

# Belonging and gifts (ii)

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Date: 05 November 2017

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[0:00] Today, this is number six in a series of six on the nature of the communities of Jesus Christ. Hopefully, encourage us together to be zealous for the things that really last and really matter and really build up the body of Christ.

And it's in connection with church membership. So being a church member, I think, is just saying yes to these things that the Bible says. And yes, I'll do that here with this group of people. And just to remind us that Matt and Penny are due to be received into membership on November the 26th. And as if you're a church member, you have an opportunity to comment on that. We don't just do it on the say so of the elders. We as a church are receiving other brothers and sisters into church membership. And we want all be on board for that. OK, that just gives us the idea of what's happening.

So this ought to be my introduction. My introduction is what is true spirituality? In Hinduism, if I remember what I was told correctly when I was in Sri Lanka, a Hindu holy man is somebody who can go up on a mountain without food in sub-zero temperatures and survive the cold and the isolation.

[1:44] And that is holiness. It doesn't matter whether he committed adultery or lies. His holiness consists in this supernatural ability to survive the cold, etc.

Back in the day, and still today actually, monks seek spirituality by maintaining celibacy and silence. So they don't get married and they don't talk. It's an interesting combination, isn't it? Today's TV evangelists say if you're a really spiritual person, you'll be very healthy and probably very good looking and very wealthy because spirituality is to do with health and wealth.

And of course, here is a spiritual giant. That's Yoda, in case you didn't know. And his power was that he could fight and levitate and speak sentences backwards, he could.

Things like that. He's a Jedi master, isn't he? And who are the real Jedi masters of Christianity? Who are the real spiritual masters?

[2:57] What does spiritual excellence look like? Is it power? Is it being superhuman? Is it being subhuman? And I'd like to answer that question from a Christian perspective by looking at what the Apostle Paul says, actually in three chapters of his letter to the church in Corinth, written about 54 AD.

So back there. And if you can find in your Bible, 1 Corinthians 12, you can see what a large chunk I have chosen to try and chew on for this morning.

And while you're looking at that, you might also have in your mind this question. What does Calvary say about charismatic gifts and speaking in tongues and all that sort of stuff?

Anyway, let's do a guided tour through 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14. Maybe a guided tour is too fine a title. It's like scratching the surface with rather a long scratch.

Here's a map, which I got from the internet. I hope they don't mind. This is a map of the Mediterranean. There's Italy, Sicilia. There's Greece.

[4:07] There's Cyprus. And Corinth is there. It's on that little bit of, by the sea, on that little narrow bit there.

It's in the ancient Mediterranean. There were many churches around, because this is right at the beginning of Christianity. So the Apostle Paul had gone all the way around here.

And you notice some other names of important places that are mentioned in the Bible where God did amazing things back in those days. There were apostles, prophets, mighty things being done,

healings, and so on.

And there's the arrow to show where they are. It was a seaport. There was money around. There was commerce. It was cosmopolitan. Different nationalities.

It was pagan. It would be immoral. Quite often, seaports are like that. And that is the place where 1 Corinthians is sent to.

[5:06] That's Corinth. Right. I'm just going to pause for a minute, because I've got a lot to say. And I mustn't try and say it too quickly. I'm just going to look and see who's here. Good morning to you all.

Good morning to you all. Good morning. Let's click on. So now I'd like to put this into a context in a slightly different way.

That was the geographical map. You're okay with that. You knew where the map was. So let's put this now on a timeline. And I'm going to start the timeline back in the time of Abraham. So it's a Bible timeline.

So Abraham, the father and founder of the Jewish race. And we're going to follow the timeline on. So lots of things God does following that timeline.

Let's just put Moses in there. The man who led the nation of Israel when Abraham's family had enlarged. So as to become a whole nation.

[6:07] And they were given a body of laws and so on, which is taking us into the territory of this evening. And the study in Galatians. Anyway. This is the time in which God promises things.

He makes a promise to Abraham of a huge, wonderful future wrapped up with the seed of Abraham. So promise.

