

Helping and Administration

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[0 : 00] I've never prepared a sermon in Eastern Europe, so I prepared this in Cracow. I was in Cracow this week at a church planting conference. I'll say a little bit more.

You'll find that I'll dip into that a little bit. I'm not going to say much this evening, but I will say one or two things about that as well. So it was the gift of administration and the congregation kind of fell short this week because I wasn't really meant to be preaching this evening.

So that's why it's been prepared while I was away and therefore it will appear, it'll become clear that that was the case as we go on.

So helps here, help, the gift of helping. Just means one who comes along to help, one who comes alongside to help. It's both in practical and spiritual terms.

We've got certain things that we've been highlighting in this series about the importance of spiritual gifts and where they lie. See if you can pick them out as we go through the sermon, some of the things we've talked about.

[1 : 00] And Jesus is a great example for us of a helper. It's a rare word. It's a rare word in the New Testament.

And it has shadows of the Holy Spirit coming along to help practically and spiritually.

In our lives we help one another, it's got more horizontal rather than vertical. It's not so much about serving the Lord, although that's our motive. It's about serving one another.

Always as we've seen in all these series, the motivation for us and all of the gifts of the Spirit is that we do so out of gratitude. Gratitude for our adoption, gratitude for being forgiven, gratitude that we belong to, it's family that we have purpose, that we have direction, identity, and that we have love poured out on us.

And therefore grace in our lives should make all of us helpers. We all have that privilege of...and responsibility. We know the gifts, elements of the gifts are common for all Christians.

[2 : 09] And yet there's ways in which some people are specially gifted with gifts of the Spirit. And this is probably the most unsung and unnoticed of all the gifts, the gifts of help, or helps, or serving.

I just want to say a few things about it for us. Primarily it's for the benefit of others. So in your Christian life it's thinking about how the Holy Spirit will help you, enable you to live a life that benefits others.

We've seen that for the benefit of the church, for the kingdom of God, all the gifts of the Spirit. And it's good as a witness to the world that people will see the love of Christ in action.

And it's really someone, someone with the gift of help, someone who is very gifted, this is very basic, someone who is very gifted at seeing where help is needed.

In a community, in a family, in a church, very related in many ways to what Anna was saying earlier. It is, through experience and through examples in the Bible, it's someone who's willing, we see someone who's willing with this gift of help to sacrificially do so.

[3 : 30] Give of their time, their energy, their priorities. And usually the gift of help is related biblically, I think, and scripturally, and through experience to undertaking unglamorous works.

Not a glamorous gift of the Spirit, it's not an upfront gift of the Spirit. It's the people who are particularly gifted from the Holy Spirit to do the things that other people don't want to do, and who will do it willingly with a servant heart.

People who see things that need to be done without being asked, what a great gift in a family, what a great gift in a congregation. People who do unnoticed work, unnoticed by most, but not by Christ or by the spiritually sensitive.

And people who will be practical in their help to one another. But also, can I say, spiritually, we often think of the gift of helps as a practical gift, helping people in very tangible and practical ways, like

we were hearing earlier.

But it's more than that, it's the ability to help with a word of encouragement, with a text walking alongside someone, saying that you're praying for someone.

[4 : 49] Seeing a need and responding to it, helping someone. It's something that we are all to be committed to, but there are those with particular gifts in that area.

Can I say to you, if you are someone who recognizes that you have that gift in yourself, can I encourage you to express that gift with willingness and with joy?

Don't allow it to become bitter, in that I wish more people were able to do what I'm doing. You're special if you have the gift of helps.

And as you do it joyfully, you will encourage others to do help in the same way. If you don't particularly feel you have that gift, but you see it in other people within the body of Christ in the gospel community, don't take advantage of that gift. Mimic it.

Don't say, oh, that's okay, that's what someone else will do that. Someone else will do the unseen, the unnoticed, the unglamorous work of the congregation. Be thankful for them, but don't take advantage of it.

[5 : 58] If the gift is of help and maybe broadening it to administration, I'm not going to say much about that. Don't criticize and condemn those who are great administrators, great organizers.

We all need organizers in a community, in a Christian community, we need organizers. Don't kind of think there are pain in the neck to be organized.

No, do we need to sign up for this? Do we need to organize for that? Because a church must run on these bases, like a family must run on these bases, but rather be prayerfully supportive in whatever way you can.

We all have to be helpers. It might not be in your nature, or it might be not your experience. You might naturally be used to being served.

