



Glyfada Christian Center



18/05/2025

Preacher Luca; Stavros Antoniadis

Series God's gifts

Service Sunday Service

Passages 1 Timothy 1:17; Psalm 27:1-4; Matthew 11:12; Matthew 25:34-40;
1 Corinthians 12:1-6;

Gifted – Do we have a gift and do we belong

Pastor Gail – Greeting and Reading of the Word.

1. Good Morning. We are so thankful to have time with the Lord. Hopefully, we have time with Him by ourselves all through the week. But Sunday is a very special day. We gather together to raise our hands and our voice, to gather to give Him glory. To remember that we are family. Jesus created us to be in community, and Sunday is a celebration of that community. And I love the Scripture that says that where two or three are gathered together, He's there. We know He is with us when we're alone, Him and I, but isn't it wonderful, when that's just magnified, looking at faces that are shining with the presence of the Lord. So, Lord, we welcome You today, You are the King.

2. We're going to stop here for a second. Some of you may not know that we're actually singing from the Word, this morning. Absolutely one of my favorite Scriptures in the Bible, in

1 Timothy 1. Sometimes, I don't know about you, but that's how I learned a lot of Scriptures, to sing it.

3. 1 Timothy 1:17, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." We're actually singing these words this morning. I think that's so powerful, that Paul wrote to Timothy and he said, 'Let's give Him, the King, all the praise.' Please stand in His presence for a moment.

4. Glory and Honor to You forever. He is a great God. Turn with me to Psalm 27:1-4, "The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

5. Thank You Lord, for Your Word. Lord, we just thank You today that we are in Your presence here in this very room. Let's just forget about everything else that was before today, and everything in the afternoon, just to be our strong tower.

6. Before we start today, Evy, I'm going to use you is that alright? Evy was very early here today, and she came down and spoke to the worship team, and she said something that the Lord has been talking to me all week long, that when we just see a situation, but we look beyond it to Him. There are so many Scriptures that talk about, 'Lift your voice to Him, lift your hands to Him. He sees and hears, amen, and He's already prepared the answers. There's a Scripture in the New Testament, that says, "the Kingdom of God suffers violence, and the violent, take it by force" Matthew 11:12, and we are the violent ones. Amen. It doesn't mean that you're always violent loudly; I might be, and you might not. But we know who wins, amen. We're in the Lord's army, Amen. And He's won every victory we've ever needed and we've ever needed. And sometimes, sometimes, we need to lift our voices and lift our hands, instead of our hands hanging down, but our hands lifted up. Yet, will I praise the Lord. Yet, will I give glory. Yet, will I honor Him, Amen.

7. The King gifts us, with assignments for Him. And Henneke, will share with us today, how the Lord is using her. You may not know this, but pastor Brian and I, we've known Henneke for a long time. We knew her when she was serving in the country of Tunisia. We knew her when she was serving in Libya, during the time of great wars and great battles. And it is our honor that Henneke is a part of our local church.

Henneke – Testimony

1. Good morning, everyone. The song, 'Worthy of every breath.' You were all singing it enthusiastically, but it is actually a very dangerous song. So, be careful when you say, 'Lead me in Your love to those around me.' So, I'm Henneke, and I make tea for refugees. That was how I was introduced one day. I wasn't going to name any names, and I was a little offended, but when I thought about it, God took me to Matthew 25, where Jesus is talking about those who have honored the King, and in Matthew 25:34-40, He says, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry

and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

2. So, I am involved in trauma care for asylum seekers and refugees. And understanding that there are very simple things that we can do, to start the process of healing, for people who are broken. So, I am involved in an NGO, with Michale and Katerina, and another couple, and I call what I do the, 'Hephzibah' project. Because that is from a verse in the Bible, (Isaiah 62:4), which says, "My delight in her," and it reminds us that God delights in people.

3. So, a quick definition: An asylum seeker is a person who is looking for protection, because they fear persecution, or they have experienced violence, or human rights violation. A refugee is a person who has asked for protection, and was given refuge. There are many reasons why people may seek asylum. They may be fleeing war or persecution. Persecution for their faith, their religious beliefs, their gender identity. But what makes somebody leave their country, usually is that they have no hope.

