3. **HYPERETES**

The last Greek word for "minister" that we are going to look at is HYPERETES, (hoop-ay-ret'-ace) and it means, "under rower" or "galley slave." What does that mean? These are the ones who were located on the lowest level of the ship and yet they did the majority of the work. They were the slaves! But you see, without their efforts the ship would remain motionless or it would be tossed all over the place by the waves, not moving in the direction they needed to go. But the under rowers would propel the ship forward, helping it to reach its destination and yet they were the ones not seen and they were, of course, not thought of as being important, they were slaves!

When you look at the ministry, that is a good definition. It may not be pretty, it may even be smelly, and the work is tremendous, but you are propelling God's church through this world, helping them to see Jesus more clearly, to help people reach Jesus. In Acts chapter 26, as Paul is speaking before king Agrippa of his conversion experience, of sharing Jesus with him, he said beginning in verse 16 what the Lord said to him, "**But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.**" Acts 26:16-18. That word "**minister**" in verse 16 is the Greek word HYPERETES, or under rower. Paul was a galley slave for Christ!

We do need to remember that this too is a gift of God. It is a calling that God has placed upon your heart and has enabled you to do. God will call you; you just need to respond to what He is calling you to do! Listen to what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:9-10. We read, "**For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**"

Paul saw himself as the chief of sinners, which would not look good on an earthly resume. He was persecuting the people he now wanted to serve. That would be another negative point on an earthly resume. And yet Paul saw the hand of God upon his life and as God placed the desire, Paul stepped out in faith, and by the grace of God he was placed in the ministry.

And when God placed this upon Paul's heart, what did he want to do? **SERVE!** Paul was not looking for recognition. He was not looking for any praise from man. He served quietly and effectively which had a powerful impact upon the people he came in contact with. Paul served with no strings attached; he was not looking for anything special from anyone. That is the heart of a servant. Some today will serve like the ministry is some kind of investment that they will collect in due time. That is the wrong heart. You serve because you are a servant!

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean. We are told, An elderly widow, restricted in her activities, was eager to serve Christ. After praying about this, she realized that she could bring blessing to others by playing the piano. The next day she placed this small ad in the Oakland Tribune: "Pianist will play hymns by phone daily for those who are sick and despondent - the service is free." The notice included the number to dial. When people called, she would ask, "What hymn would you like to hear?" Within a few months her playing had brought cheer to several hundred people. Many of them freely poured out their hearts to her, and she was able to help and encourage them.

- Source Unknown

That truly is a servant's heart. Not looking for recognition or praise or anything but to serve, to minister to others! She did not have much, but what she had she gave to the Lord and the Lord used it mightily. Remember in Luke chapter 17 as Jesus is speaking on obeying His words, on being a servant. And He said beginning in verse 7, **“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”** Luke 17:7-10.

You see, our rewards are not going to be received on this earth, even though we are blessed abundantly. Our rewards await us when the Lord returns for His Church, His Bride. We are servants, all of us, and some have the supernatural gift of being a servant, a minister, the gift of helps.

And let me say this. You can tell those whom God calls to this ministry because even during the difficult times, as down as they may be, there is a fire burning in them to speak the things of God, to share Christ, to serve the people. Jeremiah was a man called by God to speak of the coming judgment, which the people didn't want to hear. They wanted to hear the false prophets for they were talking about peace and prosperity instead of the truth. And Jeremiah was beaten and worn out.

And we read in Jeremiah 20:9, **“Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.”** When God places that desire upon your heart, you can’t stop serving!

On the other hand, some are not called but enter into a ministry for the reward, challenge, glory, fulfillment and-so-on. It is more of a profession to them than a calling, and it is seen in their attitude and actions. They want to get out what they can from the ministry, when the ministry is giving of yourself. It is hard work. It is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week ministry. And thus, the reality is you won’t be able to do this out of human effort because eventually you will get burned out. It is a supernatural gift of the Spirit!

