

# To Serve God (Ministry)

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[ 0 : 00 ] At the age of 23, Jesus really did turn my life upside down. Almost immediately, I had a desire to contribute to serve in the local church, synonymous for me with my conversion.

And I would hang around and sign up for basically anything that I could. So I'd sign up to lead on camps. It was one of the first things I ever did.

It was a fishing camp. I remember it was this fishing camp that was being run up in the New England area. I rang up the bloke and said, you know, I'd like to come and help. And he said, you ever led on a camp before?

I said, no, but I can fish. So I passed the qualifications for that. Cutting the grass, do repairs or fixing pews, getting rid of feral animals in the ceiling of church and all kinds of stuff.

Eventually, hospital visiting, doing funerals even. And it just grew over time. I was given the task of starting a youth ministry and then an evening congregation and then a young adults ministry.

[ 1 : 09 ] And that was all within the first six months of me being a Christian. I was then given a two-year apprenticeship. The job offer was this. You're hanging around that much and you're eating my food that much. I might as well give you a job.

And so I took an 85% paid cut and did a two-year apprenticeship to test my skills and my stamina for vocational ministry.

At the end of that, I entered formal theological education and the process of becoming a full-time minister. After three years of theological education with a degree in theology and diplomacy and ministry under my belt in five and a half years as a Christian, I was ordained as a deacon in the Anglican Church of Australia in Armadale Cathedral on the 21st of December 1998, which means in about two weeks or so, it's 20 years since that happened.

Christian for 25 and a half years, I've been involved in vocational ministry for 25 of those years. And God has given me many opportunities to serve him over that time in a whole different variety of ways.

And I can say that God has used me to impact people's lives in that time. But for whatever he has done through me, it's what he's done in me that has been the greatest joy, I think, the greatest benefit of ministry.

[ 2 : 42 ] It's one of the surprising blessings, what God does in you as you serve other people. So it has been my joy with all the ups and downs.

It's been my joy in the darkest moments. It's my joy to be involved in ministry. I'm totally convinced that it's God's call on my life. This is not just a job, a career thing.

It's not about promotion. It's not about getting the next big opportunity. It's his call on my life. And so I'm really pleased to be able to talk about ministry today. If you've just joined us today, we are week four into our five-part vision series called My Purpose, Our Purpose, God's Purpose.

It's an annual vision series. In week one of this, when we kicked it off, we asked the question, what's the purpose of life? And we saw that the purpose of life was that God created and saved us for his glory.

And we used the word magnification to summarize all of that. Week two, we narrowed it down. What's the purpose of church? And we saw that God has gathered his people together in order to magnify him.

[ 3 : 55 ] And we used the word membership to describe that. Last week, week three, now that God's gathered us, what is his purpose for his gathered people?

And we saw that it is to transform us into the image of his true son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the word we used to summarize that was maturity.

Okay, so we've got magnification, membership, maturity. He created us, he saved us, he's gathered us, and he's growing us. Now the question is, what does God want us to do?

Is it just to grow up? Is that it? We're going to use the word ministry to summarize that. And if you are sharp this afternoon, you would have realized they all start with an M.

Okay? And next week will be mission. And it is also an M. So if you look at your service outline, same breakdown as what we've done in the previous weeks.

[ 4 : 56 ] Firstly, what's God's purpose? And then how can we pursue it on purpose here at St. Paul? So what is God's purpose for his growing children? The goal of spiritual growth is to become more like the Lord Jesus.

That's what we saw last week. It's become more and more in the likeness of the image of the Lord Jesus. And while this means becoming more like him in his character, and the Bible is very, very clear about that, we must also remember that Jesus came to do a specific work.

And that was to do the will of his father. On the eve of his crucifixion, he prayed this, John 17, 4, I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

So, which means that if God's intention is for us to grow up to be more and more like the Lord Jesus, not just his character, but also it is to do the work that God has called us to do.

Ephesians 2.10 tells us that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. So God intends for all believers to be active members in his kingdom.

[ 6 : 06 ] And that's my first sub point here, every member ministry. God's purpose is for every one of his gathered and growing children to be involved in ministry.

That is, ministry is not a special category of Christians. It's not, they're an elite Christian or the suckers or something like that.

So what I want to do is to trace this out in the Old and New Testament just really briefly. Looking at the role of the priesthood, the concept of priesthood is common in the ancient world.

Generally, priests in the ancient world, their main function was to offer sacrifices to appease the gods. And that can be anything from animals through to sacrificing people in order to appease the gods.

In fact, back in the ancient Incas, they sacrificed people because they believed the gods got their energy from blood of humanity.

[ 7 : 12 ] And so you sacrificed humans in order to energize the gods, to swing them around into your favor, to get them to do things for you. The animals would die in the place of those.

Sorry, sorry. That's the ancient one. The Old Testament, however, priests, they would offer sacrifices in a very different way. The biblical idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament, animals were offered to cleanse the worshiper from their sin.

And so the animal would die in the place of the worshiper so that the worshiper could go away forgiven. So as an Israelite, if you wanted to receive the blessing of God, the forgiveness of sins, then you would take your animal to the priest.

And these guys were known as the Levites. You can read the book of Leviticus and you'll discover all about the priesthood. Or you can just listen to the sermon series that we did in the last five years here, whenever it was, on Leviticus and you can listen to it all there.

So there were those in the Old Testament who were set apart for this special function as priests to offer sacrifices.

[ 8 : 24 ] But we also read something really interesting in Exodus 19. This is where God calls his children Israel to himself at Mount Sinai.

He's rescued him from slavery in Egypt. And then it says this in Exodus 19 verse 4. You yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself.

Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations, you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

So God's word to hear to his people Israel, who he's just rescued from Egypt, his corporate gathered children, is that you collectively will be priests.

That is, priests in the sense that you will serve me in the world. Not like the Levites, who have a special function of priests, but you will be not sacrificial priests, but you'll be serving priests in the whole world.

[ 9 : 29 ] And so both of these ideas, both the individual sacrificial, functional, formal priests and the corporate serving God in the world priests, the body of God's people, come to their climax and reach their fulfillment in the New Testament.

And that's the passage that was read out to us in Hebrews 10. If you've got time, quickly run to Hebrews 10. In verse 1, it says the law, that's a reference to the Old Testament.

It says the law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming. So the law, the Old Testament, is a shadow of the good things which are coming, which is a reference, a valid reference, if you like, to the gospel of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament.

For this reason, it can never, and talking about the Old Testament, it can never by the same sacrifices repeat endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once and for all and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

[ 10 : 39 ] But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. So what it's saying there in Hebrews is that whole Old Testament sacrificial system didn't remove sin.

But it did serve to remind God's people of the seriousness of their sin. And it reminded them that a representative was needed.

Something needed to die, if you like, in order to atone for their sin. So let's just jump down now to verse 11. It says, Day after day, every priest, this is the individual functional priest, the formal Levites, stands and performs his religious duties.

Again and again, he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. Okay, that's their job. Feels like a kind of pointless job, really.

Then verse 12 talks about Jesus' sacrifice. This is the New Testament. It talks about Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross. But when this priest, Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

[ 12 : 03 ] And since that time, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. So Jesus is what Hebrews 10 is saying.

Jesus is the true priest who offers the true sacrifice. Once and for all, he deals with the sin of humanity. He's the true lamb, the lamb of God, whose blood is shed and dies in our place so that we're forgiven and spared.

So Jesus is both the priest who offers the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself. He perfects both. Why? So that we who are scattered from God because of our sin can be gathered to him as his much-loved and forgiven children and be brought into a new humanity of priests set free to serve God in the world.

We see it again in Revelation chapter 1. Verse 4, John introduces his letter and he says, This is written to the seven churches in the province of Asia.

In other words, this is not just written to the church leaders. This is not written to the... This is written to everyone in the church. And then we read this about halfway down through verse 5. So the New Testament is clear.

[ 13 : 42 ] The old formal, Levitical, sacrificial individual priest is done with in Jesus. But the corporate priesthood of God's people is not.

All of God's people are saved and gathered to be a priesthood serving God in the world. Every one of God's children is a minister.

And yet, this is interesting because the priesthood of all believers, every member ministry, was something that was recaptured, if you like, or rediscovered at the Reformation 501 years ago.

In around about... In there somewhere. And yet, there are so many people sitting in Protestant churches today who totally misunderstand the biblical idea of priesthood of all believers in every member ministry.

And in fact, what even ministry is. You see, for a start, because of Jesus' finished work, there is no such thing, there's no need, if you like, for priests who mediate between you and God.

[ 14 : 56 ] You don't need people to do that anymore. People like me, who are ordained leaders of churches, are not priests in the individual Old Testament sacrificial sense.

I don't have a special connection that you need to get by me to God. That doesn't exist in the New Testament. I am, like all Christians, a priest in the corporate serving God in the world sense,

however.

All of God's saved and gathered children, like me, like you, are called into the service of God in this world. And so God's purpose for you, God's purpose for me, and for all of us collectively, is to do ministry.

And you are ministers who are doing ministry, all of you, if you're a Christian. So when people say, I'm going into the ministry, or they say things like, let me introduce you to my minister, you're actually reinforcing a category error.

Because you're the minister as well. So, you know, next time we do that, a new person comes along, brand new person in church, I'll bring them to you.

[16:17] Let me introduce you to the minister. It's one of the ministers. Let's see how we go with that. Okay, so the reason I say that is because ministry equals service.

Ministry is interchangeable with the word service. The words ministry and minister simply mean service and servant. That's all they are.

So the title Prime Minister of Australia simply means that Scott Morrison is the first servant of the people of Australia, for the time being.

At least for now, until the next guy comes along. And so this says quite a lot about the way in which we do ministry.

Our core value of servant leadership here at St. Paul's is so important because it is about us ministering together, serving together with identities which are deeply secure in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:24] You see, it is so common to serve out of a sense of duty in the hope of earning God's favor, or it's so common nowadays, especially in our world, there's a big push in a secular culture to serve less fortunate people.

A lot of that is driven by self-centeredness. Just need to dig a little bit deeper. A sense of superiority for cultures, not as sharp or not as good as ours, and need to be able to serve those cultures so that they would grow up.

It's driven from a sense of my own fulfillment. So we don't do it for personal reasons. We don't do it in order to earn favor with God.

We must never forget that God saves his people out of Egypt. Then he gathers them to himself as his treasured possession. And then he says, I want you to serve me.

It's the same with Jesus at the cross. He dies for our sins, gathers us to himself as his church. He calls us to serve him in the world. We don't serve God to gain his favor.

[18:37] We do ministry because we already have it. We serve others with the attitude of which Jesus served us. Mark 10, 45.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. At the source of all Christian service of ministry in the world is the crucified, risen Lord who died to set us free into a life of service of God and of others.

It's the reason which you were created. God has created you and saved you in order to serve and to serve together the world.

And before you were saved, you were enslaved to your own self-centeredness. So you've been set free to pursue the very design God had on your life initially.

And serving the biblical sense is putting the needs of others ahead of your own or putting the needs of the community ahead of your individual needs. There's a paradox here. And I mentioned it right at the beginning.

[19:47] I feel like God has so blessed me over the years in service. If you serve primarily for yourself when it suits you, because it fits into your program, it does stuff you just want to do, it doesn't push you out of your comfort zone at all, then it isn't actually serving.

And so therefore you'll never feel the benefits. You'll never experience the benefits of serving. Ever. Ever. The only workable dynamic for ministry in the church is Mark 10, 45.

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. So having just, you know, knocked down the hierarchy idea, what's the relationship between church leaders and church members?

Or more specifically, between those in vocational ministry and those who are members of the church, serving in the church. I want to jump back into Ephesians 4, verse 11 to 12.

We were there last week. Verse 11. So Christ gave, himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers. These, broadly speaking, we can call these categories, if you like, leaders within the church.

[ 21 : 06 ] We're happy to go with that just for the time being. So why did Christ give these to the church? Verse 12. To equip his people for works of service, for works of ministry.

What's the end goal that God has in giving church leaders to equip his people for works of service and ministry? Verse 12. So that the body of Christ may be built up.

And in fact, the word actually means built up and built out. The whole idea here is Christ gives leaders to equip the members for the work of ministry in such a way that the whole church grows up into maturity, which is his design for his people.

We all have a ministry. Church leaders have primarily an equipping ministry and church members have primarily a doing ministry.

And there's obviously crossover there with some of that stuff. But we all are called to minister together to build Christ's church. This is crucial.

[ 22 : 15 ] Because I think that too many, in fact, I would suggest that way over 90% of churches think of ministry in the local church in the same way that you would think of the manly ferry.

On the ferry, you've got a few staff who get you from point A to point B. There's that bloke, whoever it is, up the front driving the whole thing. And there might be a couple of people there who are checking your tickets or putting out the ramp so you can get on without falling in the water.

And there's someone selling you snacks. I mean, who knows? It might even be the same person doing everything. I've got no idea. And everyone else is sitting there passively in the seats, working on whatever it is that you're working on and your phones and taking photos and conversation, just waiting to get to the destination.

And the people on the boat, the staff, it's their job to get you to the destination as smoothly as you possibly can, as fast as you can, to get on your own way. And that is the way so many churches view ministry.

We pay people to do that for us. And can I say that it's particularly, and I've talked to ministers all over the place, it's particularly prevalent in places like eastern suburbs, North Shore, where we're used to getting people to pay for everything for us.

[ 23 : 46 ] They cut our grass, they clean our windows, people do all that. They walk our dogs for us, for goodness sake. Pay a fortune to get this dog and get someone to walk it for us. We're used to people paying for all those things and we treat church in exactly the same way.

The local church ought to be viewed more like a sailing boat, actually a bit more than a sailing boat. Let's call it one of the yachts in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. Everyone on board has a job to do.

There's no passengers there, kind of, you know, I'm just here to take the photos. You know, that's just, you know, the guy's not there. You know, you don't have the person sunbathing at the front, you know, a couple of days to catch some rays.

Captain's job is to set the course, to navigate the direction, to get the crew operating together and each part doing its work, but making sure that we're doing it together in order to get to the goal, to get to Hobart.

Then you get to Hobart, you go, what am I doing here? We're going to get home again. All of God's people are called to a corporate priesthood, either an equipping ministry or a doing ministry, but doing it together for a purpose.

[ 25 : 11 ] So that is what's God's purpose for his growing children. Second point, how can we minister on purpose at St. Paul? So let me say, first of all, this is by way of a caveat, if you like, you can serve God both in the church and in the world.

You can minister in a whole range of ways through being citizens, neighbours and friends and colleagues. And I'm very keen for us to develop that concept of frontline ministry as a church. You can speak to Adrian, our missions minister, about that and we'll touch on it probably next week a bit. But tonight, I've got my ministry minister hat. I oversee ministry, this M for St. Paul's and I've got that hat on tonight.

And I want to look at what does it look like for us to work, to minister on purpose at St. Paul's and I want to suggest three ways, time, talents and treasures. So firstly, time.

Easiest way to serve God with your time is turn up. This is profound. Turn up. Don't underestimate, as I said two weeks ago, don't underestimate the role you play by turning up and just engaging with another individual.

[ 26 : 25 ] And especially an individual who's not necessarily a close friend or anything like that. Taking the time to talk, to encourage, to listen, to be there.

As you speak the truth in love, as I said last week from Ephesians 4.15, speaking the truth in love to each other, you are ministering, you are serving another human being.

Now when we think of ministry at a local church, we normally think of it in the formal sense, a position. I'm on a team and I've got my spot in the roster.

It is possible to fulfill your function in a roster and yet not do ministry. I want to make that clear. Because that is such a small portion of the ministry that gets done in this church.

And it isn't the starting point of ministry and it's certainly not the end point of ministry. The informal ministry is what happens outside of the formal structures of the gathering of St. Paul's and it is extremely important for service to one another.

[ 27 : 33 ] And it takes time. People take time and it takes effort. Ministry doesn't stop there though. I don't want you to just think, well all you do is turn up.

I want to encourage you to do that but go beyond that and in fact join a ministry team. Again, this is going to require you using the time that God has given you to serve Him.

There's preparation for ministry, there's coordination of people, there's training, there's all sorts of stuff. It all takes time. And what's more, once you join a team, you're accountable for your time to others.

When you are part of a team and you don't put the time in then others need to carry that load for you. If you're part of a team, when you don't put your effort in, the rest of the team takes that load. And that's the case anywhere. It's work teams, it's sporting teams, you know, all that kind of stuff. So there might be an opportunity as well for you. There's some very broad categories.

[ 28 : 36 ] It might be also an opportunity, when I'm thinking about time, where for some of you, because of life circumstances, you are able to give larger chunks of time to the ministry of St. Paul's.

In a previous church that I belonged to, a teacher retired at the normal retiring age. He went from his retirement from a teacher and spent, you know, all of his years as a teacher.

He went then and did some training, got himself ordained as a deacon in the Anglican church and now ministers as, in an honorary capacity on staff in the church that he'd been a worshiper in for 40 years.

And he realized as he was heading towards retirement, because our ministry team is running flat out doing jobs that I don't think that they need to do.

But people expected to do it because they got the mentality that we're the manly fairy. So he thought the best thing that he could do was to take the load off by getting himself trained and ordained.

[ 29 : 45 ] And therefore, he could step in in an honoring capacity to serve in the church. So don't buy into our society's values that when you retire, the whole goal of life is to get to retirement with a secure nest egg so that I can spend the rest of my days in self-indulgent ease.

That's not a retirement plan. That's shooting yourself in the foot. We ought to be congratulating, in my view, and celebrating the fact that, for instance, Debbie Gould, our membership minister, she's one of our purpose pastors, one of the five pastors, leaders of our leadership team, has been ministering at St. Paul's three to five days a week for more than 20 years, longer than I've been ordained, as a volunteer.

Okay, now, let me just, I do think, when I said we should celebrate that, I didn't mean a pause and, okay, let me just say it again, I think we should celebrate that.

Okay, so that took twice, it took four times for me to say it this morning, twice tonight, so that's good. That's an improvement. That, that I don't think means that we undervalue you, Debbie, I don't think that was what I mean.

Andrew Smith has been giving at least two days a week for four to five years or so at St. Paul's, doing a whole range of things. And there are others who contribute in a whole range of other ways in volunteer.

[ 31 : 42 ] We've had, one of the joys, I think, we've had a number of young people who have come through over the years, the 10 years I've been here, have given, you know, one or two, three days a week for a year as a sort of a gap year and stuff like that and which has just been amazing to have those opportunities.

We get more done in those times and ministry progresses remarkably when those things are happening. So that's the first thing, with your time, give of your time. Secondly, talents.

The Bible uses the language of gifts here when it talks about this, 1 Corinthians 12, four to seven. 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 working but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the spirit is given for the common good.

So every Christian, that's what the each one is referring to in verse seven, receives spiritual gifts. Spiritual gift is an ability.

[ 32 : 43 ] Verse six calls it a working or it could also be called a power. And this ability, this working, this power comes to us comes to us as a free gift from God.