4. Last year, here in Greece, about 69,000 people asked for asylum. That is only 7.5% of the asylum requests worldwide. And they come from countries from all over the world. So, God is bringing the world to us. What I do, is I team up with others, in three different locations. So, some days I may be working with Katerina, or I may be with Tina. These women are very skilled by the way; you need to talk to them.

5. I use stories from the Bible, that have aspects in them of who God is, and how He sees us. The story of Joseph, maybe the story of Mary, who wipes the feet of Jesus. The story of Hagar, who knew that God saw her. And then we use lots of activities. They may be art exercises or physical exercises. They may be fun and games, or doing breathing work. Lots of exercises to regulate your breathing when for example you have a panic attack.

6. So, we're giving them tools to start helping themselves and to start the healing journey. We listen and sometimes we cry with them, or we cry for them. Sometimes we show them love which helps them a lot. In the next slide we can see better what's it all about. Sometimes we find ourselves in difficult circumstances.

7. If as a woman you have experienced sexual violence, it might be very difficult for you to go to some doctor. We pray for them. We look after the children. We try to always be present. We make a lot of tea and much coffee. Hospitality is one of the most helpful things we can offer these people, and it becomes a blessing.

8. There are times when we use this van that you see on the slides. To be recognize, or for safety. We may even have some special occasions, maybe a birthday, or Christmas. But there is always this recognition of these precious women carry a heaven burden.

9. I could tell you a story of a family with 2 young girls, who walked for 3 months, through the mountains, till they had no toe nails left. Or I could tell you about the precious woman, who was petrified to go to the beach, where we normally enjoy going in the summer. She had seen people drown in front of her as she was travelling here.

10. But I don't need to tell you, their stories. Because I don't want to stir your emotions. I want to stir your Christian love for people. And each one of you is a part of this work. Let's just go to the next slide and you can work out where your part in this work is in that.

11. The first thing is please, please pray. Pray for healing, pray for encounters with Jesus. Pray for those of us working with stories that break our hearts too. Pray for more people who really want to get involved, and be careful when we sing songs in church. Ask us, when you see us on a Sunday in church, how can I pray for you this week.

12. I've put on the slide, 'Join us as a volunteer.' If you feel like this is what God would like you to be involved in, or if you feel like you want to pray more informed, we'd love you to join us. But we don't do refugee tourism. They are people who have dignity and worth. And one day, I hope to have along side me, we already have wonderful people who could tell their story. And I would like to have somebody along side me who says, 'I met Jesus, on the refugee road.'

13. Let's be a trauma informed well faring community, for broken people. And let's make tea together for refugees.

Pastor Gail

1. I really like the idea of making tea for the refugees. Thank you Henneke. Jesus was the greatest example of His washing the feet of His disciples. Amen. Be sure to talk to Henneke today after service and Michael and Katerina, and so many others. We are so thankful for having people who are working with the refugees. This is the year of prayer. The theme is prayer.

2. So, I want us to pray for just a moment. But I want us to pray for Henneke and all the people in this room, that serve in those various ministries. And I'd like to invite you to stand with me also, because I would like us to continue to pray for Martha, as some of you may know, she is doing some better.

3. Martha is a member of this church and she founded 'Nea Zoi'. Basically, started with us in EME. And she has very serious cancer. Last week she didn't recognize anyone, but her son believes that our prayers, are bringing her through. They're stopping the chemotherapy, because the doctors said that it was killing her. The doctors said that, and since she's stopped, she's better. We want to believe for God's will, in this situation, Amen. Let's pray for the refugee highway, let's pray for one another. We pray right now for all that, Amen.

For the remainder, please watch the video.

Luca – Main Message.

1. Good Morning. How do you feel today? Good, Good. I want to ask you a question. Have you ever been to a concert, a really big concert? Tell me who was it? – Sting, the Beatles, OK.

Anything better? The bars pretty high. I remember very well when I went to my very first concert. It was my favorite rapper. I was so excited about it. Because I never imagined that I would ever be able to see him. But one day he came to Germany. And me and a friend of mine bought tickets to go to this concert.