Let’s take a few minutes to look at this gift and how it truly is a calling. It is not a job, we need to understand that. It is a calling and we will see this as we look at a few Scriptures and then we will look at our example, the ultimate example of a servant, Jesus Christ.

A CALL TO MINISTRY?

1. THE CALLING - EPHESIANS 3:7 - DIAKONOS

Listen to what Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:7 about this gift of ministry that God had given to him. We are told, **“of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”**

Notice that this was a calling and this calling was not according to man, but by the gift of God’s grace. Because it was of God, God gave him the power to do the work. Too often people wonder how they can become a minister. We don’t make ministers, God does and as He raises them up all we can do is recognize what God is doing in their life.

2. THE EDUCATION - ACTS 4:13

Now here is one that many don’t think I am right on and that is education. They even wonder what credentials I have to be a pastor! So, what do you need to be a minister of Jesus Christ? What kind of education do you need? Let me explain by sharing with you what two apostles had in regards to education. In Acts 4:13 we are told, **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”**

Notice that Peter and John did not go to Old Rabbi University. They did not have their PhD in Theology. They were with Jesus and that fellowship with the Lord trained them up in the things that they needed.

What is interesting is that these religious leaders who had arrested Peter and John were the ones who were schooled in the Law of God, the Scriptures, and yet they saw something different in Peter and John.

Yes, they were fishermen, and in their minds they were uneducated and untrained men, and yet they spoke the Scriptures with boldness. How can that be? They recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus! We must remember that when the Lord calls us He also will equip us. Sometimes that means going to Bible School and sometimes it doesn't!

And here's the thing. Are you going to rest upon the degree you have, the schooling you have or are you going to rest upon Jesus? Too often we fall back on what we have instead of the one who has given it to us. We need to spend our time with Jesus, we need to spend time in His Word and we need to exercise our faith and if the Lord has called us He will certainly equip us for the work! If you can do it on your own, then you are not ready for ministry of any kind. If you realize you can't do it, you are not ready, now is the time! You see, spend time with Jesus, rest upon Him and do the work He has called you to do!

3. FULFILL THE MINISTRY - COLOSSIANS 4:17 - DIAKONIA

Here is one that seems so obvious and yet, I have seen people get involved in ministry and then just drop the ball you might say. God wants us to fulfill the ministry that He has called us to, that just makes sense. In Colossians 4:17 listen to what Paul said, **“And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’”**

How important are those words for each of us. What has God called you to do? Whatever it is, fulfill it and do the work to the best of your ability. It would seem that maybe Archippus was down, maybe discouraged, maybe he wasn't seeing much fruit from his labor and Paul encourages him to continue on, don't stop, don't give up, keep forging ahead in the work that God has called you to do. He wanted the church in Colosse to encourage Archippus to finish the work that God has called him to do, to fulfill it! We all need that encouragement from time to time as did Archippus!

And I love Paul because he had such a passion for the ministry. He had such a passion to fulfill the work that God had called him to do. Remember what Paul said in Acts 20:22-24, **“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**

May nothing move us from the course that God has for us! And, know that what you do, even though you may not see results as quickly as you like, Paul reminds us, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** I Corinthians 15:58. What a glorious promise, one that I hold onto and I hope you do too!

You see, whatever ministry that God has placed you in, give it your all, do your best. That is all God asks of us, to fulfill the ministry He has called us to for the betterment of the body of Christ!

4. GOD PLACES US IN MINISTRY - I TIMOTHY 1:12 - DIAKONIA

People often wonder, “How does a person get into ministry?” Let me say this, we don’t appoint people into a ministry, God raises them up and we can only recognize what God has done in their life. The Lord puts people in ministry. That is what Paul tells us in I Timothy 1:12, “**And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.**”

You see, God not only enabled Paul to be in ministry, but it was the Lord who put him in the ministry! I know, some of you look at Paul and see this great man of God and then you look at your own life and that is not what you see. And you wonder if God can ever use you!