You may not easily find that you acknowledge people's needs. You may be impatient, you may be proud, self-absorbed, an entrepreneur. Then take these weaknesses that you have and recognize that in God's church, among God's people and God's family, we're all called to be servants.

[7 : 06] We're all called to be helpers, even if we don't have this specific gift. It is such a reflection of the character and the nature of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Interestingly, also it's the currency of the unseen spiritual world of angels on our behalf, ministering spirits sent to help those who belong to Christ, the Hebrews 1.14.

So the church is to be by grace because of Jesus and because of what He's done, a beautiful community where God is given the glory and where Jesus is made famous as we declare Him to the world by the way we help one another, by the way we care for and show love towards one another.

People desperately need to see what it is about the gospel community that makes it different, that is attractive, that rubber stamps the great claim to faith and truth that they possess in Jesus Christ.

And sometimes that will be almost inexplicable to them, but it should be attractive. At the conferences, you'll probably find over the next few weeks, okay, right, okay, Cory's away, I'm here, I am still going to be quoting Tim Keller because he was the speaker at the conference and I'm going to pass out the link to it because I really want you to hear what was being said because it was really powerful about God changing the power of the gospel to transform my life, my church, my community and my world.

[8 : 51] Very powerful and you talk just at one point talked about the burning bush, that the burning bush was unique because as Moses went to look at it, it was in the desert and everything was very dry in the desert and this bush was burning and normally it just burned up very quickly, but this bush was something different because it was burning but it wasn't burning up and he was attracted to see this inexplicable reality and he applied that to the church and said that the church, there's much that's inexplicable about the church to the world but there should be an attractiveness about it and attractiveness about we serve and love and care for one another.

As part of the conference in Krakow, we finished on the Thursday on the Friday, Neil and I and one or two others went to Auschwitz, which was a harrowing and hellish place.

Terrible dark memories of evil and darkness and division and pride and greed and brutality and sheer horror, sheer horribleness really. And one of the things that I wanted to do coming out from there and thinking back to here was I just wanted to hug you all and I wanted to hug Jesus Christ

and I wanted to hug the gospel as if you could hug the gospel.

Just for its sheer beauty and hope in the midst of the utter darkness of what humanity has done to one another. A reminder, it just was a reminder to me of how great the gospel is and how much time and effort and care we should take to protect the gospel and how easily we get distracted from our heavenly calling and become ugly ourselves.

Use the gifts of the Spirit to build up the church and to build up one another in the family. Recognize and remember that.

[10:50] So the spiritual gift of serving or helping is one, as we read in 1 Peter chapter 4, that should always be other centred.

It is something that we should recognize involves one another. That we are thinking of others and not ourselves. It is the channel through which many of the other gifts, the gifts of service, is the channel through which many of the other gifts are expressed.

It is part of our DNA and it is what Christ examples. He gave his life a ransom for many, came to serve and not to be served. It is other centred.

A rare thing of powerful beauty. For example, the things that happen in the church that others don't see. In the community, the gospel community. The quiet individual unseen acts of helping.

Hugely significant. It is a gift of helping that is dependent also on the Holy Spirit. Whoever serves, serves as one in the strength that God supplies.

[12:00] It is not a natural gift. It can be natural. People can be good helpers in life. But this is a spiritual gift that is done for the glory of God, with the strength of God for the furtherance of His kingdom.

And therefore we need His grace to enable us to overcome our selfish motives. And that is what makes it unique. We are dependent on the power of God in our ongoing lives to be helpers.

And indeed for any of the gifts of the Spirit. Again last week I was being away. I was reminded of the importance of having a power source near you.

My phone's battery is really rubbish. And my iPad does not seem to last very long either. An iPad and a phone is completely useless without the power source engaging the battery and filling the battery.

And you wanted it to keep in touch. You wanted it to take photographs where you are. And you are just very conscious of the power source all the time, looking for a power source. And it is just that reminder to us of the energy source that we are required to be engaged with in our Christian lives all the time.

[13:16] If we are to live for Christ, if we are to live for His glory, if we are to serve Him, we can't be strangers to Him. We can't be isolated from Him. We can't be out of touch with Him. We need to be prayerfully depending in our weakness on His strength.

And as we serve in these ways, helping, not becoming embittered, not grumbling at others, then we are to do it with a sense of eagerness.

We didn't read this, but in chapter 5 of 1 Peter it speaks about the leaders of the church serving with eagerness, serving with willingness, not under compulsion.

And there is that great sense that we have leaders, elders, deacons, as members of the church, we are to serve and do these helping acts in our lives willingly and eagerly.