And the promise comes to its fulfillment in Jesus. That red dot is Jesus. Who died on the cross and rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven.

So that work that Jesus did was a complete work. He finished his work. He went into heaven. He sits in heaven now. And there's more to do in a sense.

But what he came down to earth to do was finished. And he gave that information to people to tell others and to write down.

[7:15] And I've put a blob around there. Which is the work of the apostles as they went round that area of the Mediterranean.

And Jesus had handed to them the message. And they wrote it all down. And by the time we get to the end of that blob, the Bible is complete.

But it isn't complete in the middle of the blob. Because it's still being written. So this, I would say, is the time of inauguration. So the promises begin to be fulfilled.

And a foundation is laid. And I think we saw this last time, didn't we? The foundation of the apostles and prophets. And the timeline goes on to that orange blob, which is the final fulfillment of all the promises.

Which is the resurrection, not just of Jesus, but of his people. And the future resurrection in glory for his people.

[8:18] And so we are there somewhere on that timeline, looking back on the cross, looking forward to the complete fulfillment of all things.

The resurrection of his people. And the Corinthians were there. So that places them in a different sort of timeline. But that's where they were. Awaiting the consummation.

Now what I need to tell you is that I don't think the Corinthians would have agreed with my picture. We get this in different places.

And I'm going to try not to get drawn aside to explain too many things as we go through. But I should stop at this point. This area is where the revelation is complete.

And we have the Bible. And we're waiting for the resurrection. So I've got another arrow in there which shows this bit. Where there is a complete Bible until the resurrection.

[9:19] The testimony once given, completed in scripture. Which is why we don't trust anybody who says, oh I've got more bits of Bible to add to you.

We don't trust that, do we? If somebody says, oh I've got another chapter of the Bible that you guys haven't got. We say, no, this is complete. What Jesus said, he said, he handed it on in entirety to the apostles.

That's it. There's nothing more to add. He finished his work. And that's a finished description of all that he accomplished. And what we're waiting for is the resurrection. Now the Corinthians would not have agreed with that in the following way.

They would say, yes, Jesus died on the cross. And some of them would say, well he couldn't actually have risen from the dead, could he? Because the Greeks would have a real problem with spirituality being anything to do with resurrection.

And they would be very uncertain about that. And they would be even more uncertain about that orange blob being all the way over there.

[10:24] And they would say, a future resurrection? No, I don't think that's possible. I don't think that that makes sense. And what they would do is take the resurrection, click, and put it where they were.

And they'd say, whatever the promise of resurrection is, we've already got it. We are raised in every sense that there can be, and that's us. And as we go through, you'll see that this has enormous implications for the Christian community.

We know that that's the case because in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul argues the whole thing about there is a resurrection, a physical resurrection. It's still to come. Jesus was physically raised.

But I won't go off into chapter 14 because I've got enough to do with these chapters. Does that make sense about the... In a sense, it shouldn't make sense because it's odd. But this must be what they were thinking, that the resurrection is now.

It's already happened. Okay, let's draw no future resurrection in glory for his people. And we're there.

[11:35] That's what they're thinking. And what do we look forward to? Not quite sure, really. It squashes everything in a peculiar way. Let me now sketch out for you what I think this does for the Corinthian church.

And I'm picking up on various things through their letter, through the letter to them, to build up this picture. And you can flip through with me if you're quick, but I don't want to get myself bogged down.

Chapter 1, verse 2, he says, To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of the Lord Jesus, their Lord and ours.

They're Christians. They call on the name of the Lord. There's a Corinthian Christian. They think, do they not, that they're already resurrected in some significant way.

Chapter 4, verse 8, Paul seems to allude to this when he says, You guys, already you have all you want. Already you have become rich.

[12:41] You have become kings. And you've left us behind because we're not kings. That without us. How I wish you really had become kings. So I'm going to put them in this blob and bubble of thinking the resurrection has already happened in some sense.

And I'm going to give them some crowns because they think they're kings. And what would go on if you went into, if you'd come to, instead of being here at Calvary Church in Brighton this morning, you were actually in the church in Corinth all those years ago.