They are gifts from the spirit of God according to verse four. They are given to every Christian for the purpose of ministering to the needs of others.

Verse five calls it service. And this service is for the building up of the Christian community both in its size and depth because verse seven calls that for the common good of the church.

So the bottom line is that every Christian is in ministry through the church and if you're a Christian you've been gifted by God for that end.

No one, no Christian is ever merely a consumer of the services of others. They are also distributor of services to others.

[ 33 : 49 ] Now, 1 Corinthians 12 tells us how the gifts are distributed in the church and the answer is diversely.

Note the repeated use of the word different in these verses. Firstly, there are a variety of individual gifts. Some have put the diversity of gifts into three broad categories the prophetic gifts, the priestly gifts and the kingly gifts.

Prophetic gifts are gifts and abilities based on understanding and articulating biblical truth. They are gifts that represent God to others that are marked by things like boldness and clarity, evangelism, teaching, speaking, discernment, prophecy.

Priestly gifts are abilities based on understanding and supplying basic needs for people. They represent others to God and the world and are marked by things like sympathy and sacrifice and care, encouragement, helping, pastoring, mercy, that kind of stuff.

Kingly gifts are abilities based on understanding and direction and people groups as a whole, what they need as a group as a whole.

[ 35 : 01 ] they represent Christ's vision to others and these gifts are generally marked by things like wisdom, practicality, leadership.

Often you look at the apostles, founders of ministries, leadership, administration, wisdom, faith, courage, that kind of stuff.

That's how the gifts are distributed, all kinds of different gifts and no individual has all of those gifts. As much as we might like it, no one has all of those gifts and you tend to have one area that you're really strong at, maybe two areas that you're fairly strong at but you'll never have three areas that you are supremely strong at where your passions are for all three areas.

You might be able to function in all of them but one or two of them will dominate. Secondly, there are different kinds of service in verse 5 which means our gifts are better suited to some places and context over others.

Some work better with children than adults. Some prefer a small setting rather than a large setting. Some work with blue collar and some can work with white collar better, that sort of stuff.

[ 36 : 16 ] Thirdly, there are different kinds of working in verse 6 which most likely means there are different levels of capacity. every Christian has an almost unique collection of gifts and on top of this there are different seasons in our lives where the context where those gifts are called out in us are called out in us in different ways.

When you put it all together it may be that each Christian has a personal gift setting which is totally unique to them in a way that even a thumbprint might be unique.

The implication of that is that there is ministry that most likely only you can do. Spiritual gifts fit you for the mission in life that God has given you wherever he has placed you.

So how do we discover the spiritual gifts? Let me just clarify this point really clearly. I think I need to make this. It is interesting that there is virtually nothing in the Bible at all about how to discover spiritual gifts.

Virtually nothing. Very, very little. Which means there is a problem with every single prescribed process that you'll pull off a book in Kurong or whatever off the shelves in Kurong and say here's how you discover your spiritual gifts.

[ 37 : 44 ] There's a problem with every single process. There are at least three factors that seem to come together in discovering gifts. Affinity, ability and opportunity.

There is pretty much this is pretty much the process we go through I think in all of our major decisions in life. Finding jobs and every other major decision.

Affinity, ability, opportunity. Affinity, what human needs do I vibrate towards? What interests me?

What are my passions? Ability, what am I good at?

What do people say I'm effective in? Opportunity, what doors of service are open, what needs to be done? They're the three of them, affinity, ability, opportunity.

When I first got involved in ministry there was opportunities and it connected with ability. Steve, that pew needs to be fixed. We need people sitting on these seats on Sunday and they need to be fixed.

[ 38 : 46 ] I can do that. That's connecting with an ability that I had. Steve, after several months, today, pews are all fixed, grass is cut, we're going to go visit the hospital.

Dunk, dong. That's not something that I'm have an ability at. Affinity, I think so, but there's an opportunity there, so let's have a crack. So what I would suggest is the place to start is opportunity. Find the ministries in the church that need to be done and just do them. Just serve. Don't ask, first of all, whether it fulfills you.