So just to close, and I'm going to finish with this and then hand back over to Thomas for the communion, which is a great way to finish our service tonight. We recognise that there's formal ways in which we can help.

[14:24] We had the tables out this morning which listed all the different things that we could be helping and whether that's just doing so because we feel that led to help or that we really have a specific gift in one area then that's great.

And of course there's also the informal help that is done that nobody sees but you and Jesus Christ. But remember that as a church we have the formal structures in place through our ministry teams that we mentioned this morning, but also through our deacons.

Deacons are those ordained members of the church who are set apart to be helpers. That's their calling. Acts chapter 6 makes that clear.

Our deacons are helpers. We initially, to help the elders, the leaders of the church, so the leaders were free to do what they were called to do, they had a hugely significant practical role and so we have helping moulded into our structures as a church.

In our city groups we have deacons who are there not only to be helpers but I hope to inspire help and to delegate and to find out those with gifts of help and match them to needs.

[15 : 51] Deacono helping. But also remember relational helping. And that involves not only knowing but being known, being ready to give help to one another, but also to be able to receive help, not to be so proud that we can't receive help either spiritual or practical.

And remember the relational side and the spiritual side of helping. It's such an important thing to be helping one another spiritually in our day-to-day living.

And in St. C's we have that vision to be that kind of Christ-centered people together in all our impossibilities that we're working against programs towards relationship.

We're not really that concerned about maintaining an organisation. We know that an organisation is important to us at that level but it's to serve Christ that we seek to do all these things.

So that church conference that I was part of, there were 600 church planters from all over Europe. People doing very ordinary things, some with very small churches.

[17 : 11] The biggest group of people were from the Ukraine. That's where the most church planters had come to this conference, praying for God to bless and God to work and learning from one another as part of the city-to-city Europe which is from Redeemer initially.

And we're part of that. We're part of that. And there's not a day goes by when I don't feel inadequate for that calling and that work and I feel so often I've wasted so much time and helped so few people.

And the challenge for me for going to these conferences, and I hate going to them usually, is that they take me out of my comfort zone. But also I hope, re-inspire and reinvigorate me to remember that we're part of a great work, a part of a kingdom movement and it's an amazing privilege to be part of that.

And we hope that we always remember that in all our helping we're seeking to be reminded that God through grace changes me and he changes my church and he changes my city and he changes my world.

And that's what we long to be and to do here. We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. God has called each of us here together to serve him and to help one another in the gospel ministry.

[18 : 36] And many times I feel like we're hanging on to his coat tails and speaking reverently as our Father. But he can help us to do what we're called to do. We're here as part of the kingdom work.

I hope that we see the bigger picture that as children of God we can move forward and therefore not to focus on the minutiae, to forgive your leaders, to forgive what you don't like about sensees, to forgive the difficulties you have maybe with people in the church, the struggles about it not being what you want it to be, your discontentment with various things that may be not that important, to look to Christ and look to His calling and look to the privilege and look to His love and to be kind and to be helpful and to do miracles.

Because these things are miraculous through His Holy Spirit. And in your workplaces, not just here but in your workplaces, your God's children there, you're on mission to reach out.

Since these will never fulfill its calling from the front, we'll sink. But do consider the souls of your families, your friends and your colleagues, they've been placed in your lap.

Not to save them, that's God's work. Praise the Lord that that's the case, but to share Jesus boldly with them. I'm looking forward to seven days of prayer at the end of November and we're going to bulk that up a little bit this year with more focused evangelistic, missional opportunities from then through to the carol service, through to Easter, through to hopefully reading one-to-one Bible with your friends, and that will be a great challenge for us.

[20 : 34] And in all of that, just outwork the gift of helping. Be a helper, honour those who are specially gifted with helping in this church.

You'll need to think, you'll need to work out and think who they are, because much of their work is unseen. But God knows who they are, and if you're sensitive you probably will know who they are also spiritually.

But support them and pray for them, and seek to mimic them as they mimic Christ, and be a helper, be self-forgetful, and be a helper for Jesus Christ.

That's Bowerheads, briefly, in prayer. Father God, we thank you for the privilege of what we have here, for the unity and love and support we share. We know there's battles and struggles always in

any gospel community, but we pray that we would take them to Christ, that you would fuse us together in love, and that love would cover a multitude of sins, for there are many sins, organizationally, administratively, in the way we maybe sometimes do things or don't do things. And yet help us to put aside sometimes our personal preferences, and seek to be helpers, seek to look out, seek to be concerned, and seek to love. Bless us then as we come to celebrate the Lord's upper together.
[22 : 01] Amen.