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!

4. HEALING

Healing might be of spirit, mind or body, hopefully all of them!

There are several examples of divine healing in the Old Testament, of which one of the best known is Elisha the prophet healing Naaman, a commander in the Syrian army, of leprosy. (2 Kings 5)

Jesus, of course, performed many healing miracles. He did these first and foremost to give glory to God. He also wanted to build the faith of those who witnessed them. He was also compassionate and wanted to heal the sick. Perhaps the greatest of these healing miracles was when he raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. (John 11)

And Jesus gave his disciples power and authority to heal in his name and they also performed many healing miracles. In fact, there was nothing Jesus did that his disciples could not do. Peter even raised someone from the dead (Acts 9 v 36-43).

When we use the gift of healing, there is laying on of hands, because touch seems to be an effective way of passing the Spirit to the sick person. There has to be some faith present, whether in the healer, the one being healed, or others in the vicinity. Healing can be blocked by sin and sometimes the person has to ask for forgiveness for the healing to be effective. Sometimes evil spirits might have some involvement in the disease and the healer might have to deal with those. Often, as there is a build-up of the Spirit, there will be manifestations, which can look strange, but are nothing to fear. People sometimes fall over, or laugh or cry, for example. The proof of the effectiveness of healing is in the fruit. Healing of some sort always occurs, whether spiritual, emotional or physical. Ultimately God is sovereign and does not always choose to heal physically, but often he does.

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