

It's Your Turn Now
Pastor Deborah Oakley
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Before I begin my message, I have some important announcements to make. There are some changes coming starting next week and we want you to prepare for those changes.

For some time now our staff and ministry teams have been overloaded and overwhelmed. We all agree it's time for them to have a break.

Due to being short-staffed, we will be closing and combining some of the children's classrooms. We still plan to provide a quality experience to the best of our ability. But get here early if you want a place for your children in a class. Once the rooms are full, you will need to keep them with you in the sanctuary. We just ask that you watch them and if necessary, take them to the foyer.

Also, the worship team will be taking time off for much needed rest. Be assured though that we will always have at least one person and as many instruments as possible.

Finally, Rex and Mary are worn out cleaning the building. So, if you find any trash would you please pick it up and throw it away.

Please understand these changes are only temporary. **THEY ARE ALSO NOT TRUE.** Fortunately, none of this is really going to happen. I repeat, none of this is going to happen.

I said all this to make a point for my sermon. My point is this: It's your turn now. That's actually the title of my sermon.

You see, "It's your turn now" to help carry the load.

"It's your turn now" to do what God has called you to do.

"It's your turn now" to use your gifts.

"It's your turn now" to make a difference in the lives of others and to serve others.

Sometimes we get that backwards. We want others to serve us. Do you realize every time you come to church you are being served? Others are using their God given gifts and abilities to minister to you. The worship team just served you in worship. The children's ministers are serving your children. I'm serving you the word of God.

And that's why most of us come to church. And that's OK. However, it shouldn't end there. In Matthew 20:26-28 Jesus said:

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

You see, Jesus didn't come to be served, He came to serve. So, if we want to be like Jesus, then we must serve others. Every one of us are called to serve and to do ministry.

The word ministry comes from the Greek word diakonos — and means – a servant – a minister - one who serves. It is also the root word for deacon.

“Diakonos” is not a special office. In fact, Vine’s Bible Dictionary says it means to render any kind of service. It was never used in the Bible to describe a title or an office such as an ordained pastor. It never refers to a professional. Rather it refers to a person who is serving in ministry within the body of Christ. “Diakonos” implies that believers should serve one another according to the gifts they have.

This means that every believer is a minister. YOU SEE... we tend to think ministry is limited to the staff or certain people who are called or gifted. But I’m telling you that YOU are called and gifted. Ministry is simply you, using your gifts for the glory of God. Every one of us has received at least one gift... and everyone should be using their gifts.

So, let’s look at six reasons why we should use our gifts for ministry:

1. THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS WE ARE ALL MINISTERS.

2 Corinthians 3:6 says:

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant- — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The New Testament lifts believers to a higher level of expectation because of grace, and the calling that God gives us. I Peter 2:9 says:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Peter describes followers of Jesus Christ as a holy priesthood. This puts all Christians in the role once performed only by the Old Testament priests. In the Old Testament, only the priests could minister to God. But now Peter says we are all priests. And priests are called to use their gifts to minister. This is an honor and a privilege.

2. OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS STUNTED UNLESS WE USE OUR GIFTS.

If I asked how many here today desire to grow in the Lord, I would guess it’s most if not all of us...otherwise we probably wouldn’t be here. Here’s a key to growing in the Lord. Use the gifts God gave you. Ephesians 4:16 says:

As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Your spiritual growth will be limited unless you use the spiritual gifts God has given you. It will also limit the growth of other people and the growth of the church! We grow spiritually through:

Prayer and the Word.

Christian Fellowship.

And using our spiritual gifts to minister.

Many believers think attending church is their ministry. But they don’t do their part to serve others. And they aren’t really growing because they aren’t serving.

But Romans 12:6-8 says this:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

There's no question that we should use the gifts God has given us. And when we do spiritual growth happens.

3. THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WILL NEVER BE MET WITHOUT CHURCH INVOLVEMENT.

If the MEMBERS of this congregation don't minister, many needs will never be met. In fact, do you know that lay ministry (which is the same as the body doing the ministry) began because needs weren't being met?

In Acts, the widows were being neglected, and the leaders realized they couldn't continue to meet all the people's needs, so they turned that ministry of care over to others. The New Testament principle is so clear that ALL of God's people should serve. The pastors cannot do it alone! That's why "It's your turn now." And when we all begin to minister to others, lives are changed.

When Jimmy March first came to Grace, he had been a member of a megachurch, but he wasn't able to find a place to serve. He was looking for a church where he could serve. We were excited to hear that, but we had heard this many times from other people who never got involved. However, that was not the case with Jimmy and Margaret. They have been involved in our children's ministry, Jimmy is a leader in our men's ministry, and he is now taking over the leadership of our pastoral care ministry. He also ministers to our brother Andy Chavez. So, Andy is also going to share how Jimmy has impacted his life.

