

The Mysterious Ways God Works

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Romans 12:4-8

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Children's Sunday,

After hearing his dad preach on justification, sanctification, and all the -ations, a minister's son was ready when his Sunday school teacher asked if anybody knew what procrastination meant. The boy said, "I'm not sure what it means, but I know our church believes in it!"

Sometimes what goes on in this room is a bit over the heads of the younger folks in our congregation. So this morning I want to speak to everyone but on a level that our children (and possibly the adults) will enjoy and understand.

There are so many things in this world that is a mystery to me. There are many people in this very room that are way smarter than I am and some of the things that are a mystery to me are easy for them to understand. But I am very confident that there isn't anyone that knows and understands everything except God and Jesus. For example, look at this watermelon seed. It is a complete mystery to me the power of this one little seed, how it goes from this to this. Somehow this seed pulls from the ground and through itself 200 thousand times its weight in water. Through this mysterious process this seed colors an artistic outer surface beyond the imagination of any artist. It also creates a white rind and within the rind a beautiful red heart that is so good to eat. Throughout the watermelon there are seeds that can do the same thing.

It is an incredible mystery how God made and gave that little seed the ability to do that. But I am glad God did because I love to eat watermelon. Many things that God does is mysterious, cannot be explained or understood no matter how smart we are. How and why God decided to create each one of us to look different, to sound different, with different abilities to do different things is a mystery, but I'm glad God created us that way.

God created each of us with special gifts and talents, all of these gifts and talents are important and God gave them to us for a reason. God gave us these gifts and talents so we can use them to help tell other people about Jesus, to make the church a wonderful place to worship and learn about Jesus, and so we can be good friends and support and help each other.

While I am not 100% sure how God creates us and decides how many and which special gifts and talents each of us get I do have an idea how we discover them in our lives, let me see if I can explain it.

- This jar (half filled with water) is like our lives and as God creates us we are given interests and abilities; like music, dancing, math, football, cooking, and the list can go on and on. (sprinkle a few different colors of kool-aid into the water.)
- As we get older and we realize that we have these interests and abilities we begin to use them at school, local sports teams and organizations, even at church. (sprinkle more of the kool-aid into the water) The more we use our talents and gifts the better we get at them, more accomplished and skilled.
- At the same time as we grow up we also begin to do things that are not pleasing to God, we call it sin. (sprinkle in a good helping of red kool-aid)
- At some point as we begin to hear about God's love for us and how God sent Jesus to die on a cross for us, we realize that we have sin in our lives. When we do we ask God to forgive us of these sins and promise to do our very best to live our lives in ways that will put a smile on God's face. When we open

our hearts to Jesus his Spirit comes into us and we are made into a new person in our hearts and minds. (pour bleach into the jar).

- It is when we become this new person in our hearts and minds that we start thinking about how we can use those interests, abilities, gifts and talents in ways that will help tell other people about Jesus, to make the church a wonderful place to worship and learn about Jesus, and so we can be good friends and support and help each other.

In Ephesians we are told to be "filled with the Spirit." A more accurate translation is that we should be "continually filled" with the Spirit of God. This sounds like being filled with the Spirit is something that should be a constant on-going thing, not just a one-time event. (Move to the other jar)

- How can we be "continually filled" by the Spirit of God. I don't let you in on a secret; it isn't by just coming to church and warming a pew. Joining other believers in worship and fellowship is certainly a part of it, along with a consistent personal time of prayer and scripture study. But I think that using the gifts and talents, interests and abilities that God has given us is just as much, if not more a part of the puzzle as this other stuff.
- Here is what I think happens when we choose not to use our gifts and talents in the service of God. (Begin to pour water into the jar) As Christians God's Spirit continues to pour into us and as we offer ourselves to God in our worship here at church, and in our private times of worship in personal prayer and scripture reading, and the using of our gifts and talents; the Spirit of God flows out and over us and onto and into the lives of the people that are around us.
- This is what is asked of us as Christians, to be vessels and instruments of God's love and Spirit and when we do this God works in wonderfully mysterious ways in our lives and the lives of the people around us.
- But when we don't it is like we have a hole and we can never be completely filled, let alone filled to overflowing. (open the plug on the jar)

Two years ago my brother and sister-in-law gave our mom a Nook, it is like a Kindle, where you can read books on a hand held computer type thing. My mom loves to read books but she has never used it. The only time it has been taken out of the box is when Natalie has got it out to see if she can help her mamaw learn how to use it. My brother and sister-in-law didn't give that gift with the intention for it to sit on a shelf or stuck in a drawer never to be used.

Many people, maybe people here today, have gifts from God that they are not using. They have either shelved them or tucked them away out of sight. Today would be a good time to dust them and yourselves off and get back to the work and calling that God has uniquely gifted you to do.

Children you have been blessed in tremendous ways with gifts and talents, interests and abilities to serve God, your church and the world around you. Find out what those gifts and talents are and commit yourselves to a lifetime of using them in ways that puts a smile on God's face.

There is an Aesop's fable about an old crow who was out in the wilderness and very thirsty. He had not had anything to drink in long time. He came to a jug that had a little water in the bottom of it. The old crow reached his beak into the jug to get some water, but his beak wouldn't quite touch the water. So what did he do? He started picking up pebbles one at a time and dropping them into the jug. As more and more pebbles accumulated in the bottom of the jug the water rose in the jug until the crow was able to drink all he desired.

This is a parable of how God has chosen to work in our world. Each of us offering our gifts and talents (like our own pebbles) ó teaching Sunday school or a Wednesday evening class for adults or children, visiting the sick or lonely, serving in the kitchen, in the nursery, singing in the choir, and the list can go on and on. Utilizing the gifts that we have been blessed with to serve in ways we can may not seem all that important at the time, but as our gifts work together (our pebbles build up), God works in and through us and the Kingdom of God can grow here at 40 Kings Way.