

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

10.30 am 23rd November 2025

Revd Zoltan Biro leading and *Simon Bird* preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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Theme: Roles and Responsibilities and the diversity of the gift of the Spirit

Call to Worship

Come sons and daughters, mothers and fathers,
sisters and brothers and aunts!

Come grandmas and grandpas, uncles and nephews,
nieces and neighbours and friends!

Christ calls us together as parts of one Body,
for worship and service and praise!

Let's worship God together!

Song:

I love You, Lord
Oh, Your mercy never failed me
And all my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
In darkest night You are close like no other
I've known You as a Father
I've known You as a Friend
Oh, I have lived in the goodness of God,

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

Bridge x2 Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now
I give You everything
'Cause Your goodness is running after, it's running after me

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

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Family Time

Song

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the risen Lord
To renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me
Give me faith for what I cannot see
Give me passion for Your purity.
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within
May Your joy be seen in all I do—
Love enough to cover ev'ry sin
In each thought and deed and attitude
Kindness to the greatest and the least
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my striving into works of grace.
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth
Giving life to all that God has made

Show Your power once again on earth
Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise.
Lead us on the road of sacrifice
That in unity the face of Christ
Will be clear for all the world to see.

Keith Getty / Stuart Townend © Thankyou Music, Thank You Music Ltd.

Young people leave for their groups

Prayers

Bible Readings: Exodus 31:1-6 and Romans 12: 1-8

Sermon: Roles and responsibilities and diversity of the gifts of the Spirit. (Simon)

Some questions. How has God made the church to function? What is my role and responsibility in it? Church is not a spectator sport!

Normally when explaining a passage we would start by explaining the context and how the argument builds up, but I start with an important point from the passage.

‘Think of yourselves with sober judgement,’ (3) This means to make a right judgment. In the passage, which is not clear in the English translation, the word ‘think’ is implied four times. So this is a passage we should think about, note carefully and obey. Our main point is that each of us should be thinking, ‘what is my role and responsibility in the church?’ ‘What gifts do I have and how can I use them in God’s service?’

We are continuing our series on the gifts of the Spirit, and today we look at the passage from Rom 12, where Paul teaches again about the church as a body and gives another list of gifts.

Romans is a hugely significant book. In Chapter 12, Paul turns to practical application of his teaching. After a very well-known introduction (1-2), his very first area of teaching is about the body and diversity of gifts (3-8). He must have thought this key to his purpose. Here are Paul’s main points.

1. Do not think of yourself *more* highly than you ought (3). Think of a football team: there is no place for one dominating star player.
2. It does not say this, but equally true: we should not think of ourselves *less* highly than we ought. Each of us should realise we are each part of the body/church, and each one of us is needed. Undervaluing ourselves dishonours God. It is God who has made us, he himself put us in this body, and he himself decided how to gift us. The body, and how we fit in, are God’s design.
3. ‘Think of yourselves with sober judgement,’ (3) I started with this point.
4. Now Paul introduces the picture of the body (4-5). The points he makes are that we are *each* part of one body, one family, we *each* belong to each other, we are valued, but (or because) we have different functions.

One of Paul’s purposes in writing Romans was to reconcile Jew and Gentile in the Roman church. You can see that talking about the body, how we fit together and the gifts we have, serves this purpose.

I want to stick with Paul's important idea of the body and see how and why he used it in the other passages we have looked at in the last weeks.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul addressed a church that was misusing the (miraculous) gifts of the Spirit. Before giving specific advice, Paul lays a background of teaching about the body and love for one another. He wants them to use gifts to build each other up, rather than have excited worship times.

Paul used two illustrations from the body. 1. 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body.' (12:16). We are not all the same, and each one belongs. And 2. 'The eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you!' (21). None are excluded; we need each other.

In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul again uses the idea of a body, but this time it is not for mundane reasons – to sort out relationships or correct poor behaviour - but to build a picture of a glorious church, with Christ as its head. This church has cosmic purposes (Eph 3:10). He uses the idea of the body to speak of unity (3-4) and the gifts or ministries listed have the purpose of equipping or building up the body, so we become mature, and achieve the fullness of Christ (13).

