

Sermon Title: **Build Up the Church**

Bible: 1 Corinthians 14:1-12

Where & When: Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on September 8th, 2019

Audience: about 33 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for giving us this church. Thank you so much for giving us many gifts. Who we are is all because of you. With your gifts, with your love, we want to build up our church and serve the community. Please be with my lips, according to your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. 1 Corinthians 13

Today's Scripture is 1 Corinthians, chapter 14. Before looking at chapter 14, I would like to read chapter 13. What is in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13? Any guesses? "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." And the chapter 14 starts with "Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts."

2. Corinthian Congregation

Love is the most important and famous concept in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthian congregation. Did Paul write down the love letter to the congregation? Unfortunately, there

were divisions, confusions, and problems in the church of Corinthians. For example, some church members were saying, “I belong to Paul”; some were saying, “I belong to Apollos”; some were saying, “I belong to Cephas.” But it was hard to hear “I belong to Christ.” At that time, there was slavery, and some slaves became Christians. It was not easy for the church to welcome those who were slaves. Because of the cultural differences, there were conflicts. Jesus was born Jewish, and his twelve disciples were Jewish. And Paul himself was Jewish. Many foreigners - Gentiles or Greeks - became Christians. As they had different traditions, they argued with each other. There were different economic classes as well. In other words, there were both the rich and the poor in the church. Some church members were well fed, and some church members were hungry. The Corinthian congregation was very diverse and dynamic, but to live in the faith community was not that easy.

3. Gifts in Corinthian Congregation

Is there anyone who speaks in tongues? Have you seen those who speak in tongues? I do not speak in tongues. Some of my friends and my family speak in tongues. In my experience, they can pray for one or two hours very easily. So I envied them before, because I really wanted to pray more and more. But I could not understand what they prayed, and even they did not understand what they had spoken in tongues. In chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, Paul compared speaking in tongues with prophecy. The meaning of the prophecy here is not talking about the future. Even in the Old Testament, prophecy means to speak up instead of God, rather than to

predict the future. In other words, they deliver God's message to the people. That's why many prophets in the Bible talk about justice and peace, freedom, and liberation. In this chapter, prophecy means upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation. It sounds like mentoring, coaching, counseling, and caring for others. Now I understand the meaning of verse 4; "those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church."

4. My Ministry or Church's Ministry

The lesson that I learned from this scripture is that there are two kinds of gifts; one gift for myself, and the other gift for the church. As a pastor, which gift should I use? Which ministry should I do, my ministry or the church's ministry? Can I do my ministry? For example, I am very good at speaking in Korean. Then, can I work for having a Korean-speaking congregation in this church? Is it good for this congregation? Sometimes, my ministry can be the church's ministry. Sometimes, my ministry cannot be the church's ministry. Sometimes, there can be a little overlap. The best one is when my ministry and church's ministry are the same, right? The worst one is when my ministry does not fit with the church's ministry, right?

5. 2020 Vacation Bible School

I still have my vision for this church; in 2053, as a retired pastor, I want to be invited to the 200th Year Anniversary Celebration of this church. How about your vision for this church? How about our church's vision? Is there anyone who hopes to have a 200th year anniversary celebration? Then, what ministry do we need? What can I do, even though it can be just my

ministry? I want to have Vacation Bible School in June, 2020. You might ask me, “Excuse me, Hwapyoung, do you think that it is possible to have Vacation Bible School in our Gilroy United Methodist Church?” My answer is “I do not know, but I have my vision. Can I try my vision or my ministry?”

I think that I have a gift for VBS - Vacation Bible School. A gift is not what I earned, but what I received. I have experienced 5 Vacation Bible Schools in the former church, as the Children's Ministry Director at New Creation UMC. Among 5, I created 3 customized or congregationized VBS's. I made my own curriculum, recruited and trained volunteers, and invited the kids and their friends. For instance, 2016 VBS was a multicultural VBS. Because there were three cultures in the church: Korean Culture, Chinese Culture, and Mexican Culture, I made three cultural days; Korean Day, Chinese Day, and Mexican Day. The 2017 VBS was Olympic VBS, in 2018 Water VBS. In the first year that I went to that church, there were about 5 kids in the Children's Ministry. Thankfully, In 2016, a total of 40 kids joined VBS; in 2017, 36 kids joined, and in 2018, 32 kids enjoyed the VBS. It was a great gift from God!

Because I really want to have VBS next year in this church, so far I share only the bright sides. Of course, there were many challenges: language barriers, cultural barriers, immigrant issues, etc. Honestly speaking, I do not know if I can have a VBS here, because we do not have any kids now. But I want to plant my gift in the soil of Gilroy. It is a tiny seed. I do not know if it sprouts, if it flowers, and if it bears fruit. Only when I give it a try, can I see the result. I want to

test my gift, my vision, and my ministry. I do not want to regret not doing what I should have done. I know that I am not a superhero. But I want to try to go from zero to hero, at least for VBS. I pray and hope that the church may keep on being built up until 2053.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you gave me the gift of VBS. I do not know if it is good for the church. Because you gave me the gift and the vision, I will try. Please guide me to use my gift and my ministry for building up the church. I am a servant of this church. Please use me according to your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Possible Qs.

1. Do you have any vision for this church?
2. What gifts do you have to build up the church?
3. Is VBS good for this church?