



Glyfada Christian Center



11/05/2025

Preacher Anton Beukes; Stavros Antoniadis

Series God's gifts

Service Sunday Service

Passages Romans 12:1-2; Romans 12:3-8;

Gifted: The Grace Given Us – God and Justice Presentation

Anton Beukes – Welcome Mothers, Bible Reading, prayer.

1. You can sit down for a moment. Welcome to everybody. Especially our mothers today. If you are a woman that has given birth to a child, or if you are a spiritual mother to somebody or many others, we want to say 'Happy Mother's Day.' And more than that, may it be a blessed day for you. Our mothers are special to us. For many of us who still have the privilege of having a mother, and maybe many, many miles away, we know how special mothers are. So, for you who have their mothers with you today, love them, appreciate them, and enjoy the day with them.

2. We're just going to read a couple of verses before we continue our worship. We'll read from Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper

worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

3. Worship is what we do this morning through song, but worship is the way we live before God. In everything that we do, when we sacrifice ourselves, our desires, our needs, then God is worshipped, when we live according to His will, and in holiness. Let us continue to worship the Lord through our songs this morning.

4. Our Father in heaven, You are a good Father. You are so, so good. Lord, sometimes we don't even have the words to express how good You are. But this morning we want to say, this morning we want to sing, this morning we want to shout out, that You are a good Father. But You are also our good Father. Our Father, that we Your children can come to You, and worship and praise You. Thank You that we can do that in Jesus' name. Amen.

5. Let's just thank our worship team for the worship this morning. You may sit down. Greetings from pastors Gail and Brian. They are out of town for a few days. They are meeting with some ministry partners, and they're also meeting with a member of our church, that does not live in Athens at this time. Please continue to pray for them.

6. We've changed the program for this morning a little bit. This is now the time for the children to go to the children's service, and let's just pray for them. Father, we thank You for our children, they are a blessing from You. And Lord, we pray that as they spend together this morning, that You will continue to reveal Yourself to them; that You will reveal Your love for them. We thank You Lord, for all our Sunday school teachers. Thank You Lord, for the gifts that You have given them, and we pray that You will use them this morning as Your instruments. And we pray this in Jesus' name. And as the children leave, let's take a couple of minutes just to greet somebody. There are some new people here this morning. Let's greet people and say hello to one another. You can stand up and walk around.

Anton Beukes – Main Message.

1. Today, we'll read from the book of Romans 12:3-8. I'm just going to give you some time to look it up in your Bible or your phone. We prefer the Bible and it will also be on the screen, but it is good to follow in your Bible. Before we start, let us pray together. Father, we thank You for Your Word, Your living Word, Your Son Jesus, that came to reveal Yourself. But we also thank You for Your written Word, that we can read Your will and love for us every day. And Father as we read from Your Word, and as we talk about Your Word, we pray Lord, that You open our eyes, that You will open our ears and our hearts, that Your Spirit will speak to us, so that we will know You better. But also give us the strength to live out what You teach us today. Thank You for the gift of Your Spirit, that leads us, that corrects us, that brings us together in unity. We thank You Lord, for Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that because of Him being worthy, we can pray this in Your name. Amen.

2. So, today is mother's day, and if you came in a little bit late, we already wished the mothers a happy day, but usually with mother's day, in many cultures, there is a small gift-giving. Maybe some flowers, or chocolates, or whatever your mother loves. Not usually something as big as a birthday present, I think it should be bigger, but let's keep it there, but

it is more the words that we say through the gift, to say, 'I love you; I appreciate you; I thank you.'

3. As I was thinking about gift-giving last night, a question came to my mind, 'Why do we give gifts?' It costs money. It's expensive, and sometimes people don't even use it. And sometimes, they don't even appreciate it. Or they just put it back in the package and give it to somebody else. But when we look at the history of gift giving, we see that throughout thousands of years, all over the world, people have been giving gifts. Gestures to say thank you. Gifts to say, 'I love you.' Gifts of bribing, or good will, just because you need it. Giving gifts is part of who we are as humans. Today, we give gifts on certain milestones, mother's day, birth days, Christmas, when you leave a job. Your colleagues would say thank you for your work, or they could also be thankful that you are leaving. It's mainly focused on special events.