Listen to what Paul went on to say in I Timothy 1:13, “**although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**” Here it is, Paul was not a very good guy before he got saved, in fact he still saw himself as chief of sinners when compared to a holy and righteous God and yet God used him, why? It all comes down to this, it is the grace of God, it is the mercy of God that He extended to Paul and to us. It is not because of us, it is because of Him! God places us in the ministry as I have said before; all we must do is follow!

**5. USE THE GIFT THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU - I PETER 4:10-11 –
DIAKONEO**

The last one we will look at is found in I Peter 4:10-11, where Peter tells us, **“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

In God’s multi-faceted or manifold grace, He has given to us gifts to minister in the body of Christ. Now, if we don’t use these gifts Peter tells us it is as if God’s grace gift was given to us in vain. And folks, if we don’t use these gifts they are wasted. Meyer puts it this way, “Manifold grace is many-coloured grace. As when a ray of light breaks into a spray of many hues, so each of us receives God’s grace at a different angle, and flashes it back broken up into some fresh colour.”

It just makes sense, to use the gifts that God has given to us and yet, many refuse to take those steps of faith. And notice that Peter tells us that we are to use the gifts with the ability that God has given to us and not in our own strength! These are not natural abilities or talents that a person has. God is the one who raises the person up, gives them the ability to do the work. Thus, God gets the glory and not man!

We are going to take the remainder of our time this morning and look at the example of Jesus and the ministry He did when He walked this earth. He truly is the ultimate example for our lives of what a servant is all about! He shows us what this gift of ministry or gift of helps is to be manifested in our lives!

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

1. WASHING THE DISCIPLES FEET – JOHN 13

As I have said, Jesus, of course, is our ultimate example of a minister or one who helps others. In John chapter 13, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus and his men had gathered together to share in the Passover meal. Now we have a picture in our minds of Leonardo da Vinci's painting of "The Last Super" but that is not accurate an accurate picture. They did not sit at tables but they reclined on low couches on the floor. They rested on one elbow and ate with their other hand. And in those days they wore open sandaled shoes, and with all the dust, their feet would get very dirty.

And so, as guest arrived at someone's home the lowest servant would come and wash their feet and dry them. You did not want to sit next to someone at the table with dirty, stinky feet! But here, in this room that the disciples of Jesus met there was no servant, no one to wash their feet. And none of the disciples were going to step forward and do this job, they were the Apostles not the Bpostles you might say! In fact, the disciples were arguing who was going to be greatest in the kingdom, not a slave in the kingdom, so they were not going to stoop down and do this. They were not thinking of serving anyone, let alone washing anyone's feet!

And so God, the creator of heaven and earth, girds Himself with a towel, gets the water, and begins to wash the disciple's feet. And I'm sure that things grew quickly silent in the room at that time. No one was talking about being prime minister in the kingdom at this point! And as Jesus finished teaching them by example, He now was going to teach with words.

In John 13:13-17 we read **“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”**

Jesus, who has taught them by example, now tells them to go out and do the same to others, to be a servant. Now Jesus is not saying that we are to literally go out and wash people’s feet, that is not the point. He is telling us to go out and be a servant, to minister to people as He ministered to them!

And the exciting thing to me is there is a blessing in that, a blessing when we serve. There is joy in our hearts as we reach out to others. The world is trying to find happiness and joy in being self-centered. And since they can’t find it, they go to therapy, self-help groups, books, medication and they still can’t seem to find it. The reason is simple. That kind of joy, that kind of fulfillment is not found in self-centeredness but other-centeredness! Jesus said in John 15:13, **“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”** A simple example is this, ***JOY!*** J is for Jesus, O is for others and Y is for you. If you get that right you have ***JOY!***

I think many Christians today miss out on this blessing of being others-centered; ministering to others because they feel it is all about them. Their needs must be met first and then they can help others. Let me say this, you will never be satisfied, your needs will never be met until you reach out to others and as you do, God will take care of your needs far more than you can imagine! That is the example that Jesus left for us to follow, be a servant of all!

