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!

3. FAITH

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11 v 1)

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11 v 6)

There is a lot of evidence in the Bible (for a start the fulfilment in Jesus of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah), and in historical writings from the time of Jesus, which supports the Christian faith. You can almost make a decision to follow Jesus based entirely upon the evidence. But you do need a little faith completely to bridge the gap between disbelief and belief.

Perhaps the best example of a man of faith in the Old Testament is Abraham. He obeyed God’s call to leave his own country and travelled to a new one to found the Jewish race. (Genesis 12)

Also he was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, though in the end God did not ask that of him. (Genesis 22)

Paul said that Abraham was justified by faith. In other words, his faith was so strong that his faith alone made God forgive him for anything he might have done wrong.

One example of a man of great faith in the New Testament is the Roman centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant but was quite happy for Jesus not to come home with him but simply to say the word. And that is what happened and the man was healed. (Matthew 8 v 5-13)

The position with the gift of faith is that the Holy Spirit works on us so that we trust that God will act in a supernatural way in any situation for which we might be praying. The work is done by the Spirit. Our faith only needs to be “as small as a mustard seed”. (Matthew 17 v 20)

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