2. I remember we were driving there. We made sure that we were very early on time, to be in the front row. And my friend was driving very slowly to save gas. And I was saying, 'Come on drive faster. We've got to be there.' And then we were there. And it was so great. It was so exciting to finally see him, and I actually remember thinking, 'Maybe if I sing good enough and he sees me singing, he'll bring me up on stage, you know.' I was hoping. I wanted him to see that I know all the lyrics, even the double times, the hard parts.

3. Well, he didn't bring me on stage obviously. It was still a great evening. I was watching him perform and it was great. I was a member of the audience, a spectator, but I wanted to have more. I wanted to be part of it.

4. Actually, when I look around at this room, we should have a concert here as well. You know, we have seats, you guys sitting there, all relaxed and we have a stage. But we are a church after all, Right? And when I think about a church, the picture I have in mind, is not just a concert. It's not a place where most of the people are spectators or two or three holy people serve.

5. I think a much better picture would be an orchestra. A big band with many different instruments, and all of us are a part of it. I think, it's a little bit similar to the picture Anton painted, last week, when he talked about Paul, where he referred to the church as a body, you know. We have the eye, the hand, and the arms, and every part is needed. All of us play an important role in this body.

6. Do you believe that? That's great. So, for those you who might say, 'Hmm, maybe I'm new here, maybe I started going to this church very recently,' you might have the question in your mind, 'What role do I play in this orchestra? What is my part in this church?'

7. Because we are in the season of 'The Gifted' series, so we want to talk about the different gifts that the Spirit gave to us, and how each one of us can be a part of the orchestra and serve with each and every different gift.

8. And to do so, we'll read from 1 Corinthians 12, and I want to try something with you guys. I hope you're with me. Can we please stand for the Word together, and make sure you have a Bible with you, there are still some more laying around. So, we are reading from 1 Corinthians 12. It's in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, and then there is 1 Corinthians.

9. Let's try to read it together. We are reading the first 6 verses from chapter 12. I will start and you guys just join me, alright? First in English and then after that in Greek. "Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to dumb idols. Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of workings, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.” This is the Word of God. Now in Greek.

10. Perfect. The church is an orchestra, with many different instruments. Some you can hear louder than others. The piano for example, but then there are more quiet ones, maybe the violin. But they’re all part of the orchestra. Even I can be a part of it, when I play the triangle.

11. Let’s go back to the question, ‘How do I know if I am a part of the orchestra? What brings us together and what makes us the orchestra?’ To answer this question, Paul takes a few steps back. He talks to the Corinthians about their past. Their old lives. They used to follow dead gods. They were part of the cult life, going to the temples, serving the offerings, and going back home.

12. But when they met Jesus, something changed. A transformation of heart took place. Something came to life inside of them, that they didn’t know existed. And that changed everything from within. A life with Jesus changes everything. It means, knowing that you are unique; you are made with dignity by God, the creator of the universe.

13. It means, this God wants a relationship with you; this God knows your flaws, knows your mistakes, but He loves you anyway. It means that He has given you a character. He has given you abilities. He has gifted you. This is true and living faith. And this faith can say as we read it in verse 3, “Jesus is Lord.”

14. This truth stands today. If you have experienced this change, when the Holy Spirit has called you and God lives inside of you, and you can say from the bottom of your heart, “Jesus is Lord,” you are a part of the orchestra. You are part of God’s family. And you are part of this body and of this church.

15. We are part of the orchestra. Our old lives no longer count. Whatever dead idols you may have followed before, whether it was recognition from other people, wealth, whatever it was, it is dead. The Holy Spirit is alive in you, and proclaiming this truth, and saying Jesus is Lord, makes a difference. Because it is true. And if this is true, that you are part of the orchestra, it means that you play an instrument. That means it is true that He has equipped you, to be a part of this church.

16. So, now that you know you are a part of the orchestra, and you are equipped, you are gifted, which leads us to the question, ‘What instrument do I play?’ To be honest with you, the specific gifts, Paul shares a little bit later and we are going to be talking about this, in the upcoming weeks.

17. But before that, he wants to make something important very clear. In the verses 4-6, he writes, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different effects, but it is the same God who works all in all.”

18. Why does Paul say this here? Why is he not jumping to the gifts already? But he is repeating something several times here. I think the important message Paul wants us to understand this; all gifts have the same value because they come from the same God. All gifts have the same value because they come from the same God.