2. FULFILLMENT IN DOING THE WORK OF GOD – JOHN 14

In John chapter 4 Jesus encounters a woman by Jacob's well in Samaria, while His disciples are out looking for food. And beginning in verse 13 we read, "**Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'**" John 4:13-14.

Jesus is telling this woman that she will never fill that void that is in her life with worldly things, only a relationship with God will satisfy her completely. He is the only one that will satisfy our hunger and our thirst!

Now keep in mind that Jesus was hungry, He was thirsty, He was tired at this point. And now His disciples returned and we read beginning in verse 31, "**In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.'** But He said to them, '**I have food to eat of which you do not know.'** Therefore the disciples said to one another, '**Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?'** Jesus said to them, '**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'**" John 4:31-34.

Notice that Jesus found satisfaction, joy, rest, fulfillment in doing the work of God. His hunger was satisfied. You see, you can't minister without getting something back in return. It comes as you give yourself away!

I can truly attest to this truth. Over the years in various ministries I have been very busy, especially when I also worked outside the church. But as tired as I would be, as I served the Lord, He always gave me the strength I needed and He even refreshed me so that in the end, I felt better than if I would have stayed home and took care myself. I felt better than if I would have rested. In other words, God met my needs and blessed me as I served others.

Now we have seen Jesus teach by example and now He was going to teach by words, showing them how this applies to their lives. And we read in verse 35, **“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”**

Please understand what is going on here. It is not harvest time yet, there is still four months to go until the harvest. Some say that this was a proverb that Jesus was speaking of; others say it was a literal time till the harvest. But don't miss the point through all the rationalizing. Whatever was growing in the fields, it was tall, but not ready to harvest yet. And as the woman of Samaria went to get the men of the city, they now were coming through the fields, and as they walked their heads were seen above these crops with their white turbans on. And Jesus is saying that it is harvest time now, the people are coming, there is your work, be a servant and fulfill the work of God that your joy may be full! In other words, I have shown you by my example what needs to be done; now you go and do the same!

Now as I begin to rap things up here this morning, please understand that the gift of ministry or the gift of helps is very important in the body of Christ. And yes, not everyone is a pastor, but we are all servants, and many people in the body of Christ, not just pastors, are given the gift of ministry or the gift of helps.

Think of it this way. In the human body, when you cut yourself, you have white blood cells that come rushing to the site to prevent any infection from setting in. You also have clotting factors that come to prevent you from bleeding to death. And in their effort to come to help, some will lose their life to preserve the body.

The same is true in the body of Christ. In times of need the body gathers around to help a person in need. In fact, they are just waiting to help out, to get that call so they can rush into service. And when this gift is in operation in the body of Christ, it truly is beautiful, it moves the church forward.

D. L. Moody once said: "I would rather get 10 men to do the work than do the work of 10 men!" We are the body of Christ working together for the betterment of all and the gift of ministry or the gift of helps is important for a healthy church.

Let me leave you with these thoughts from Paul in I Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 14, as he said, **“For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”** I Corinthians 12:14-27.

The healthy body takes care of itself as Paul said here in I Corinthians and truly, the gift of ministry or the gift of helps is needed in the church today. Spurgeon nails it as he tells us; “I want every member of this church to be a worker. We do not want any drones. If there are any of you who want to eat and drink, and do nothing, there are plenty of places elsewhere, where you can do it; there are empty pews about in abundance; go and fill them, for we do not want you. Every Christian who is not a bee is a wasp. The most quarrelsome persons are the most useless, and they who are the most happy and peaceable, are generally those who are doing most for Christ.”

May we be a servant of all and minister to people with the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit! It truly is a gift that is needed today and may we exercise it, the gift of ministry or the gift of helps!