

1 Peter 4

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[0 : 00] This morning we're going to think for a little bit about God's kindness, about Jesus' goodness.

And we're going to think about that in a particular way. But I'll start with the general questions for you to begin thinking about. How good is God? How kind is Jesus?

Jesus, we know God is so good that He sent His own Son to rescue us from our sins. And to raise His Son so that we can be saved.

If there's not a clearer picture, or there is no clearer picture of God's goodness than that act in Jesus. Jesus' kindness, He's so kind that He set aside His glories.

To take on flesh and serve us, dying for us and rising for us. That's the kindness of Jesus. He's so kind that He's coming back for us.

[1 : 04] He didn't just start something and let it go. He's going to return, to finish everything. That's how kind Jesus is. He's so kind also that He does not leave us alone here and now.

In between when He came at first and when He's going to return. He doesn't leave us alone in this present time. That is kind on Jesus' part.

He has given us His Holy Spirit. Let me read to you something Jesus said. I'm going to ask you to turn to a number of passages this morning.

You don't have to turn to this one. You can just listen. It is in John chapter 16, verse 7. Jesus explained, the night that He was betrayed, He explained to His disciples, I tell you the truth, it is good for you that I'm going away.

Unless I go away, the Counselor, whom Jesus had already called the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you.

[2 : 13] But if I go, I will send Him to you. Jesus says to them that He'll not leave them as orphans. This is Jesus' kindness to give His Holy Spirit to His people.

He did that. He kept His promise. About a month and a half after these words, He poured out His Spirit on His followers. There were about 120 of them at that time. And you'll remember, this happened on Pentecost, when all of a sudden, His disciples began demonstrating powerfully to the world that the mighty acts of God are for the nations, the whole world, every tribe and tongue of people.

And they demonstrated that God's mighty acts are for everyone by miraculously speaking in tongues in languages that they did not know.

Announcing the miracles and the mighty acts of God in the languages of the people that were listening. And this displayed God's wonderful goodness to the world, to the whole world, in fact.

Well, Peter, who was there, Peter, who listened to Jesus, promised the Spirit, Peter, who was there at that moment, who received the Spirit, and began speaking in tongues that he did not understand, he then got up, he stood up, and explained to the listeners what was happening.

[3 : 37] Because people were saying, what's going on? So Peter stood up and he explained. And this is what he explained. Acts chapter 2, verses 32 and 33. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are witnesses of that fact.

Peter understood what was going on.

Jesus, exalted to the throne of God, had now poured out the Holy Spirit on his people. Why? Why did he do that?

Why did Jesus send the Spirit to his people? Now there are many purposes, many things the Spirit does. Let me read to you one section of a song that lists a lot of things that the Holy Spirit does in the life of believers.

And then the rest of this morning, we're going to focus on one particular thing, and also tonight. But just to give you a broad understanding of all the things that the Holy Spirit does for believers by Jesus' kindness, let me read to you.

[4 : 56] This is actually a Christian rap. It's called Triune Praise. I'm not going to rap it. I've read parts of this to you before. Triune Praise. The chorus goes like this.

Glory to the Father. Glory to the Son. Glory to the Spirit. Three and yet one. One in your nature. Three in your person.

The same in your essence. Distinct in your working. O my soul, behold the wonder of the Trinity. Blessed be the Trinity. O what a mystery.

I will stand amazed for the rest of my days, pouring out my heart in triune praise. That's the chorus. Then there's one verse on the Father, talking about all the Father does.

Another verse on the Son. And now this third verse on the Spirit. Praise God the Holy Spirit. Third person of the Trinity. Distinct from Father and Son, yet share in their divinity.

[5 : 54] Holy Spirit, we praise you. You don't like the spotlight. You'd rather point away from yourself and give props to Christ. And yet, because you're God, you deserve veneration.

And you're the one responsible for our regeneration. You apply the finished work of Christ to all the elect. Your call is effectual. You haven't lost one yet. You comfort us when sin, Satan, and the world get us bothered.

And it's only by you that we cry out, Abba, Father. You are the spirit of adoption, the spirit of truth. You graciously provide your people with the gifts and the fruit.

You help us kill sin. And you detach us from our idols. If it wasn't for you, we would never understand the Bible. Because you wrote it. For our life, it will surely suffice.

Amazingly, you do it all for the glory of Christ. That's just a glimpse, a short glimpse, of all that the Holy Spirit does.

[6 : 54] Or of some things the Holy Spirit does for Christ's people. We're going to focus on one thing this morning. How the Spirit gives gifts to each of us in order to help others, our other brothers and sisters.

We're going to contemplate that a bit this morning and again tonight. So I hope that we can grasp something of Jesus' kindness for sending His Spirit to equip us to serve each other more effectively.

Building each other up in love. That's what I hope we can grasp this morning. If you would, turn to Ephesians.