19. Of course, there are different kinds of gifts, but none is better than the other. None is more important or even more spiritual than the other. That is what the Corinthians thought. They were speaking in tongues and prophecy, and they thought, for example, that those gifts were more spiritual. But this is wrong. All gifts have the same value.

20. And something else that Paul describes in these 3 verses, which gives a deeper meaning to the gifts, is that those gifts are not just gifts, but they are a service and an effect. So, those gifts are 3-in-one.

21. Let's talk a bit about the gifts at first. This emphasizes that the gifts are gifts of grace by God. They are not earned by works, but gifts of God's grace. He has lovingly placed them in our hearts, and each one of us has something so unique in us, that is different from everyone else in this room. God has made us unique and gifted us so, so differently. So, that's the gift.

22. But these gifts don't end in themselves. Those gifts have a higher purpose. Those gifts are meant to share. So, at the same time those gifts are a service. Those gifts are meant to build each other up. We as the body of the church, benefit from each and everyone of us, from our differences, from our different gifts. So, the mission and the purpose of those gifts are a service.

23. And a third thing Paul says about those gifts, is that they are also an effect. What that means is, that whatever happens through us, is ultimately God's work. God has placed those gifts in us. So, it is the Holy Spirit who brings them to life. Gifts, service and effect. And if we use them like this, we serve the unity of the church. This is such that a great message, it serves the unity of the church.

24. Because God is three-in-one, that's what Paul writes here, because he is talking about the Spirit, the Lord and God the Father, God wants to bring unity to the church, through those gifts. Through this triangle of Gifts, service and effect. It is the Spirit who gives the gift, the Lord, that is Jesus, who is the center of the ministry, and God, the Father, the source of the power.

25. So, our gifts may be different, but they have the same origin, God. This means as I said before, no gift is more important than the other. There is no point in comparing each other. But if we encourage one another, we live in this divine unity.

26. So, in this orchestra there are many different instruments, and if we have the same origin, it doesn't matter if one is louder or quieter, they all at the end serve this beautiful song. And this diversity is a gift. You are strong, because you are different from me. We are different, and that is a good thing. Share your gifts with us. Get involved in this church. Don't hold back. We need you, and God wants to work with you.

27. You don't have to compare with other gifts. And I know this is easier said than done. Because it might seem that my gift is not all that valuable to the whole church. But it is a divine truth, and I'm sure that everyone of us can talk from experience, that we can learn from one another, and that all those differences are good for the body of the church.

28. I think we are a congregation that sometimes, couldn't be more different from one another. We are different in many ways. There are so many different cultures in this room.

Everyone has such a unique story, we have people with so much experience, young ones who are still figuring out. People who know their gifts already, and people who are still discovering.

29. I love it that I can say from the bottom of my heart, that I have learned so much from all those different experiences and different perspectives, that you guys bring into this church. And that makes the unity of the church whole. Every gift is important, because it come from God. Every gift serves the strength of the church.

30. So, you are not here just to watch, you are here because God wants you to be here. You are here because God gifted you. Maybe your gift is quiet, but it carries. Maybe you think it is not that spectacular, but it strengthens others. You may be a good listener, you may have a heart for children, maybe you can organize things, pray, encourage, make music, or be hospitable. Then that gift is your ministry.

31. We are different. But we are not separated. We all serve the same God. And He brings us together. As the Spirit who gives us the gifts, as the Lord, Jesus, who leads us, and as God, the Father, with His power who works in us. You belong here. You are needed and you are seen, God sees you, we need you. Imagine what becomes possible, when we continue to live like that.

32. I think, we have just started to become this orchestra of God, playing a divine song. Let's continue to live like that. Let's not live next to one another, but be there for each other. Not in competition but together. Not for our own glory, but for the glory of God.

33. Let us pray. Father, thank You for creating me and working in me, Jesus, I thank You for being my Lord. I want to serve You. Holy Spirit, show me my gift, and give me the courage to use it. Lord, we thank You for Your unity, and we thank You for making us so different, and yet You bring us together as a church. Show us how we can work with each other, and let our church be a testimony of Your love and of Your divine unity. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen