

Gifted for Ministry! Ex 31: 3-11

Over the years God has called all kinds of people to do special jobs in His service. In Old Testament times, God chose certain people to be prophets, priests and kings filling them with His Spirit and gifting them with the abilities to accomplish His mission. One of the distinctions between their day and ours, is that following Christ's resurrection, God now pours out His Spirit on ALL who come to him in faith, connecting us together into one huge spiritual family, both for our mutual support and also for doing His kingdom work here on Earth (Acts 2:14-18, Eph. 4:8-16) As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church,

there are varieties of gifts, services and activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; varieties of services, but the same Lord; varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Then Paul went on to list some of the many gifts which you would expect to find ministering in a church: wisdom, faith, healing, working miracles, prophesying, teaching, etc. But what about all the other regular people in church, the artists, musicians, craftsmen, construction workers, business people and blue collar laborers even those whom Mike Rowe celebrates doing the dirtiest of jobs at the bottom of society – do these people have gifts for ministry?

The glib answer of course is "CERTAINLY." But that begs the question, what then are their gifts that can be used in ministry? Does the brick mason have to sing in the choir? Does the tailor have to teach Sunday School? Must the Church administrative assistant also head up the Evangelistic team?

The answer here is again "YES." If you can sing, by all means join the choir and if you can witness, then get out there sharing your faith. But you can also be **gifted** to lay bricks for ministry, to sew clothes for ministry, to be the church's administrative assistant for the glory of God; this is exactly what today's scripture passage would teach us.

If you have been reading along with us in the book of Exodus, you know that in chapter 20, God first gave the people of Israel the Ten Commandments, then in Chapters 21-23

God gave an extensive list of laws based on those commandments to govern daily life in the Promised land. In Chapter 24, after the People of Israel promised not once but twice to obey all these laws, the most amazing thing happened... Moses, Aaron, their two assistants and seventy of the tribe's Elders went back up the mountain to have dinner with God.

There on the mountain they saw a rather impressive image of God and did not die as they fully expected to. But just who or what did they actually see? Because God is a Spirit and even made a point of telling Moses that no one could directly see Him and survive (Ex. 33:18-23). We will deal with this and many other appearances of the invisible God during Tuesday's Something More Bible Study, but for now let's keep moving along towards today's topic.

After the dinner party, God called for Moses to come back up the mountain to stay for forty days, during which time God would not only give him a set of stone tablets engraved with the law and the commandments, but God would also describe in exquisite detail how the people were to make a gold plated "ark" – a portable box – to hold these stone tablets, along with a luxuriously decorated tabernacle – a tent – housed within a much larger tent to serve as a place for the people to meet with God, along with all the alters, implements, clothing and rituals needed for the proper worship of God. This is all recorded in Exodus chapters 25-30.

Ironically, during Moses' 40 day sojourn up on the mountain, writing down all these detailed instructions for the proper worship of God, the people at the foot of the mountain were getting Aaron to build **golden calf** around which they could dance in worship, thus dramatically breaking both the first and second commandments that they had so recently vowed to completely obey. But this story of the Golden Calf and God's response will also have to wait for the new year as we now turn our attention to **WHO** God had chosen and equipped to build and decorate this golden ark and its bronze alters along with sewing and crafting both the tents and fancy clothes and Jewelry that Aaron and his sons were to wear while serving as priests. This is the topic of Exodus, Chapter 31.

I have filled **Bezalel** with My spirit, and with ability, intelligence, & craftsmanship ...
I have also appointed with him **Oholiab**,
And in **all who are skillful** I have put the skill,
that they may make all that I have commanded
Ex 31:3-6

*The Lord spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name **Bezalel** ... and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind*

*of craft, to devise **artistic designs**, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.*

*Moreover, I have appointed with him **Oholiab** and I have given **skill to all the skilful**, so that they may make all that I have commanded you (Ex 31:3-6).*

Have you ever heard of Bezalel? Few people have. Yet, this important Bible character was God-charged and God-gifted with all the abilities needed to accomplish a major task for God. Specifically, he would be the chief architect and construction foreman for building the Ark, the alters and the entire rest of the Tabernacle, along with all its parts and supporting pieces. Bezalel was both to design and execute the work as described by God along with assigning out piece work to other craftsmen whom God had also gifted the skills to accomplish these tasks.

God had anointed Bezalel to minister – to work for the glory of God – with his hands. doing manual labor. God had not called him to preach, he was not gifted for music and he was not placed on the field of battle. God had gifted him with ALL the abilities to accomplish ALL the tasks necessary – not only to design and construct but also to oversee others – in the building of God’s Tabernacle.

Notice also that Bezalel was much more than a master multi-media **craftsman**, he was also an **artist** from whom God expected, “*devise artistic designs*” not only to be accomplished in precious metal work and carved wood, but also in jewelry along with priestly garments and two completely different style of tents; one to be woven decoratively out of precious fabrics and another huge one to protect everything while still being portable.