4. But when we go back to the time of Paul and Jesus, especially in the Greek and Roman cultures, gift-giving was a part of the honor and shame culture that these two cultures lived in. It was a reciprocal gift-giving, meaning that when I give a gift to someone, I expect a gift back. If I was of a higher influence, in a higher class, and I give gifts, maybe money to somebody in a lower class, they will not necessarily give me the equal amount of money back, but they may do something for me.

5. That was the whole system of benefactor, or patron with their clients. And so, a rich person, may give money to a writer, and the writer wrote a poem or their book, or their play, they may dedicate it to their benefactor. Many of the rich men in the Greek and Roman societies, would give a lot of money to a lot of clients, with the expectation, that when it comes to the time to vote for people for certain positions, that they will not only vote for that person, but they will go around and encourage other people to vote for that person as well. The idea was to give, in order to receive. Even giving to the gods, was with the expectation of a blessing or something.

6. There was always an obligation when you received a gift. There is a well-known picture that is depicted in photos or statues, this was the most decent one I found, sorry, most of the others were all naked. But this is a portrait of three girls dancing. It's also called 'The three graces.' The three graces refer to three gifts, that was a part of this culture. The gift that you give, the give that you receive back, and the gift that is given forward. So, I receive a gift, I give it back, but I also give forward. That was expected of all good citizens.

7. But how do we look at this kind of gift in spiritual terms. And I think this is something that Paul wrestled with as well. Are the gifts that we receive from God, something that He expects us to give back in the same way. Or if we give a gift to one another, should we expect a gift back? Why did God give us gifts? Because He expects us to give them back to Him? Or why do we receive the gifts?

8. So, let's go to Romans 12:3-8, and see if we can find some answers from this passage. "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to

the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

9. So, let’s look at this whole text, to try to figure out why God gave us these gifts and how we should respond to that. Let’s read v. 3 again, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.”

10. So, the first thing that we see here is that Paul speaks to the church in Rome, not from a position of, ‘These are my own thoughts or this is my own teaching,’ or saying, ‘I’m the greatest teacher ever,’ but he says, ‘According to the grace that I have received, I say to you. I’m not better than you, I’m not more intelligent than you, I’m not wiser than you. But God has given me, the grace, a gift to understand, and what He wants tell the church.’

11. And then he says to the church, ‘Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought to.’ How do you see yourself? I’m important because I’m standing in front of you. I’m called a teacher. It means that I have many years of experience, many years of training, and very few of you are sleeping, so you are listening to what I’m saying. That is boosting myself. But when we look at the grace we have received, the gift of wisdom and of knowledge, that God gave me many years to study and to experience, it’s not for my benefit, it is for your benefit. I may stand here, but it is the gift that the Lord has given me, that enables me to stand here, so that you can be blessed, and we as a church can grow in the knowledge of who God is.

12. So, how do we look at ourselves? As in the important positions that we stand in, or remember how sinful we were, how weak we were, before we met Christ, and that everything that we have, everything that we are, is not because of ourselves, but it’s because of Him. Remember, Paul said, ‘I was crucified with Christ. I don’t live anymore. Christ lives in me.’ And so, when we look at ourselves, what should we see? Not this body, not this brilliant mind, we should see Christ in us. And everything that we do, is from God, is through God the Spirit, is to God. Think soberly about who you are.

13. And then Paul continues this verse to say, ‘In accordance to the faith that God has distributed to each one of us.’ We are who we are; we have received what we have, not because of our greatness, but because of what God has done, the grace that flowed through Christ on the cross, and the only response that we can have, is that of faith. The gifts are given to us, not because we deserve them, but because we believe in what Christ has done, and what He continues to do.

14. And I want you to look at the last few words in the English, surely, it’s the same in the Greek, “To each one of you.” It’s not just the elected few that received gifts. Each one of us, if you believe in Jesus as your Lord, and is His follower, you have received a gift; at least one gift from God. It’s been given to us. It’s been distributed to us.

15. Now, the distribution is an important part. So, let’s look at the next verse, v. 4. “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function.” This is a beautiful picture that Paul uses. Because, when I look at the people sitting in front of me and behind me; I wish I could see all those who are online, but I see

many different people. Women and men. Young and old. From different cultures. Speaking different languages. But I also see people with different gifts. Different functions.

16. And so, we are like a body. With different functions. Some are shoulders, some are biceps, some are elbows, some are forearms, some are hands, and then there are different fingers on each hand. Now, the fingers cannot say, 'We alone are important, when we write a letter, because without the hand, and without the forearm and without the elbow, and the biceps and the shoulder, the fingers are unable to write.' We are not like this (A hand without an arm). We are like this (We have a hand which goes back and forth.) We are different with different gifts.

