

The Living Sacrifice

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 July 2026

Preacher: Emma Amyes

[0:00] Morning, everyone. Morning. I wonder if, I'm sure you are all familiar with one of these. This is a shape sorter that children use. Mind you, I find it quite good fun. And the idea is that there are all these shapes in here and you have to put them into the right hole, otherwise they won't actually fit on the bus. So for instance, I've got a star here and actually as much as I might try to fit it in to the circle shape, it won't actually go. I mean, you could cut some of the corners of the star off, it depends how far you want to go really in trying to fit it in. But there is a star hole here and it just wonderfully slots in.

Isn't that great? Thank you, Simon. And we have a circle here and as much as I try to ram it into the triangle shape on the top, the circle doesn't go. It won't fit in the square either, either, at all. But wonderfully, it goes in the circle hole. And I can remember we have one of these for our children. My son is now 19. I'm not sure how much he'll appreciate me sharing this, but he's not here, so I'll go ahead. When he had one of these, he was fascinated with the triangle shape. And there was clearly a triangle on the sorter, but he tried all the other holes and he was desperate and got so stressed and so anxious. Now we're meant to, as parents with one of these, to let the child find their own way and get to it. But I had to give in. And in the end, I helped him put the triangle in the triangle slot. And I could just see the relief on his face as that happened. And really, in our reading that Margaret read for us, this is what Paul is trying to explain to the Romans. He says to them, 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. And there are more gifts that Paul talks about, actually, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Each of us has different gifts. And we're to use them to serve God and in order for our lives to be full and sacrificial.

Now, we would have a problem in this church if I offered to help the tech team. That is so not my thing. Just talk to my husband. All the wrong buttons would be pressed and it would be mayhem. Also, if I perhaps offered to play an instrument in the worship group, Julian and the rest of the group might welcome me with open arms. But as soon as I started playing three blind mice on my recorder, which is all I can really remember, they would be asking me to leave very quickly.

And I'd like to share with you this morning how I came to discover one of the gifts that God has given me in the hope that it encourages you to seek God and chat with your fellow Christian friends to discover the spiritual gifts that God has given you. Now, I've shared some of my testimony here.

[3:58] And shortly after I came to faith in my late 20s, the vicar of the church that I settled in asked me to share my testimony with the congregation. And afterwards, he told me that I had the gift of preaching and he'd like me to use the gift in the church. When we come to faith, God awakens new gifts within us. And this can be quite daunting and take a while, certainly for someone like me, to accept and for that to use that that gift confidently that God has given us. For example, prior to coming to faith, I trained in business studies and secretarial duties, which I loved.

And that became my default setting in the church. I always offered up my admin and secretarial gifts. As you all know, I went to live and work in India with the Oasis Trust. And after that, I went to Bible college and studied for a degree in theology. And as part of the training, we had a six-week placement each year working in a Christian setting to develop our spiritual gifts and experience Christian mission. For my second year placement, the college said that I should go on a placement where I could develop and practice my gift of preaching. That seemed quite daunting to me. I still wasn't feeling confident about that gift, despite the college encouraging me and affirming me in it. But I soon found out that God's ways are not our ways and his thoughts not our thoughts, as it says in Isaiah chapter 55 verses 8 and 9. My placement was set up for me to go to Uganda and visit a

couple from my home church who were working out there. And they were going to link me up with a church leader.

Soon after I arrived in the wonderful south part of Uganda, we drove to a remote village where the church leader lived. He was called Stanley Matejka and he was an Anglican archdeacon for the Church of South Uganda. He was a lovely, godly, spirit-filled man. He was married to a lady called Jolly and they had 13 children and they all loved the Lord passionately. I was to stay nearby to them in their guest hut.

There was no running water and no electricity. Now, neither of those things really bothered me, having lived and worked in India, but I had hoped there might be electricity and I had packed my hairdryer in the hope I'd be able to use it. But anyway, some of Stanley's children were going to collect water for me from the well at the bottom of the hill each day for me to use for my washing and cooking and bathing. And I joined them because I was so determined that they didn't wait on me.

[7:03] Now, this was a much harder task than I thought. They filled the big water carriers and very serenely walked back up the hill calmly and beautifully, not dropping any of the water. And of course, I couldn't carry one of the carriers on my head. So I was carrying it and staggering along, spilling water everywhere. It was clearly something else that was not my gifting.

Shortly after I arrived, Stanley asked me to share my testimony of coming to faith with him. And after I had done that, he asked what I would like to do on this placement. I didn't mention preaching at all. I said that as he was a busy archdeacon with many churches and clergy to oversee, that I'm sure it created a lot of admin. And perhaps I could do admin for him as I was very well trained in that area. He paused for quite a while and smiled and said, Emma, whilst I'm sure you are a very good secretary, I do actually have one. Her name is Lois and you will get on very well with her. So I don't need you to do admin for me. And I knew what was coming. My heart sank.

Tomorrow, I would like you to preach and share your testimony with one of my churches. The college has told me that God has given you the gift of preaching. So I'd like to see you use that gift. And outwardly, I smiled and agreed. Inwardly, oh, I just felt awful. I was to preach the next day. I just had my NIV study Bible, no commentaries, none of my wonderful Bible college friends. It was just me, God and his Holy Spirit, which as I prayed in my little hut, came upon me powerfully and inspired me with Bible verses to share with my testimony. I was reminded that when God calls, he equips, it says in Exodus chapter four, verses 10, when Moses protested that he was slow of speech to deliver his message, God told him to go promising, I will be with your mouth and teach you what to say. I realized I just needed to put my faith and trust in God afresh and believe he would do for me what he did for Moses. The next day came and we were walking to the church for the Sunday service.

And I presumed as one who drives everywhere, that this would be about a 20 minute walk. Two hours later, we arrived at the church. It was a packed, vibrant church and they were all Anglican. So it was a bit like home from home, except although the service had the same content as my home church, it was about three times longer, the service, with people coming and going throughout. When it came for me to preach, I was incredibly nervous. I could feel my legs shaking and thought that people could see that happening. But as soon as I stood at the lectern at the front of the church, I felt God's presence in a very real and tangible way. And I preached my sermon with Stanley translating it into their language.

We had lunch after the service and then walked the two hour journey back. But this proved a wonderful time of conversation and fellowship. In my little hut that evening, I was full of thanks and praise to God for his equipping and his presence with me. And the next day, Stanley was very affirming and encouraging and said, God has clearly gifted you in preaching, Emma. I want you to visit all my churches.

[11:09] I want you to visit all my churches and preach in them. And I was dying to say, how far away are they? But I didn't say that. How could I say no? It was clear I couldn't offer to do any typing. He had a secretary. I agreed. And this is what I did for the six weeks. We spent each week walking to various churches with me preaching, Stanley translating, and then eating and walking back. To be honest, the preaching wasn't a problem. God was so faithful in equipping me and giving me messages to share that seemed to be so well received. It was the walking that became a problem. I started to get really bad aches and pains in my legs. And I shared this with Stanley's wife, Jolly. And I wondered if it was all the walking. And she looked horrifying and said, no. She

said, Emma, I think you have malaria.

And you need to see the doctor urgently. I was really taken aback. I'd taken all my anti-malaria pills. I had a wonderful mosquito net over my bed. And I didn't realize that one of the symptoms of malaria was aching legs. I went to the doctor and he laughed. It wasn't malaria at all. My legs were just adjusting to all the walking. Sometimes, he said, in the village where I was staying, the default illness is, oh, that's malaria. Thankfully, my legs adjusted. I just needed to rest them and put them up whenever I could. I really enjoyed preaching in all the different churches. And God faithfully equipped me in my preparation and in my delivery at the lectern. Despite my nerves in between, I really had to rely on him completely. And in doing so, he didn't let me down. And my faith grew. I could see that whilst he had gifted me in administration and secretarial work, he was now giving me a new gift that he wanted me to use to serve him.

And this is what Paul, again, was trying to explain to the Romans all those years ago. And this is what God wants us all to hear afresh here at Christ Church. Imagine it's Paul's letter to the church in Clevedon, the Clevedonians. God has gifted each and every one of us to serve him and further his kingdom. But we need to step out of our comfort zone and use those gifts for his glory.

But Paul also reminds us to not let our gifts go to our heads. He says, For by the grace given me, 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.

[14:21] 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.

There's the story of an athlete sitting tall in his seat on an aeroplane as he prepared to fly to a championship which he knew he was going to win. A flight attendant walked by and said, Sir, please fasten your seat belt. The man smiled and said, Superman doesn't need a seat belt. She replied without hesitation, Superman doesn't need a plane. And the man fastened his seat belt. Success in our gifts can easily swell our heads. We don't need a seat belt or a flight attendant telling us what to do. We don't need anyone telling us what to do. We can take care of ourselves. Paul reminds us we all have different gifts, but we are all reliant on God and reliant on each other. Every part of the body of Christ is needed for each member of that body to flourish and in turn for the church to flourish and be ineffective in reaching out to others.

So I ask you all, how has God gifted you? What is the new gift that he is wanting you to use to serve him for your faith to grow and flourish and for you to be a help here at Christ Church?

[16:05] What is God showing you to give up so that you can make time, make space to use this new gift? There are lots and lots of different areas of ministry to get involved in in this church.

And God does have a part for each and every one of you, each and every one of us to play. But we need to take some responsibility and step up and get involved.

Let's just spend a moment in quiet. Perhaps could we put the passage back up on the screen, Terry?

Thank you. Can you just move it on? That's it, where it says about the gifts. Yeah, around there. That's fine. Just thinking as a prompt.

These are some of the gifts that Paul mentions. But, you know, be thinking. Let's just spend a bit of time thinking and reflecting on this. What is the Holy Spirit showing you and saying to you about the gift he's wanting you to step up and use at this time?

[17:23] I sense that some of us are here, as God gave me, very clearly put on my heart to share this shape sorter here. That actually, some of us are sometimes doing, trying to do the thing that actually God's not really called us to do.

And we're trying to fit into a slot or an area or an area of ministry that actually isn't really what God's calling you to do. And he wants us to be in the right place for us to flourish and the church to flourish.

So let's be thinking about that. And I just encourage you that as God's speaking to you, that you share with your friends around you or friends in your life group.

Because often, as it was for me with my gift of preaching, that God puts people around us who see that gift in us.

And it takes others affirming that in us. And talk to me or Alex or Simon. And, you know, we can really help you discover your gifts.

[18 : 38] Let's just have a moment's quiet and then I'll pray. Let's just have a moment's quiet and then I'll pray.

Lord, please continue to speak to us as we continue to worship this morning and go out into the week ahead.

Show us the gift you have given each of us to serve you here at Christ Church. Help us to be courageous and bold and not daunted by where you're calling us to serve.

Help us to remember that when you call, you equip. And it's part of your purpose and plan for our lives to be involved in furthering your kingdom in the place that we worship.

Keep us from complacency and comfort. Give us a holy disturbance and a fresh passion to share you with those whom we meet.

[20 : 15] We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.