Well, they wouldn't have had a Bible because the Bible wasn't finished. And what there would have been would be, I think, a lot of noise. I think there would have been a lot of noise. Not a respectful hush, which you were so kind as to provide this morning, but a lot of noise.

Everybody, can I get up there, Phil? I've got something. And I've got something to say. People would be getting up and wanting to say stuff. And there'd be a lot of noise. And some of it not understandable.

I've got something to say. And the something is just gobbledygook. What's that, computer language? Is it Arabic? Is it Greek? Is it Russian? I don't know.

[13:49] We have no idea what this person is saying. They're saying it very loudly and insistently. But we don't know what on earth they're saying. And I would like to suggest there's a lot of zeal in the sense of we are pressing forward spiritually.

We are the, what's the word? Oh, dear. Cutting edge. Yeah, we're at the cutting edge of spirituality. And what this turns out like is that there's a lot about me, actually.

My turn. You sit down. I've got something to say like that. And this also results or is accompanied by division in the church.

Now, Paul says you're a real Christian church. But I'm so sad that there's division. And some of you say, oh, I follow Paul. And others say, I follow Peter. And when they sit down at the Lord's Supper, they go into little cliques and groups.

So there's division. And I think if you came in, you'd say the whole thing's really out of control. People standing up and interrupting one another. And what's that one for?

[14:59] Oh, yes. That was, yeah. Out of control. There's somebody out of control that's just speaking all over the place. And it includes the women, too. So the women are queens.

But what happens to the weak members of the community, the ones who, somebody who comes in with a walking stick, somebody who's older, somebody who is not a bright spark?

Well, they get left out. And they're despised. And that's the sort of picture I would like to propose that we have in mind for the Corinthian church.

Because I don't think that's far wrong. And it will make a whole lot of sense of what Paul says to them. So, okay, are you with me?

You know where Corinth is on the map. And you know where it's in time. And you know what they were thinking about time. And then you can see what sort of church, what sort of things were going on in the church, which Paul is going to speak about.

[16:04] Okay, let's move on now. So I'm going to go. My plan is just to take us through the text of those three chapters so that we can get the flow of them.

But I'm going to try not to get into too much detail. So here we are in 1 Corinthians 12. And I should just say this is all based on the death and resurrection and victory of Jesus over sin and Satan.

So I'm not... This isn't just about organization. This is based on Jesus Christ.

So I just put that there to remind myself, really. Chapter 12, verse 1. Now about spiritual gifts, brothers. Except it doesn't say that.

It says... The word gifts isn't in the original. It just says now about spirituals. And, of course, the word gifts is put in by the translator to make sense of that.

[17:09] But is that what Paul means? And I expect that Corinthians were probably wondering the same thing. What's he going to talk about? Is he going to talk about our gifts?

Because we're very gifted people. Or is he going to talk about the people who consider themselves gifted? The spiritual high flyers. The Jedi Knights of the congregation.

And I think he's being ambiguous, actually. What am I going to talk about? Am I going to talk about gifts? Or am I going to talk about you spiritual leaders in the congregation?

Gifts or people? I don't know. But you pick up some of the way he's going to go almost straight away. Because he says, I don't want you to be ignorant.

Well, what's he saying to them? We're spiritual people. We can speak and we can make a lot of noises. Yeah, but I'm not wishing to be rude to you.

[18:09] You're a bit ignorant, actually. And I don't want you to be ignorant. I don't want you to not think about this. I don't want you to be brainless over this.

I don't want you to be ignorant. So he's already flagging up something about the mind and understanding. And he says, truth actually matters.

You know, when you were pagan, somehow or another, you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. They say stuff. Well, they don't say stuff. What do they do? Therefore, I tell you 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. The Holy Spirit affects the content of what is said. Spirit speech is truth speech.

So he flags that up straight away. And now he goes on to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being at work in the church.

[19:11] There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord, Lord Jesus. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all

men.

And he's flagging up variety, and he's flagging up unity. There is one God. One God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is a oneness about the church of Jesus Christ, but there is a variety in the way God works.

And then he describes what's going on. He says, to each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the good. To one there is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom.

To another, the word of knowledge by means of the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healings, plural, by that one Spirit. To another, miraculous powers.

To another, prophecy. To another, distinguishing or judging spirits. To another, speaking in different kinds of tongues. Interesting, he says there are different kinds of tongues.

[20:20] He's not just saying there are different tongues, meaning different languages. Different kinds of tongues. Interesting that he says that. And he says all this variety, and they could just look around them.

They just have to look on that map. I don't think they would see all this necessarily within the church, but they could certainly look on the map. So yes, God is working in all these ways. And it's one and the same Spirit who gives them to each just as he determines.

And then he goes to his famous example of the body. He says this is how to think of it. Easy peasy. Think of it like a human body. And he several times flags up the word one.

So here we go. Verse 12. The body is one. One, translated unit. Though it is made up of many parts. And though the parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

For we who were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, we're all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many.

[21:21] So he's going to say we have one body, many parts. He's going to use the one idea and the many idea as he goes through. And he repeats one and many. And here he goes.

If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, I would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. And you get the idea, all the different parts of the body.

Interesting thing is he goes on about this. You'd think we'd got the idea, but he keeps on with it. And you wonder where he's going with this. So he says, let me just draw this out for you.

[22:21] I'm sure you've got the idea, but let me just say to you, there's different parts of the body, they're all needed. Verse 21, the eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you. And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you.

And now watch where he's going with this now. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable. And the parts that we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor.

And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it.

So there should be no schism, no division in the body. All its parts should have equal concern for each other. One part suffers, every part suffers.

If one part is honored, every part rejoices. Do you see where he's going with this? Because his listeners are saying, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. We get this body, different parts of the body.

[23:28] That's pretty obvious, Paul. You don't need to go over it. But of course, you see what he's bringing in here to the super spiritual Jedi masters in the congregation who are thinking, well, there's Mrs. Sproggins who's come in late with her walking stick.

And we just don't bother with her. She's a bit superfluous. And he's already beginning to say, in the body, there are weak parts. But we don't ignore them.

We give them special attention. And in a body, there are unrepresentable parts. But we treat them. So what does he say about the unrepresentable parts? We treat with special modesty. And I think that the Jedi masters in the congregation, he's trying to get them to think, you know, Mrs. Sproggins, don't just think, because she can't stand up at the front and make a big noise, that she's irrelevant.

Actually, even in your body, you would treat her with a special honor, wouldn't you? And people who are not, you know, haven't been to the gym and done their hair and come in looking like a million dollars, we honor them.

[25:02] And he goes, so, okay, I think we might have got that, Paul. Wait a minute, where are we? And verse 24, God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it.

But you see, if we're all resurrected, there's no such thing as lacking honor because we're all full. We're glorious Christians. We're strong Christians because we're resurrected now. And Paul says, actually, you know, we're not. There are Christians in the group who are weak and lowly and are not highly honorable.

And we give, we think of them. We honor them. We notice them. We make special, we put ourselves out for them. And I think he's got that on his agenda.

We can't say to them, I don't need you. And there is such a thing as weakness and dishonor in the sense of, well, in the sense of things like at some point when we get older, we'll all have to go to hospital to be checked for something or another.

[26:26] It's a very undignified thing to do. Isn't it? To be probed and maybe to have to walk with a Zimmer frame or something like that.

It's not the height of honor. But that's where we are as Christians. We're not in the resurrection yet. We're in this humble and, if you like, humiliated state.

We await the resurrection. And Paul says that we bring that into the way we treat one another. We give people care. We give people honor.

We treat people with decorum. And we really do. Because if one person suffers, says Paul, verse 26, we all suffer. None of the fellowship we can say, well, you know, they're old.

We don't worry about them. Or they're ill. Well, they can't have much faith, can they? We say, we care about every single member of this group. Because that's the way Christianity is.

[27:24] That's the way the body is. And he said he was talking about spirituals. Is he actually talking about gifts? Is he actually talking about spiritual people?

Or is he actually beginning to talk about the way we relate, which he's going to give a name to in a moment, which is love? Now, you are body of Christ, verse 27.

Each one of you is a part of it. Yeah. In the church, God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers. I think they would have been a bit surprised at that.

Third teachers. Workers are miracles. Those having gifts of healings. Those able to help others.

Those with gifts of administration. Those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles?

No. Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Do all work miracles? No. Do all have gifts of healing? No. Do all speak in tongues? No. Do all interpret?

[28:29] No. But eagerly desire the greater gifts. So you want to be advanced? Yes, definitely. Hold on.

Let me explain something about that. Chapter 13. I will show you the most excellent way. Now, you want to be cutting-edge Christians.

In the top flight of spirituality. And he says, let me tell you a secret. And the secret is this word, love.

And before I say any more, he says, I want to give you, before I go to chapter 14, let me give you chapter 13. Because this is the key. If I speak in tongues of men or angels, and if I don't have love, then I am just a banging gong or a clanging cymbal.

Like the pagan temples that you used to go to, and now you're Christians. It's just noise. And he says, if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have the faith to move mountains, I could, you know, I could, you know, I could, you said, just think, I could imagine telling you mysteries and deep things.

[29:52] And you go, wow. And he said, but if I don't have love, it's nothing. And if I have a faith that can move mountains, do mighty things,

Lord, Lord, did we not do mighty works in your name?

And the Lord will say, depart from me. I never knew you. You do mighty works, but you haven't got love. You're nothing.

You're not this high in the church. You're this high. You might be very stringent in your financing and in even just the way you treat your body, even to be prepared to be a martyr.

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames. If I haven't got love, I've got nowhere. And he really wants them to take this on board.

You know, we've gone into the church. We've seen them sort of up on the front here doing all sorts of stuff. And Paul says, let me just, what's the motive for all this?

[31:18] What are the relationships behind all this? If it isn't love, it's nothing. And then he gives this catalogue of things which I think is pretty clear that the Corinthians weren't.

Love is patient, guys. But they were all there. My turn, my turn, my turn. No, no, you've got to be patient with each other.

Love is kind. Get out of the way. It's my turn to stand up at the front. You're supposed to be kind to another. I don't like him because his gifts are bigger than mine. Love is, love does not envy.

Envy. Love does not boast. Love is not proud. And it's not rude.

And it doesn't say, me first, my turn, attention on me. And it's not easily angered. You know, I went out in a real huff yesterday because they didn't do it the way I wanted or whatever.

[32:27] You're not easily anchored. And they did it the week before as well and the week before that. But love doesn't keep a record of wrongs. And love doesn't delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects. So-and-so did such a bad thing to me last week. Well, hold on. I'd like to protect that guy's reputation. Did they really do that? Let's go and talk about it.

Let's find out what really happened. Love protects. It trusts. It hopes. It perseveres. And he has this catalogue of the things that love is that I think they weren't.

And now he tells us something even more profound about love. There's the timeline with Jesus and the apostles and the resurrection to come.

So that's the correct timeline. And he says some things don't get to the end of that timeline. Some things are transitory.

[33:40] There's the boundary line where we get into the world to come. And he says some things are good for the time being but they don't make it into the world to come in some significant sense.

But he says love isn't like that. He says love never fails. Where there are prophecies they will cease. Where there are tongues they will be stilled.

Where there is knowledge it will pass away. For guys we haven't got it all here. We have it. We are little bits of a whole body.

And even all of us don't have the whole thing. We have little bits of... What am I reading? We know in part.

We prophesy in part. But when perfection comes the imperfect disappears. When I was a child I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put the rich ways behind me.

[34:41] Now we see a poor reflection as in a mirror. Then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part. Then I shall know.

Then I shall know. In the glory to come. Then I shall know fully. Even as I am fully known. A lot of what we do is partial.

In the resurrection. We shall know. And we shall be fully known. And the thing that endures all the way through this life.