When, after we've had a supper out there and there's crumbs all over the floor, don't ask, will I be fulfilled if I vacuum the floor tonight?

I'm not naturally vibrating across here in this direction. Just do it. There's an opportunity to serve, just do it.

[ 39 : 48 ] And if you need to know how to work a vacuum cleaner, I'll willingly show you how to do that. We've already been told tonight, there's a working bee next Saturday.

Just be here. turn up, be involved in the working bee. For those of you who have certain affinities and abilities, there's an opportunity right now to be the treasurer of St. Paul's.

We're looking for a treasurer right now. Talk to Andrew Smith who's our acting treasurer right now.

Okay, having seen all about that, there is a distinction. The last bit about talents is the distinction between gifts and fruit. Spiritual gifts is something we do. Spiritual fruit is something that we are.

No one but Jesus has all the spiritual gifts. But every Christian is to have all of the spiritual fruit. And the list is there in Galatians 5, 22 to 23.

[ 40 : 55 ] The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Spiritual gifts can often be honoured ahead of spiritual fruit or even be mistaken for it.

There's a reason for that because in our Western culture we value production. We value getting things done, the task resolved.

And so when we see people doing tasks and resolving them well with skill, we just assume that is a higher order for us than the character of the person doing it in our culture.

Spiritual gifts can often be honoured ahead of spiritual fruit or even be mistaken for them. And it shocks us to realise in the spiritual realm that it's possible to touch the lives of individuals even masses of people with a spiritual gift while at the same time your own spiritual life is in a downward free fall.

That's possible. In fact, Matthew 7, in Matthew 7 there are unregenerate people exercising gifts for the benefits of others.

[ 42 : 18 ] you can lead a crusade and see people converted but at the same time be on the way to hell yourself.

That's possible. If God can use a donkey to bring about his purposes, he can use a non-Christian to bring about the conversion of Christians.

don't ever use the success that you have in ministry in any way as the gauge of where you're walking with Christ in that moment.

Don't ever be confused. Our church needs people who clearly demonstrate both the fruits and the gifts of the Spirit, which is why our discipleship pathway, growing up to be like Jesus, sits right beside our ministry pathway, growing up in my responsibility and my leadership.

So the third and final way we can serve God in this world is with our treasure. And I'll finish with this one. Next Sunday, it's Commitment Sunday. It's the Sunday each year where we ask our regular members, those who call St. Paul's, their church family, to make a financial pledge for the ministry of St. Paul's in the next year, 2019.

[ 43 : 45 ] And also, next Sunday, we're looking to raise \$55,000 for the internal and external projects that you have heard about tonight as well.

No less than five times in the New Testament, the language of supporting missionaries or supporting a church financially is described as a ministry, an act of service.

And it's a key ministry that all of God's people are involved in regardless of gifting. You don't have a special gift of radical generosity per se.

It's to use our treasure to serve God in this world. Like our gifting, it is something that we will use to differing degrees.

That is, we don't give according to what we don't have. We give according to what we have, not what we don't have. The principle that we use here is unequal giving equals sacrifice.

[ 44 : 50 ] Equal sacrifice is that whether it's \$2 that you're giving or whether it's \$2,000 you're giving, it's a gulp factor. I need God to help me fulfill this.

Our act of giving is an act of worship and that is why the Bible calls us to give from our first fruits and to live on the rest rather than giving God what's left over. Wow, God, I've just eaten this massive roast dinner and there's a potato, there you go, you can have that one.

If God has saved you in Jesus, gathered you to himself, his purpose is to grow you to be like Jesus in both his character and the work he came to do, which is the will of the Father.

So pursue God's purpose for your life, get behind the vision of this church and serve it and God with your time, your talents and your treasures.

And within a week, within the next week, you've got opportunities to do all of those things just by the pledging and by coming to a working bay or being our next treasurer.