Ephesians chapter 4. At the end, we're going to come back to the passage in 1 Peter. But we're going to look at a few passages that are about the Holy Spirit and gifts right now.

Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. Verses 7 to 12. Page 1175, if you have the same version of the Bible as I do.

[8 : 08] Ephesians 4, verses 7 to 12. And I'll also read verse 16. But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

This is why it says in a psalm, Psalm 68, when He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.

And what does He ascended mean except that He had also descended to the lower earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe.

It was He, Jesus, who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets. Some to be evangelists. And some to be pastors and teachers. To prepare God's people for works of service.

So that the body of Christ may be built up. Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature.

[9 : 12] Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. And look at verse 16, just after. From Him, that is Christ, the head of the body. From Him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

Now this passage we looked at together about a month ago. I'm not going to expect anyone to remember. I couldn't even tell you the points that I had that day. But let me refresh you of what we talked about.

What we looked at a month ago from this verse, this passage, was that when Jesus raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, to God's throne, He poured out gifts on His body.

Believers. One of the particular gifts mentioned here, the particular gifts mentioned here, the pastor-teacher, for instance, Jesus gave to His church to equip them, to equip you, the congregants, for works of service.

That's what this time is supposed to be for, mainly, to equip you for works of service. And the body grows. We, together, as a group, as people, we grow, we mature in Christ, we are built up, or edified, as the body, as each of us, serves each other.

[10 : 44] As each part does its work. This is actually a glimpse at how good God is, and how kind Jesus is, that He would be so good to give you to each other.

That's the kindness of Jesus, to give us to each other. You are a gift from God to the others in here. But not in your own power.

Did you catch that tiny little phrase in verse 16? Look at verse 16. The very first two words. From Him, the whole body grows and builds itself up in love.

From Him. What does that mean? The body grows and matures as each of us, each part, does its work. Works of service. But that's from Him.

Well, this tiny little phrase, from Jesus, is like a window that we can peer through into a massive idea that is so important for us to get.

[11 : 50] What I've already been talking about, the spiritual gifts, gifts from the Spirit to each of us. this is from Jesus, ascended on high, poured out.

He equips us to serve each other and to help each other grow. As Peter had explained it, we've already seen, Jesus, exalted to the right hand of God, poured out the Spirit on us.

As Paul here explains it, Jesus, ascended up on high, has lavished gifts upon people to help each other, help equip each other and grow together.

Let me read to you another passage, another place that Paul talks about this. That's Romans chapter 12. You can turn here as well and see it with your own eyes. Romans chapter 12, verses 4 to 8.

Jesus' kindness in giving us His Spirit to equip us to help each other.

[13 : 00] Romans 12, 4 to 8. Just as each of us, or just as each of us is one, sorry, let me start now.

Just as each of us has one body, but with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a person's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

If it is serving, let him serve. If it is teaching, let him teach. If it is encouraging, let him encourage.

If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. If it is leadership, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

[14 : 06] This is just a glimpse of some of the gifts that Jesus gives to His people by the Spirit to equip us to help each other. There are so many different ways that Jesus shows His kindness to us by you helping each other.

What is your gift? What has the Lord Jesus poured out onto you by His Spirit? We're all one body given to each other, but we're all different according to the grace given us.

Can you see some of the pieces that we've looked at this morning coming together into a picture? Jesus promised to send His Holy Spirit for our good.

When Jesus raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, enthroned and glorious, He poured out God's own Spirit onto us, His followers.

Jesus graciously gives gifts to His followers so that united together as one body with many members, diverse parts, we each do our own part and the body grows and matures in Christ.

[15 : 20] We are divinely equipped by Jesus Himself through His Spirit and we cause the growth of each other as we each do our own work building each other up in love equipped by God.

So the question from the beginning, how good is God? How kind is Jesus? His kindness, His goodness is seen in so many ways.

One of them is He is so good that He has given you to each other and He has equipped you with divine power to bless each other.

Listen, if you will, to another passage, a more full passage that goes into breathtaking detail about who you are as the body of Jesus and how He has equipped you.

This gives other gifts that weren't mentioned in Romans or in Ephesians so it will give you some more ideas of ways that Jesus might be working in you through His Spirit to help each other.

[16 : 27] This is a portrait of who you are in Christ, of who you are because the Holy Spirit is within you if you trust Jesus. It's a portrait of who you are for each other, for each other's benefit.

It's 1 Corinthians chapter 12. So if you could turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We'll start reading at verse 4.

And I'm going to read chapter 12 and 13. 13 is a short chapter. So I'm going to read quite a bit. Listen carefully if you would. Scripture, Paul here, says this so much better than I could and that's why I just want to read it to you and then I will draw attention to a few things.

But listen carefully to the many different challenges for us as Christ's body. The challenges for us to value each other.

Even those of us who might not get along terribly well or who might typically talk bad about someone. We know that that goes on. We're humans.