And into the world to come. Is love. These three remain. Faith, hope and love. And the greatest of them is love. And it's sort of an antidote.

To their idea. We've already raised. We're already great. We've already got honour. No weakness with us. We're strong. We've got the whole thing. And he says that the thing.

[35:43] That you do have. That lasts forever. Is not the bit that you think it is. The thing that does last forever.

Is the way you treat Mrs. Scroggins. Who came in with her walking stick. That's the bit that lasts forever. It's the love. That never fails. It's a completely different way of looking. At how church runs. If you want resurrection now. If you want something. From the far future. Now. If you want. If you use a technical term. Realised eschatology. If you want the future thing now. What you have. What does it look like? It's love. It's the way we treat the people. Who we might think are weaker. Less honourable. Less presentable. That's the bit that lasts forever. Let's go on then.

[36:47] To 1 Corinthians 14. Where he says. I want you to be zealous. I want you to be cutting edge. Desire. What does he say?

Follow the way of love. And eagerly desire. Spirituals. Is he talking about gifts? Is he talking about people? Especially prophecy.

And then. So. Let's just go into a little more detail now. Says Paul. About what goes on in your meetings. We've got that established principle. That it's the love.

That is. The transcendent thing. The thing that lasts forever. But let's just talk about what goes on. In your meetings. There's a lot of noise. And some of it can't be understood.

Anyone who speaks in a tongue. Does not speak to men. But God. Indeed no one understands him. He utters mysteries with his spirit. Compare with prophecy. The prophet speaks to men.

[37:50] For their strengthening. Encouragement. And comfort. He who speaks in a tongue. Edifies himself. He who prophesies. Edifies the church. Says I'd like everybody to speak in a tongue.

Yeah. But I would prefer you to prophesy. He who prophesies. Is greater. Than he who speaks in a tongue. Unless there's interpretation.

Because the key thing is edification. Have people heard something. That they understood. That was true. That was about Jesus.

Jesus is Lord. That's spirit speech. Have they understood. That they could take it away with them. And say. I remember that. That's going to help me. Through the rest of this week.

And it's changed me. Because I think about it. It changes my attitudes. The way I think about myself. The way I think about other people. It strengthens. Encourages.

[38:46] Comforts. Builds up the church. And he's going to. Come back to this theme. Again and again. Of building up the church. It's there in verse 4. He who prophesies.

Edifies the church. It's there in verse 5. That the church may be edified. It's there in verse 12. Excel in gifts that build up the church.

It's there somewhere else as well. I'm pretty sure. Verse 20. All things must be done for the strengthening of the church. So he says. Is that what's happening? The tongues of various kinds. Are not understandable. And what goes on in the church. Is only useful. If it's understandable. And let's follow on. To.

The. The bit. The bit. In verse 18. He says. I thank God. I speak in tongues. More than all of you. They might have been a bit surprised by that.

[39:48] Because. They probably hadn't heard. Paul speak in tongues. Or known that. Because. He was doing what it says here. To speak in tongues. Privately. Says. I do speak in tongues. Oh. Right. Didn't realize that.

But in the church. He says. I would rather speak. Five. This is verse 19. Five. Intelligible words. To instruct others. Than 10,000 words.

In a tongue. Don't be childish. He says. Stop thinking like children. Yeah.

Be children. Be a complete innocence. As far as evil is concerned. You don't have to be experts in that. But. When you're thinking about the life of the church.

Be intelligent. Be grown up. And then he makes this reference. To Isaiah 28. Verses 11 and 12. I believe. Through men of strange tongues.

[40:46] Through the lips of foreigners. I will speak to this people. But even then. They will not listen to me. Says the Lord. And he says. That's. That's. That references tongues. What's the reference?

The reference. Is back. In the history of Israel. In the city of Jerusalem. When she was judged. And conquered.

By the Assyrians. Am I saying. Let's say. Let's say. Babylonians. Babylonians. That. If you went down. To the post office. You would hear.