17. And when we look at the next verse, v. 5, "so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." We are one church. We are different people. We have different gifts. And our gifts and our functions, are not for our own benefit, they're not for my benefit, they are for your benefit. Because, I don't only belong to Christ, but I also belong to you.

18. The church is not a place for individuals, to just come and receive and leave. The church is where we come together, to be together, and as we serve one another, we serve God. I don't belong to myself. I belong to you. This is very dangerous. Because in fact, when I say that, you should determine what I do and where I go. And whatever I do and wherever I go, should be to your benefit and not to mine.

19. Think of that. Is that true for me? Is that true for you? Are you prepared to fully commit to a church, where you don't belong to yourself anymore but where you belong to others? Because we are the body of Christ, and we are the bride of Christ. So, when God gives us a gift, it is to the benefit of others and not for ourselves.

20. Paul continues to say in v. 6, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us..." A bit earlier Paul said in v. 3b, "in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." But now he says, "According to the grace, you have received." And I think this answers our initial question, 'How do we need to look at Spiritual gifts?'

21. God gives us the gifts, as part of His grace. Grace is to receive what we do not need or do not deserve. We received eternal life which we do not deserve. And so, the same way that we have received eternal life in the same way we receive the gifts. It is God's grace given to us. And we respond to that, through the faith that God has given us. And these two go very closely hand-in-hand.

22. Let's read what Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast." We receive gifts from God, because they're His gifts to us. We cannot earn them, we cannot deserve them, and we cannot give the same back to God. It's all just a gift.

23. Let's go back to Romans 12:6b-8, where Paul continues to say, "If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith, if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach, if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully." I wish we

had another four hours to talk about these gifts. But we'll look at each one of them in September, October, November.

24. But if you just go back to v. 6, in this list of gifts there are seven gifts. The first one is prophesying. And this is the only one where Paul says, 'If it is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith.' This is the only part where he says in accordance with something. You cannot prophesy if you do not believe in God. God will not give you the gift of prophecy if you do not believe His Word, and if you do not believe in His authority. If somebody claims to be a prophet, and they are not a follower of Jesus, and they do not believe in the authority of the Word, then we should question if they are prophets.

25. The next three gifts that Paul mentions, 'serving, teaching, encouragement,' he just says, 'If it is to serve then serve, if it to teach then teach.' If you have received a gift then do it. Use it. That's basically what Paul is saying. If you have received a gift, don't let it get watered down, don't let it get cold; use it, as often as you can.

26. The last three that Paul mentions in v. 8, 'If it is to give, give generously, if it is to lead, lead diligently, if it is to show mercy then do it cheerfully.' And so, with these gifts, Paul adds an attitude to this. Don't use the gift, just because you have to use it, use it because you are grateful that it has been given to you. Don't use it grudgingly. Use it joyfully, cheerfully. Use it because God is honored by you.

27. So, let's get back to the picture of the three graces, you don't have to look at the picture for very long. A Croatian theologian, Miroslav Wolf, looked at the picture and looked at the meaning of this picture, and gives an answer from a New Testament perspective. He says, 'Yes, we receive a gift, we receive the grace from God. He lavishes it on us; we cannot give the same amount back to him. All we can say is, Thank You Lord. Thank You Lord, through our words, through our thoughts, through our deeds and through the way that we use our gifts.' That is the grace or the blessing that we give to God. But we should also give the grace and the blessing forward. Joyfully, generously, without expecting anything else to come back to us.

28. Why does God give us so many gifts? Because He loves us, we are His children, and He loves to shower us with gifts. We do not give anything back to God, to receive the gift. We give to God because we are eternally grateful. And the way that we use our gifts, is the way that we thank the Lord, and worship the Lord. God is a good, good Father. He gives us so much. May we look at what we have received, and use it to His glory.

29. Father, we thank You for all the gifts that You have given us, and we pray Lord, that You will give us the strength to use those gifts to Your glory. Amen.

Anton Beukes – Announcements

1. We're going to have time to give to the Lord, through our gifts and offerings, and while we do that, we'll look at some of our announcements.
2. I think I have like five pages that I have to work through.
3. For more of the announcements see the video.
4. There is also a short video in English with Greek subtitles.'