[17 : 37] But those are the people also that we are called to serve by God's grace and equipping. So listen for the challenges for us to value each other and build up every single member of the body of Christ.

And listen especially for God's goodness in this passage. Jesus' kindness. 1 Corinthians 12 starting in verse 4.

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 people.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom.

To another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit. To another faith by that same Spirit. To another gifts of healing by that one Spirit.

[18 : 45] To another miraculous powers. To another prophecy. To another distinguishing between spirits. To another speaking in different kinds of tongues.

And to still another interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit. And He gives them to each one just as He determines.

The body is a unit. Though it is made up of many parts and though all its parts are many they form one body. So it is with Christ.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks slave are free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

[19 : 47] And if the ear should say because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye where would the sense of hearing be?

If the whole body were an ear where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts every one of them just as he wanted them to be.

If they were all one part where would the body be? As it is there are many parts but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand I don't need you and the head cannot say to the feet I don't need you.

On the contrary those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and the parts that we think less honorable we treat with special honor and the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it so that there should be no division in the body but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

[20 : 59] If one part suffers every part suffers with it. If one part is honored every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.

And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles second prophets third teachers then workers of miracles and also those having gifts of healing those able to help others those with gifts of administration those speaking in different kinds of tongues are all apostles are all prophets are all teachers do all work miracles do all have gifts of healing do all speak in tongues do all interpret but eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And now I will show you the most excellent way if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love I'm only a resounding gong a clanging cymbal if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have faith that can move mountains but have not love I am nothing if I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love I gain nothing love is patient love is kind it does not envy it does not boast it is not proud it is not rude it is not self-seeking it is not easily angered it keeps no record of wrongs love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth it always protects always trusts always hopes always perseveres love never fails but where there are prophecies they will cease where there are tongues they will be stilled where there is knowledge it will pass away for we know in part and we prophesy in part but when the perfect comes the imperfect disappears when I was a child I talked like a child

I thought like a child I reasoned like a child when I became a man I put childish ways behind me now we see but a poor reflection as in a dim mirror then when Christ returns we shall see face to face now I know in part then I shall know fully even as I am fully known and now these three remain faith hope and love but the greatest of these is love follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts peace it's quite an image of who we are because of Jesus and by his spirit that he has kindly given to us for the common good a personal statement for just a moment our family is about to move to another place in about a week a week tomorrow we'll move to

Belfast we've been here for six years and over the past six years we have grown tremendously and we have learned a lot from you all from Bon Accord especially about love for each other and service to each other we've learned about hospitality in a way that we did not know existed we've witnessed you not only serving us but serving each other people from very different backgrounds that you have welcomed into your homes you've welcomed into your hearts you've contributed to the needs of so many people so many of these gifts that have been mentioned we have seen fleshed out in you over the past six years and we are incredibly grateful for this in so many ways you as a group as a congregation of believers you are following the way of love as Paul says you are showing displaying many diverse spiritual gifts meaning that it's

[25 : 37] Jesus the triumphant reigning Jesus himself who is working through you by his spirits giving each of you gifts to build each other up and we've seen that fleshed out for us and before our eyes to others so please allow the following passage which is the last passage I'll read and then a few closing comments please allow them to be two things for you an encouragement to you as well as a challenge to you to seek and display God's gifts to you the spirit's gifts more passionately and to more people within our congregation here and beyond so please turn back to 1st Peter chapter 4 the passage that we read at the beginning 1st Peter chapter 4 verses 7 to 11 the end of all things is near that's not referring to us departing by the way that's referring to the end of all things the end of all things is near therefore be clear minded and self controlled so that you can pray above all love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins offer hospitality to one another without grumbling each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others faithfully administering

God's grace in its various forms if anyone speaks he should do it as one speaking the very words of God if anyone serves he should do it with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ to him be the glory and the power forever and ever I have a few words left before I say amen we're about to move to Belfast and there will likely be felt gaps unless we're doing something terribly wrong and nobody misses anything that we've done you'll probably notice some places where we've been working Lindsay myself even our girls where we've been doing things and you'll feel some holes some gaps in the church life but and this is exactly why I felt prompted by the spirit to preach on this topic spiritual gifts now and tonight because

God has not only equipped a pastor and a teacher or youth worker to do the work of building each other up he has not only equipped the people who stand up here the Lord Jesus has equipped all of you as many of you as follow Jesus he has equipped you to serve each other and build each other up in love to help each other mature in Christ God has surrounded you with you with each other for your good and he has divinely equipped you to help each other tonight we will look in greater detail at the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 and we'll look at it more practically than we have tonight also this morning also but for now let it suffice to close by saying this about spiritual gifts spiritual gifts are all about the kindness of

Jesus in equipping his people to love and serve each other better as each one uses whatever gift he has received to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms so that God may be praised through Jesus Christ it's to him that belongs the glory and the power forever and ever amen let's pray