REFLECTIONS ON THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

In the run up to Pentecost, or Whitsun, I am going to write a few words about each of the gifts of the Spirit which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12. These are wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretation.

I will give Bible references, so you might like to have a Bible to hand.

In the Old Testament these gifts were bestowed upon some chosen individuals, but since the death and resurrection of Jesus, and as prophesied by Joel, (Joel 2 v 28) they have become available to all his followers. Every Spirit–filled believer may receive and use any gift, but some gifts seem to be more suited to some people than others. And there is a degree of overlap among the gifts. I will be as clear as I can.

The most important thing about the gifts of the Spirit is that they must be used with love.

May I suggest that on the Day of Pentecost, we each choose a gift that we would like God to give us, and ask him for it. The gifts are given for the benefit of the Christian community. It might be difficult to use some of them while we are socially distancing, but perhaps not impossible. And life won’t be like this for ever!

1. WISDOM

Wisdom is being able to understand God’s truth in a given situation and using this understanding in a context of faith to help ourselves, or to counsel others, to do what is right.

The Bible is full of wisdom. There are four “Books of Wisdom” in the Old Testament. These are Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and Solomon. The example of wisdom that always comes to my mind is the story of King Solomon and the baby. (1 Kings 3 v 16-28) Solomon once asked God to give him wisdom, and the following story demonstrates that God did give it to him. Two women each claimed to be the mother of a baby. Solomon suggested that the baby be cut in two and half given to each woman. One woman objected to this course of action because she could not bear the baby to be killed, and said the other woman could have him, thus proving she, herself, was the mother.

Jesus was phenomenally wise. He often spoke in parables. A parable is a way of explaining a spiritual truth by using objects and ideas with which the listener is familiar. For example he suggested Christians should think of ourselves as lamps, describing us as “the light of the world”. (Matthew 5 v 14-16), because we should shine as lights so that the world can see the glory of God.

Jesus also frequently responded to one question with another. For example, the Pharisees asked Jesus whether they should pay taxes to Caesar and in reply he asked them whose portrait was on a coin. And then he said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. (Mark 12 v 13-17)

Here is another very wise saying of Jesus. We take some of these sayings for granted now, but we should not. Jesus said, ”You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5 v 43-44) That is wisdom.

One way the gift of wisdom may be used is in Christian counselling.

PRAYER

Dear Lord

Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

May we remember that all your gifts are freely available to us, if we truly want them and if we ask you for them.

May we not dismiss any of your gifts just because they may not be part of our church culture. Please may we be open to them.

May we never belittle the power of the Spirit and the extent to which that power is available to us.

Please forgive us when we do.

Holy Spirit, please fill me now. (*At this point ask the Holy Spirit for one of the gifts if you would like to.)*

Through Jesus Christ

Amen