This is a wonderful vision of what we can be as a church. Think of a jigsaw puzzle: one piece on its own shows nothing, but when fitted in the right place it is part of a much bigger picture: that of Christ himself. We are literally his body, his hands and feet in the world. The church has a glorious and eternal purpose; each of us can have our part to play in this, if we allow ourselves to be fitted in! What a wonderful vision for life!

5. Paul then speaks about the diversity of the gifts. 'We have different gifts according to the grace given us.' (Rom 12:6) and here he lists seven gifts. I am not going to discuss these individually, but look at all the lists together.

There are nine gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. As we said before, we think of these as the more miraculous. There are seven in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, some miraculous, some more serving gifts. There are five ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11. Peter mentions two gifts (1 Pet:4:11).

Now, people have put these lists together and, together with gifts from other places, distinguish 27 gifts.

This suggests the lists are illustrative – they do not define all gifts – the Spirit will inspire lots of ways of serving God. And the lists mix and match. They mix up the miraculous, the ministry gifts and what we called the mundane, to show that are all important. The miraculous are important because they show the power of God (like healing), and allow him to guide his church (like prophecy), the ministry gifts are important that, although we are a body – the priesthood of all believers – God has given those with leadership and teaching gifts to direct his church. The so-called 'mundane' are vital for the church to function and for serving one another. These can often be our natural gifts and talents guided by the Spirit. For example, I am good at fixing things, but often there might be a difficult thing to fix, I pray, and I get a neat solution – a bit like the way God used Bezalel (Ex 31:3). Last week, Zoltan spoke about the gift of encouragement – do you know what a positive and building effect it has?

6. The final point I make is that Paul tells us to **use** the gifts, 'If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy... if it is serving, serve.' (6-7). There is an intentionality, an urgency even. Why, because they are God's way of building the church. We don't use human wisdom or management techniques. He does not want us to hold back.

That is the message this morning. God has a fantastic vision for bringing his Kingdom to the world. He started with Jesus and we as the church continue to do this. We are literally his body, his hands and feet in the world. But the body has been arranged by God, with different gifts. We are to think soberly (right mindedly) of ourselves today. We must recognise that each has a part to play, we must find out what gifts we have and use them whole heartedly. What are you going to do about it? Each of us should be thinking, 'what is my role and responsibility in the church?' I should ask, 'what gifts do I have?' 'How can I use them in God's service?'

Song: I want to serve the purpose of God in my Generation

I want to serve the purpose of God in my generation
I want to serve the purpose of God while I am alive
I want to give my life for something that will last forever
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will

I want to build with silver and gold in my generation
I want to build with silver and gold while I am alive
I want to give my life for something that will last forever
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will

What is on Your heart?
Tell me what to do
Let me know Your will
And I will follow You

I want to see the Lord come again in my generation
I want to see the Lord come again while I am alive
I want to give my life for something that will last forever
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will

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Prayers of Intercession – Polly & Thomas

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your unfailing love. We are your creation and your children. Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the Alpha and the Omega. You are our Saviour and our refuge. Holy Spirit, you are our guide and counsellor. Please help us serve you with the spiritual gifts you have given us. We are part of the body of Christ; help us appreciate our differences and love one another. We praise You because we will have a baptism next week. Bless those who would like to follow you and witness this sacred moment.

Thank you, Lord, for your blessings.

We pray for the outreach at St. Laurence and iCaf. You have given us many opportunities—such as the Toddler Group, Renew Wellbeing, and the Bible study groups—to reach out and witness for our Lord. Teach us how to pray for lost souls. Give us prayerful and bold hearts, so that your sheep may hear your voice and return to the flock.

We pray for the deacons and the leaders of this church. Please grant them wisdom and humble hearts to serve you. We also pray for our pastor, Zoltan. You have led him to us to minister to us. May your Spirit strengthen him and give him vision. Recently, we received a questionnaire to gather the opinions of the congregation. Holy Spirit, please guide us so that we may have the same heart and the same mind as we serve your church.

Thank you, Lord, for your blessings.