God also gifted the other unnamed craftsmen and craftswomen who were to work under Bezalel for completing this massive artistic venture; **everyone from gold smiths to wood workers, to weavers and seamstresses, using their daily skills in ministry to God.**

Yes, God gifted and used people like Moses, Aaron and Joshua; but He also gifts and uses people like Bezalel! The construction work God called him to do was of such importance, that God gave him a special anointing for the task. Moses had the spirit for administration and prophecy, Aaron had the spirit for the priesthood and Joshua had the spirit for conquest. But Bezalel had the spirit for artistic design and construction. Bezalel’s name actually meant “*under God’s shadow*,” signaling that just like Moses, Aaron and Joshua, he was accomplishing all his artistic and constructive endeavors through the inspiration of God’s spirit living within him. Bezalel was an architect, artist and construction foreman for the glory of the Lord.

These days, people seem slow to answer God's call to service because they fear their skills are too common; too everyday to be suitable for God. But now you know this is not true. I doubt that there is any job, any skill, that cannot in some way be done as a ministry for the glory of God. Do you dig water wells? The mission field is begging for your talents. The Kingdom of God needs a multitude of workers in the various fields of labor. Each of us needs to find our place in the service of our Lord, and accept God's anointing to fulfill that task; whether it's preaching, praying, building houses, digging wells, even farming ... for the glory of God.

One day a rather successful wheat farmer was out inspecting this year's strangely struggling crops, when miraculously the clouds overhead formed themselves into the letters "PC." Taking this as a clear sign that he was being called instead to "preach Christ", he sold the farm and everything else he owned, bought a big tent and hit the revival circuit. The only problem was he was a very poor speaker, who could barely draw anyone to come hear his sermons. Disappointed and dejected he shared his difficulties with his own pastor who lovingly suggested that perhaps all God had been advising, was that he plant corn.

D.L. Moody (*I think*) once famously quipped that he would hate to see anyone whom God had called to be a farmer shrinking down to just be a preacher.

But there was one more person whom the Bible celebrates, which I doubt even now, that you would think of as being gifted for ministry. That person was **Oholiab**, whom God says that He personally chose to be **Bezalel's assistant**. Did you hear what I just said? God had not only gifted one particular person to oversee all of the Tabernacle's design and construction, but he had also gifted another particular person to serve as his assistant!

What kinds of gifted skills would be needed to be an "assistant?" not necessarily artistic, or that of a craftsman, or even construction skills, but instead organizational and interpersonal skills needed to get tasks assigned and communicated to others and to follow them through to deadlines. And certainly also to be an humble and diligent spirit who can understand and put up with eccentric artists or demanding bosses. Yes you can even be gifted as was Oholiab to minister as an assistant to another.

When you think about it, a lot of the people who were privileged to have their names recorded in the Bible, were because they were gifted to minister as an assistant for someone else; people like Joshua, or Barnabas and Silas who served as Paul's missionary associates, or Priscilla and Aquila, who as merchants, financially supported Paul, while also doing their own evangelistic witness on the side.

Our New Testament even records the story of Dorcas, a Christian lady who simply used her dress making skills to help clothe the poor. She wasn't sewing together precious

fabrics for the tabernacle walls, but instead was constructing outer and inner garments along other pieces of clothing, probably from whatever scraps she could find, for poor widows. God obviously valued her work because he allowed Peter to raise Dorcas from the dead so that she might continue her particular ministry (Acts 9.36-39). Every talent, every variety of task, that a Christian might turn their hand to, can be a ministry used for the glory of the Lord.

For example, there is a couple, Travis and Leslie Graboyes, who have become friends of this church and who usually participate in our worship services by watching the YouTube videos. Like everyone else due to the pandemic they have been largely quarantined to their home in Fincastle while still trying to reach out in a ministry of encouragement to others. About a month ago, Leslie called me to ask if she might be able to send Christmas cards to our Church's shut-ins; which I thought was an excellent idea, so I gave her a list of names. The other day upon receiving just such a card from the Graboyes family, I realized that what Leslie was mailing out were completely artistically handmade cards; little pieces of art for our shut-ins to enjoy. Yes friends, you can even be gifted with artistic abilities to minister through the making of Christmas cards. If you received one of those cards, you now know who personally made it as a gift just for you.

There are of course plenty of other creative and communication gifts we haven't touched on; acting, writing, composing and playing music, computer or camera skills. Johann Sebastian **Bach**, often recognized as the greatest composer in the entire world and for all time, declared that, *the aim and final end of ALL music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.* I would say the same thing for all other skills as well.

All of our creativity can be used and turned into a gift of worship or ministry.

- What about scrap booking? Are you scrap bookers tired of creating pages of baby photos? I reckon there's a ministry opportunity waiting to happen there.
- Are you into amateur film making with your phone? TikTok or YouTube await your awesome God-gifted abilities.

God has made us as creative beings, and many of you have creative and artistic gifts just itching to come out and contribute to ministry in the name of Jesus, everyone of which is one more step forward in bringing God's kingdom to Earth.

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Let's pray about what your next creative ministry might be.