



USING YOUR SPECIAL ABILITIES

3. "This thing called LOVE"

26 July, 2020



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Welcome Church! and Welcome to Worship!

God blesses us with rain and sunshine! Look at each other, smile and nod, and let this be your greeting to each other. and praise God in your thoughts and words! Next Sunday we will be in August! Slowly but surely we will resume a new normal life, which we pray will include singing and participating in our life as Church, as we worship together!

The August issue of the Grapevine will be out next Sunday. Please email or send your contributions to Gillian before Thursday. Your contribution is what people look forward to!

Today is our third in the series of "Using Special Abilities entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit, focussing today on, "This thing called Love".

Listen to this music and thank God for His perfect love. Believe it or not, we are made in the image of God, and we are given life in this world by His love.

LISTEN **Holy Spirit Come ...** **289**

PRAYER

We gather together, Loving Father, in Your presence with great expectation, hungry for an encounter with You, sonf eager to hear Your Word. May we be attentive to the presence of Your Holy Spirit. May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning fall on fertile soil. Prepare our hearts and minds for Your Word to take root in our hearts and lives, and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our teacher and our Lord. **AMEN**

HYMN **Love is His Word** **445**

PRAYER for Our World

Father God, in whose love we live and move. Our world is confused with the problems created by the Corona Virus. We don't know whom or what to believe. In the most of our confusion, so many of us are crying out to be loved, to feel wanted, to be cherished and valued.

Heavenly Father! You are the source of all love. Our world is also torn apart by conflict and war, living uneasily in a climate of fear, lacking in true leadership, with no clear vision for future days. Remove all fear, that we may cling to faith in you and hope in your plans.

Heavenly Father! You are the source of all hope. Our world thinks less of others than of self, creating division between nations, race, religion, neighbour and family leads to distrust. Remove the blindfolds that prevent us from seeing the true need of people

Heavenly Father! You are the source of all peace. Our world is short on happiness, too busy to enjoy Your world, and too preoccupied with living to appreciate life. Remove our busyness and direct our thoughts to remember all the blessings we have received from you

Heavenly Father! You are the source of all joy. Create a thirst in us to know you better, and create in us a hunger for your word. Help us shape our every moment, knowing the time is nigh for your return.

Heaven Father! Our world needs to know it is special and greatly valued by You, and is uniquely loved by a by You, the author of Love. **AMEN.**

READING **1 Corinthians 13** **page 216**

PRAYER for Our Community

“Love your neighbour as yourself” said Jesus. He has gathered us as valued and treasured neighbours, to rest from the things that trouble us, and focus on the needs of others.

We thank you for all who had reason to celebrate this past week, some for birthdays and anniversaries, some for answered prayer, some for reunion with loved ones whom they have not met for a long while.

As we remember these by name, we pray their joy may linger longer.

We pray for those who are concerned about their health, some in fear of COVID-19, some wracked with persistent pain and discomfort, some recovering from recent surgery but concerned for the slopes of their recovery.

As we remember these our family and neighbours by name, we pray each may experience Your presence and your hand of healing

We pray for all those pass by our front door. Create in them a desire to step in enjoy refreshments, engage in a conversation, and discover You, perhaps even one day to join in worship of You!

You are the One, Loving Father who knows everyone’s needs. Remove from us all shyness to step out as Your instruments as we return to our world to serve you. This too is our worship! In the Name of Jesus. **AMEN**

PRAYER for our Church (Let’s make this a daily prayer for our Church)

God of Eternity, present among us here and now. This Church is your dwelling place in this community, planted by those who heard You, obeyed You and acted as You enabled. May we be such people, listening and acting as you build Your Church in this place.

Teach us to encounter you everyday through Your Word that we may:

Speak wisdom in love, and declare Your Truth with humility.

Care with genuine empathy for the community in which we live.

Draw people to You as peacemakers in Your Kingdom, and

Make space for those needing to escape from the tumult of their lives, and meet You.

Then let the empty Cross declare our reconciliation with You, accomplished by Jesus the Christ, who is our Lord! **AMEN**

HYMN

And can it be that I should gain

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MESSAGE

USING YOUR SPECIAL ABILITIES - 3. This thing called LOVE

We are in the midst of an important mini-series, a topic which continues to mislead the Church: “Spiritual Gifts”. The Church at Corinth wanted clarification on this subject, so Paul starts with, I don’t want you to misunderstand this. Paul approaches the subject in a forensic manner, building up their understanding, brick-by-brick, stage-by-stage.

First, babbling before speechless idols, and speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit are not the same; they are two separate things. What you experience is not a “gift”, like an earned award, an honour conferred given to select and deserving person; there is no favouritism shown in giving this gift. The Holy Spirit gives each of us, special abilities,

which we are to use to help each other in their time of need, thus building up the Body of Christ, the Church.

The special ability to speak in languages is only ONE of many gifts given by the Holy Spirit, and Paul lists ten special abilities in verses 8-10.

Next, as the special abilities given to each of us, is for our collective benefit as a Church, Paul compares it to the coordinated way the human body functions, and uses this to identify an operational structure of the Church. All of you together are Christ's body and each of you is a part of it (12:27). Whereas the Holy Spirit gives each of us a special ability, collectively as a Church we are to earnestly desire the most helpful special ability.

