

2025-01-19 ... 10am Morning Service ... Revd Pippa White
Isaiah 62: 1 – 5; 1 Corinthians 12: 1 – 11; John 2: 1 - 11

Friends, I am here today, to tell you... it's not a sin to be good at things. It's not a sin to be good at things!

If I may make a vast, sweeping generalisation, I don't think we, and by 'we' I mean people from the UK, are very good at being good at things.

If we're talented, say at maths, and someone notices this, we often feel the need to say '**oh but my spelling's terrible though!**' or it might be something like seeing someone's house and saying 'gosh isn't your garden beautiful, you must be very green-fingered!' and we say something like '**oh not really, I just plant them and hope for the best**'

If this is you... my friend, it's not a sin to be good at things.

Let's look at this passage from first Corinthians.

'To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge... another faith (and it might be helpful for me to stop here and say that's not faith like we all have faith, and that's why we're in church on a Sunday, but faith in terms of a special ability to prophesy or having a special insight), to another gifts of healing... to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.'

We, us little humans, are given gifts by the Spirit, for the common good.

I want us to take a minute and think - what am I good at? What is my talent? What gift has the Spirit given me?

I love the caption on today's reading: '**They [the gifts] are so various that not one of us can say we have no holy gift**'

So if you're sat there, and can't really think of anything, I promise you the Spirit has given you a gift. Just take some time to discover it.

So, it is not a sin to be good at things. But! But ...

We must remember, that we are given those gifts, by the same spirit. By the same lord. We are given these gifts, given the manifestation of the Spirit, for the common good.

It's no coincidence that straight after this passage, we have that famous analogy of the body of Christ with all of its members. That some of us are eyes, some of us hands, some of us feet, some of us ears, that we are individual members, but we - WE - are the body of Christ.

And so with our gifts. We all have a God-given gift - but we are to use it for the common good.

So while it isn't a sin to be good at something, it is sinful to withhold it from the common good. It isn't a sin to have a talent, but it is sinful to deprive others of the fruit which that talent can provide. **PTO**

And I say this, not because I'm in the mood to tell you all off, or because I'm thinking, well, I'll just really put the cat among the pigeons and then I'll swan off on my week of annual leave and leave Chris to deal with it.

But I say that because when we're in a culture that sees being bad at things much funnier and much more palatable, than someone who is meek in being good at something - because if I catch any of you being prideful, you'll have to duck the Bible I'll be throwing at you - it's just easier to tuck that talent away.

Look at Our Lord and what he does in the gospel - the wine's given out, Mary says to Jesus, you need to do something about this, and he says **'what concern is that to you and me?'**

Mary, having absolutely none of this, and definitely not taking that for an answer, gives Jesus a shove so he has to do something.

Mary, seeing her boy's reluctance to use his talent, sees that he's depriving the common good, forces Jesus' hand.

So if during this sermon, you're sat there thinking **'well, I can see what my talent from the spirit is, and I suppose I can see how that could help the common good'**, but you're thinking it's easier to shrink away.... Can I ask you, find yourself a Mary.

Find yourself someone in your life, who you know and trust, who knows you very well, who knows God very well, who isn't afraid to speak plainly to you when you need it - at my rugby club we call these people your 'critical friend' - find your Mary, find your critical friend, and talk to them about it.

Because we can get so wrapped up about the 'what ifs' in our heads, the 'well if I do this, what about that', or perhaps 'well if I do this, what about them', that we tie ourselves into knots and our gifts from the spirit stay where they are, not giving anything to the common good.

So find that Mary, who will hear what you're saying, and will then give you the shove you need.

Because, and I'm going to borrow Saint Paul's words to finish my sermon,

'Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts... strive to excel in them for building up the church... keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.'