People speaking. Babylonian. And what does that tell us? It tells us. That we've been conquered. The fact we don't understand.

The people speaking. Is a sign of us being judged. It's a shameful thing. And Paul says. If somebody. A visitor comes in. And what they hear.

[41:41] Is you just. Going mad. Speaking in incoherent languages. So the person comes in. Says. I've got not. A faintest idea. What's going on here.

That's a sign. That you're judged. You. You. Way off beam. And think of that poor visitor. They wanted to come in.

And find God. They wanted to come in. And find out about Jesus. They wanted somebody. To give them. Five intelligible words. Jesus died on the cross for you.

But what they heard. Was just a wall. Of incoherence. And he says. That's not blessing. That's judgment. An incoherent church.

Is a sign that judgment. Has come on unbelievers. And you know. You can go into incoherent churches. They don't have to be speaking. The wrong language. They just don't make any sense at all. Go into a church.

[42:44] I mean. This is be a terrible thing. You go into a church. You never hear anything. You can understand. About Jesus. How awful. Go into a church. And you don't hear anything.

That is said. Believingly. About Jesus Christ. What an awful thing. We don't have to go far. In our country. To find. Towns. Villages.

Where. You can't find a place. To go. To hear. A sensible thing. Said about Jesus.

That's judgment. Isn't it? And we were thinking. On Wednesday. About East Brighton. 80,000 people. In East Brighton. 80,000 people.

And. We counted. The number of churches. Where we thought. You could go. And hear something. Sensible about Jesus. And we taught it up. All the figures. What total was it Chris. That we thought of.

[43:40] Of believers. 80. And the percentage was. 0.1%. You don't have to go. Very far at all. To have.

Where can I go. And hear something. About Jesus. There's so many people. We. I've gone off subject. But we face that challenge. Here ourselves. Anyway. Let's get back on track.

The understandable church. The one where the spirit. Really is at work. Is in verse 23. So if the whole tongue. If the whole church.

Comes together. And everybody speaks in tongues. Some who do not understand. As some believers. Come in. Will they not say. You're out of your mind. If an unbeliever. Or someone who does not understand. Comes in. While everybody's prophesying.

I think meaning to say. Saying sensible. Understandable. Heartfelt things. About Jesus. And about God. And about the gospel. Then. He will be convinced.

[44:37] By all. That he is a sinner. So it won't necessarily. Be a comfortable thing. A person might come in. And be very upset. By knowing. That they're a sinner. But that's what he says.

In principle. They will come. And know. Be convinced. Of a sinner. And be judged by all. And the secrets of his heart. Will be laid bare. And he will fall down. And worship God. Saying God is really here.

Some of you. Have had that experience. Of family members. Saying I'm not crossing that threshold. I'm not coming through that door. And why won't they? Because they know.

That when they come in. The whole thing. That's going on. As people sing. In understandable words. And the Bible is read.

In an understandable way. And all the things that go on. That that person will say. I know what's going to happen. Because I'm going to feel really bad. I'll be with people who believe.

[45:31] And that will make me feel so uncomfortable. I'm not going to cross that door. We need to pray that they would. Don't we? But what happens in the assembly. Like this. We pray.

That people would come in. And say. God is really here. I learn I'm a sinner. And that points me to Jesus. As a savior. And what advice does he give to Corinth?

He says. Well you spiritual people. I'm not knocking you. You prophets. And people that can. You know. Say stuff. What should we do? Verse 26. Well okay.

Come together. Bring a hymn. A word of instruction. A revelation. Something you thought about.

And you say. Ah. This is. You know. I thought about this. We haven't got a Bible yet.

But I reckon. This particular thing. Might end up being in the Bible. Because it seems so true. What do you guys think? I'm just speculating. I think that might have been. The sort of thing they said. A revelation.

[46:27] A tongue. An interpretation. But do it for the strengthening of the church. Don't do it to show off. If you do speak in tongues. Be patient. Be thoughtful.

Two. Or at most three should speak. One at a time. Please. And someone should interpret. And if there isn't somebody who's going to interpret. You just.