We thought we were providing good pastoral care here at Grace. But we have come to the realization that for the most part we are only providing crisis care. It's usually when someone faces a crisis that they receive care. BUT...what about those who are not facing a crisis? Should they not also receive care?

As your pastors we deeply desire for everyone to receive care and we are determined to provide authentic congregational care to each person. BUT . . . we are going to need a many people out of the congregation to help us reach this goal.

NEXT SUNDAY Pastor Joe will be giving you more information on our CARE MINISTRY NETWORK and how you can get involved. Please begin to pray about committing yourself to one of the most exciting things we have ever done here at Grace.

Do you know when someone comes to Grace for the first-time they will decide within the first ten minutes if they're coming back. Before we even worship or preach - they've decided. When they walk in our doors they notice if anyone greets them, is the building clean and organized, Is the children's ministry safe and inviting, are people friendly. Do you know one of the comments we hear a lot from visitors is how friendly Grace is. That's a good thing. However, people are not just looking for a friendly church - they are looking for friends. Friends meet needs.

There's a world of difference between a friendly church and having friends at church. We need both.

4. THE CHURCH IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT EVERYBODY DOING THEIR PART.

The church will never be a whole, healthy body unless everybody uses their gifts and does their part. 1 Corinthians 12:18-22 says:

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. 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!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

Every part of the church needs every other part of the church. And here's what happens when not everyone does their part:

1. Abuse — Too few people having to use too many gifts. They're overloaded, they're worn out, and they are tired from carrying someone's else's part.
2. Disuse — Too many people not using their gifts.
3. Misuse — People using the wrong gifts.

Let me read a parable to you. A group of animals decided to improve their existence by starting a school, to teach swimming, running, climbing, and flying. The duck, an excellent swimmer, was deficient in the other areas, so he majored in climbing, running, and flying, much to the detriment of his swimming.

The rabbit, a superior runner, was forced to spend so much time in the other classes that he soon lost much of his speed. The squirrel, which was an A plus climber, dropped to C, because the instructor spent hours trying to teach him to swim and fly. The eagle was disciplined for soaring to the treetops instead of learning how to climb, even though flying was so natural for him.

This parable painfully portrays what often happens in the church. We each have a gift, and our gifts differ. Some of us are trying to do things we shouldn't and we're not doing the things we should. If God made you a rabbit, then run, if you're a squirrel then climb, if you're an eagle then soar, and if you're a duck, then waddle. And don't get upset because you waddle when you run. Some of us waddle even if we aren't ducks.

I think the point is obvious. Be who God created you to be and use the gifts He gave you. Because:

5. NOT USING YOUR GIFT DISPLEASES GOD.

In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus tells the parable of the talents. A master was going on a journey, so he entrusted talents to His servants. One was given five talents the other two and the other one. The one who had 1 talent did not use his gift because it wasn't as much as the others and God was displeased with Him. You see God not only gives different gifts to different people, but He also gives different amounts of gifts to different people.

I remember a time when I didn't want to preach or lead because I was comparing myself to Pastor Joe. I have no doubt He's a 5-talent guy. I have so much respect for him, and I want to be just like him when I grow up. So, I would try to copy him. Until I realized God gave me abilities different from his. (always being right.) Once I accepted that I was motivated to use my gifts.

The parable teaches us how important it is we use our gifts because when the master came back, the first thing he wanted was to see who used their gifts and how they used them.

Also, using our gifts to minister to others actually ministers to God! In Matthew 25:35-40 Jesus said:

I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me. Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.'

Everything we do for others we are also doing for Christ!

6. THE HARVEST INCREASES AS INVOLVEMENT IN MINISTRY INCREASES.

Jesus knew that the only way the harvest of souls would ever be reaped depended on having laborers. He said in Matthew 9:37-38

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.

He said the problem isn't the harvest; the problem is laborers. You see, if we can just get the church to do what it's supposed to do, we wouldn't need to worry about the harvest.

This passage makes it so clear that some things will not get accomplished without our involvement. Listen God is unlimited, but sometimes He chooses to limit Himself to working through us. This is an amazing, sobering thought. Augustine said, "Without Him we cannot, without us, He will not." That's why "It's your turn now."

I close with this true story: During the Second World War, a small French community had a statue of Christ in the center of their town. During the bombing, the statue was broken into several pieces. But they carefully collected the pieces and with great affection they began to rebuild the statue of Jesus. The statue wasn't as beautiful with all the cracks but to them it was more beautiful.

However, when they had almost all the pieces together, they realized they were missing the nail scarred hands of Jesus. They were so disappointed they decided to take the statue down. Until one person placed a plaque at the bottom of that statue that read, "I have no hands but yours." All of a sudden, the people understood something that I wish we understood: we are His hands.

We are the extension of His ministry, and He is limited if we don't use our gifts for His glory.

I challenge you today to choose to be the hands of Christ to someone!
I challenge you to minister to the Lord by ministering to other people!
It's your turn to find a place to serve and minister in Jesus name!