Let me show you, says Paul, a way of life that is best of all, i.e. let me give you the best, most helpful and practical way of achieving this. In chapter 13, the most famous passage read at many weddings, Paul elaborates on the practical application of how we can be the Body of Christ, that looks after each other in a way that honours Christ, and brings glory to God.

In the first three verses of chapter 13, Paul identifies three things the human heart falls prey to: showing off one's abilities, demonstrating a spiritual insight into God's plans and a faith that moves mountains, and living in the public glow of one's service to the poor. Writing to the Church from his base in Ephesus, the Apostle John captures Paul's caution to the Church in Corinth, Don't fall in love with the world's hedonistic offer of life, nor its material offering, which squeezes out love for the Father. The world says, want and have your own way, want and have everything for yourself, and want to appear important, has nothing to do with the Father. This approach to life only serves to isolate you from Him (1 John 2:15-17)

In God's scheme of things in this world, if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing (13:3). So, what is this love you are talking about Paul, and how can we identify it, the type of love that exclusively loves others?

Paul paints a portrait of this selfless love: This love of which I speak, is slow to lose patience; it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good people when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen (v. 4-7. J.B Phillips)

When Paul said at the end of the previous chapter, You should earnestly desire the most helpful gift, the gift of love, to love others more than I love myself, both individually and collectively as a Church, is the gift which we should earnestly desire. Paul is expanding on Jesus' teaching, 'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and

intelligence.' This is the most important. But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.'

Paul is saying to the Church at Corinth, to love others as you love yourself is a practice of living, just like a child who eats, speaks and reasons as a child, but in growing up, puts aside childish things. Clarity about purpose and goal of life does not come naturally. There is coming a time when we will know every-thing completely with absolute clarity, just as God knows me with absolute and complete clarity.

Imagine, God knows us, before He formed us in our mother's womb. Before we were born, God set us apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5);

God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be Holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:4); I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1) - more than 100 times God speaks to us to say, before you were a thought in your parent's mind, I knew you by name. That's how much I love you. There will come a time when everything that confuses you today, every question you have about things here and now, you will know, as clearly as God knows you!

The closing verse of chapter 13 is a beautiful ending, not because it is poetically delightful, but because it represents the Christian's journey of life. It starts by building a relationship with God through which we base and build faith in Him, His plans and purposes for this world and my life in it. This faith grounds my hope, that God's plans and promises will be fulfilled. Finally is love, which in a hierarchy, is the greatest of all.

Why love? Because the One who created us did so with great love. He spoke everything into existence, but you and me, He created with His own hands, and into each of us He breathed His Spirit. Each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-16) by this pure love. God doesn't want anything from us, except to love Him and worship Him, because He who knows every hair on your head (Matthew 12:30 and Luke 12:7), who calls you by name, is faithful to keep His promises (Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 25:8-10; Psalm 33:4; Psalm 91:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:3 and 2 Timothy 2:13).

When we enter God's Kingdom, our faith would have been rewarded, our hope fulfilled and we will bask in God's love forever!

Isn't this the kind of love you want to practice here and now, and get a taste of Heaven on earth, to come?

AMEN.

LISTEN**He knows my Name**

<p>1. I have a Maker He formed my heart Before even time began My life was in his hands He knows my name He knows my every thought He sees each tear that falls And He hears me when I call</p>	<p>2. I have a Father I have a Father He calls me His own He'll never leave me No matter where I go He knows my name He knows my every thought He sees each tear that falls And He hears me when I call</p>
<p>3. He knows me, He knows my name He knows my name He knows my every thought He sees each tear that falls And He hears me when I call He knows your name He knows your every thought He sees all those tear that falls And He hears you when you call</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Source: LyricFind Songwriters: Tommy Walker He Knows My Name lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Universal Music Publishing Group</p>

PRAYER

Eternal God! The love you modelled and showed us through Your Son on the cross is too much for us to take on board. Our fear is, we might be made fun of, even eyed with suspicion when we practice this self-less love! What we need Loving Father is both strength and courage to live up to this worthwhile goal, and we also need Your wisdom, not to be taken advantage of, by those who think we are vulnerable. Sitting in the shadow of Jesus' teaching. **AMEN.**

HYMN**Love Divine, All Loves Excelling****559****BENEDICTION**

Our God has given each of you remarkable special abilities.

Ask Him to release and set you free to explore His Word

Ask Him to release you to marvel your existence, and the beauty of His creation in you.

Ask Him to release you to communicate words of nurture and encouragement, to express trust and respect, share heartaches and visions, to convey love, mercy and forgiveness.

And when each day is done, and you look forward to a good night's rest, may our Loving Father, liberate you from the cares and worries of the world around you, to marvel at the sheer depth of the night sky, and the vastness of Your creation way beyond your understanding, and let our love becomes wordless adoration.

Through Christ Jesus, who is the pure glory of your loving. **AMEN.**

As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please drop off your tithe envelope and offerings on the plate at the back of the Church, remit directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope in the Church's postbox.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS IN TITHING AND GIVING

If you are not attending this Church and would like to contribute to its ministry, please click "EMAIL US" at the top of the home page to know more.

THANK YOU.