Heavenly Father, we bring before you the needs of Britain and the world, and we humbly ask you to hear our prayers. The United Kingdom's policies on asylum seekers have changed significantly. Lord, protect and shelter all those who belong to you. The BBC has been accused of institutional bias. Guard its reporting, Lord; grant that its news may remain fair, truthful, and in accordance with your will. Third-quarter GDP growth has fallen below expectations, and youth unemployment continues to rise. We ask you to steady and strengthen the British economy and to provide abundant job opportunities for young people.

Thank you, Lord, for your blessings.

Russia has launched large-scale drone and missile attacks on Ukraine. Have mercy on the wounded, heal the broken cities and homes, and grant true peace and safety to the people there. Climate change has caused disasters in many places, and cholera has broken out across parts of Africa. Lord, bring swift healing to those affected by disease, provide relief to all who suffer from these calamities, and protect the vulnerable.

We commit all these concerns into your mighty and loving hands, trusting in your perfect wisdom and power.

Thank you, Lord, for your blessings.

We pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Song

There is a redeemer
Jesus, God's own son
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Holy one

Jesus my redeemer
Name above all names
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Oh, for sinners slain.

Thank you oh my father
For giving us your son
And leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done.

When I stand in glory
I will see his face
And there I'll serve my king forever
In that holy place.

Thank you oh my father
For giving us your son
And leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done.

There is a redeemer
Jesus, God's own son

Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Holy one

Thank you oh my father
For giving us your son
And leaving your spirit
'Til the work on earth is done.
And leaving your spirit
'Till the work on earth is done.

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Communion

Invitation

Come to this table
Where bread and cup are transformed by the Spirit of God
Into a meal of love and grace
A supper of visions and dreams
A table where all souls are welcome.

Prayer of Communion

Loving God
Whose Divine Lungs exhaled the Spirit into our World
**Your breath continues to transform our world
From the still to the stirring.**

Before the earth was formed
The Spirit of God swirled through voids and shadows.
As humans were created...
The air of God filled the lungs of Adam and the soul of Eve.

This Divine Air

Continues to fill us up

When our bones are dry and spirits are sluggish.

Today,
We invite the Spirit to come upon these elements.
God of winds pour out your Spirit
to make the elements come alive for us.
**Make this meal awaken our sleepy hearts
and stagnant souls.**

**May we begin to celebrate visions and animate the dreams
that have only been alive in our minds.**

As we share this meal, let us remember our siblings in faith who came to this table,
in decades and centuries past and our children
who will surround this table in the future.

**Lord, we come knowing that
we depend on You for**

**life and truth and love.
We come knowing that
You welcome us with
open and accepting arms.
We come ready to meet with You,
and be changed by the encounter. Amen.**

Distributing the elements

The Lord Jesus, on the eve of His crucifixion,
gathered His friends for a meal.
During supper, He took a loaf of bread,
and gave thanks for it.
Then He broke it and passed it among them
with these words:
This is my body which is broken for you.
Take, eat and remember Me.

After the meal, Jesus took a cup of wine
and gave thanks for it.
Then He passed it among them with these words:
This is my blood which is shed for you.
Take, drink and remember Me.
So now, we eat, and we drink
and we remember Jesus and His great love for us.
And we will continue to do this until He returns. Amen.

Closing Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Song:

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you
in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Richard Gillard © 1977, Scripture in Song (a division of Integrity Music)

Prayer of Commitment

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit
you have made us one with your saints
in heaven and on earth:

**Help us to see your presence
burning in the hearts of others;
grant that we may be united
in a fellowship of love and prayer;**

Give us the courage to pick up our cross
and respond to the needs of the world,
give us the stamina to follow you,
to be your hands and heart in the world;

Enable us to witness to your grace and mercy.

We pray all this through the love your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Grace

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen**

Events next week:

Wednesday 26 th	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.15	Bible Study
	2.00	iCaf 5
Thursday 27 th	10.30	Bible study
	10.30	Toddlers
	7.30	Men's Bible Study
Friday 28 th	5.00	Table Tennis Club

Sunday 30th 10.30 **Worship and Baptism**
Love and Humility:
The right attitude to the gifts of the Spirit
1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 14:1-5

Followed by Church Lunch

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