Pipe down. Just. Be still. Just. Calm down. Quiet and down. And. Speak to yourself and God.

A new prophets. Okay. Great. But. Two or three should speak. Don't be pushing and shoving to get to the front. And the others can be thoughtful.

And weigh what's being said. And if somebody says. Excuse me. I've got something to say on that point. You don't say. Shut up. I'm speaking. You say. Okay. Yes. Hold on a second. You.

[47:26] The first speaker. Stop. So that all can prophesy in turn. And everyone may be instructed and encouraged. And it's not out of control. Oh. I've got something. I really must say. I really must say.

No. Hang on. You don't have to just say it. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets. God is not a God of disorder. But of order. And by the way.

He says to the ladies. You were pushing up to the front as well. It's not a reference to giving notices. You were. This is the idea of people saying. You know. I've got to go and say something.

I really want to say something. Ladies. He says. That's not fitting for you to be pushing your way up to the front. He says. You should be quiet. I think that's probably a better translation than remain silent.

It gives you the idea of absolute silence. But he says. I don't want you pushing your way up to the front. And being the main speaker. But to be womanly about this.

[48:23] He says. I must be in submission. As the law says. And be in submission to your husband. Don't come along here and look very sweet. But really be.

As soon as you get outside. You know. Give your husband a bit of a mouthful. That's not. You know. We're talking about relationships. Aren't we? We're talking about the way.

That we relate to one another. And indeed. That men relate to women. And women relate to men. And they might be saying. Oh come on Paul. You're very pedestrian.

We are streets ahead of you. And at this point. Paul says. Actually guys. I'm an apostle. I was given these things to say by the Lord.

And your job is not to argue with me. But to do what the Lord says. Did the word of God originate with you? Verse 36. Are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet.

[49:21] Or spiritually gifted. Let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you. Is the Lord's command. And if he ignores this. He himself will be ignored.

So in summary. Be cutting edge. Be eager. Be eager to prophesy. Don't forbid speaking in tongues. But do everything in this orderly.

Christian way. Of love. Patience. Kindness to one another. So what did we learn this morning? What did we learn?

If you've come along this morning. And you're not a Christian. I thank you for your patience. In listening to such a long talk. It's been a talk about a community of love. It's been a talk about a love. That lasts not only in this world. But on into the world to come. And if you're an outsider to that. If you're an outsider to Christian things.

[50:24] That's what you're outside of. Wouldn't it be great to be an insider? Wouldn't it be great to be in a community. In a place where

there is love.

Which goes on forever. And that's what being a Christian is. So if you're not a Christian yet. Make it your business to become one. And you might be thinking.

Well he never did this bit. What about spiritual gifts. And tongues. Is he going to denounce them. Or promote them. And I'm going to say. Well. You can look in the church documents if you want.

Here's a better question. What about love? If you think it's very spiritual. To denounce your brother. On this.

Just because of this. Where is love? Love. Love is the prime thing. I'm not going to promote tongues.

[51:22] The thing is love. That's what Paul promotes. The way we relate to one another. And you're going to say. So what else.

We've learned something about spiritual excellence. And spiritual advancement. He says. The excellence and the advancement. Is building up others. With a particular care.

For the weak. The dishonorable. The unattractive. And maybe you're thinking. I like that. It's very long this morning. But I like what's being said.

I want to be part of this. And I say. Well. By all means. What should we be praying? What should we be seeking to do? We should be praying.

For every opportunity. To say something. To someone. Or perhaps some many. That really. Helps. Build them up. And it might be something.

[52:19] Very simple. Like. You had a hospital visit. Last week. We were praying for you. Tell me how it went. I've got a hospital visit.

Next week. I'm going to pray for you. Something. That builds up. Encourages. Strengthens. Sense. And be understandable.

It's to bring together. To strengthen. In courage. And comfort. And Paul says. And most of all. It must be motivated. By.

Love. And that's where we are. Until the day breaks. And the shadows flee away. And we see him face to face.

In the world. That is nothing other than love. Let's sing together.