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1 Corinthians 12:1-12, 27-31; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-13

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The Gifts of the Spirit

Last week we talked about the Fruit of the Spirit and how upon faith in Christ, God grafts onto us all the buds capable of producing all of the fruit of Spirit which is...love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As Christians, we are capable of producing every single one of these fruit as they are intricately connected and cannot be separated from one another. But it could be true that some fruit ripen and mature sooner than others. Hopefully by the end of our lives, we would be beautiful trees producing each one of these wonderful fruit from our branches.

The Gifts of the Spirit are little different. Upon faith in Christ, scripture tells us that God gives at least one of these gifts according to God's good purpose of building each other up. So while we each should display the same fruit, we do not all have the same gifts. This is what we turn our attentions to today as we continue learning more about the person of the Holy Spirit.

There are three specific areas in the New Testament where Paul describes these spiritual gifts and why they are given. 1 Corinthians 12:1-12, 27-31; Romans 12:6-8; and Ephesians 4:11-13. Join me now as we hear for the Word of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:1-12, 27-31

12 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. **3** Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. **8** To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **10** to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. **28** And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? **31** Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Romans 12:6-8

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; **7** if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **8** if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Ephesians 4:11-13

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

Has anyone ever taken a spiritual gifting assessment? Good! This should just be a review for you. We give it to folks at our Growing in Faith Together new members workshops. So you may already know the gifts God has given to you through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you have never taken one, guess what? Today you are in luck! I just happen to have one to give you now. If you are curious and would to find out, raise your hand and I'll have someone come around and bring you one. Fill it out at home on your own.

But in the bulletins today, you'll find a small card that says, "My spiritual gift is..." At some point during today's sermon, if you know what it is or have a hunch what it is...write it down on the card. And then as part today's offering put it in the offering bags as they come around. You don't have to put your name on it. It's completely confidential...just between you and the Lord. But as we do, we are offering those gifts to the Lord to be used here in the church, for God's glory.

This morning, I'd like to share about the purpose of these spiritual gifts. We'll consider what gifts might we have or how do we recognize them? And finally we'll ask, "What is God asking of us today?"

I found it interesting that neither Tyler Staton nor Francis Chan mention spiritual gifts in either of their books on the Holy Spirit. But the Billy Graham did in his book, *The Holy Spirit, Activating God's Power in Your Life*. So I will be using his book as a primary source for today's sermon.

The Apostle Paul describes the body as a complete organism made up of many individual members and parts. These components alone do not make up a body, but as they work together in concert with the specific purpose for which they were created, they make up a body. And so we have a head, which is very different from our feet, which is very different from our hands, our legs, torso, eyes, etcetera etcetera. Individually they are not a body, but together they are.

We do not expect the head to act like a foot, or the hands to act like eyes. Furthermore, Paul says, "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.'" No, they all belong together and serve their unique purpose for which God created them.

The same is true with the Church which is the Body of Christ. Paul says, "Now you are the Body of Christ, each one of you is a part of it." As members of it, we each have certain parts that we are to play or contribute for the Body's proper function. These are our spiritual gifts. And the reason the Holy Spirit gives them to us is "to equip [God's] people...us... for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." In other words to make us strong trees bearing all of the mature fruit of Jesus' Spirit in our lives.

These gifts are given for the benefit of the Church and not the individual.

Now from these three scriptures that I just read, we can identify four categories of gifting or function. Leadership Gifts. Positional Gifts. Character Gifts. And Sign Gifts.

Leadership gifts include leading, governing, and administering.

Some people have the gift of leading others. They are often visionaries with good communication skills. They represent Christ's character well. And they have some what of a charisma that gets others to follow them. A good test of someone's spiritual gift of leadership is to look behind them. Are people following? If yes, then they have probably have the gift of leadership.

Others have the gift of governing. In other words, can they delegate what needs to be done to others so that they do not end up carrying the burden entirely themselves.

For example, there is a story in Exodus where the people were coming to Moses for judgment on all sorts of disputes and it was wearing him out. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, came to him and said, "It is not good that you are doing this by yourself. Select reliable people who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain, and then appoint them as officials over groups of people. Have them hear the people's cases but have them only bring you the most difficult ones. That will make your load lighter [My paraphrasing]." ¹

Jethro had the gift of governing and he imparted those gifts to Moses which helped him lead the people better. The only admonishment that scripture provides for those who govern is to do it diligently.

Others have the gift of administrating. These people are well organized, methodical, and good with people. They make sure the functions of the Body of Christ get done. Someone needs to plan worship, print bulletins, book keep, do payroll, and pay the bills. These things don't happen on their own. It takes someone with the gift of organizing to make sure that our lights stay on.

Then we have the positional gifts or people who serve in the body of Christ. Apostles. Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors or Teachers, and Helpers or Servants.

Some are Apostles. The Greek word for apostles means "one sent with a commission." In some senses this includes all believers in Jesus Christ. But it could also imply those who were first apostles of the church, or eye witnesses of Jesus' ministry. Or it could include missionaries who are sent out to make disciples of all people. Do we have any charter members of Cascades present with us today? Would you please stand. Folks these are the apostles among us who left their home churches and came together to plant this church in this part of Orchards.

Some are Prophets which from the Greek means "public expounder." Through the Holy Spirit, prophets speak directly on behalf of God. Prophets sometimes say some pretty hard things which convict people of sin. "According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, [the] second part of the prophetic office was the edification, instruction, consolation, and exhortation of the believers in a local context."² According to Billy Graham, "prophetic foretelling or predictive prophecy, no longer exists to the extent that it did in the first century."³

Scripture also warns us about false prophets in our midst. Billy Graham says, "The requirement (or test) of the true prophet in the Scriptures was that [they] had

¹ Exodus 18:15—26

² Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power In Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Books, 1988), 170.

³ Ibid, 171.

to be 100 percent accurate. Not 50 percent. Not 75 percent. Not even 99 percent. But 100 percent accurate."⁴

Some are Evangelists “meaning one who announces good news.” These people are not afraid or ashamed to share the gospel anytime, anyplace, or with anyone. Now people sometimes mistake the role of an evangelist as one who is trying to make converts. But an evangelist just shares the good news. It’s the Spirit’s job to bring people to faith. Think of an evangelist as one who casts seed upon soil. Some takes root, some does not. Seems like Jesus told a Parable about something like that.⁵

Some are Pastors. The word for pastor is sometimes referred to as it’s Hebrew counterpart or shepherd. Shepherds look after a flock of people with love, care, and genuine good will of the people in mind. They provide counseling, guidance, warnings, and protection of the flock. Pastors are also often times teachers. Which is the next of the positional gifts.

Some are Teachers. The Greek word for teacher used in Ephesians 4:11 means “instructor.” People must be taught the scriptures and the faith. The word teacher means “one who causes to learn.” Our teachers cause us to learn so that we mature into the image of Jesus Christ. Do we have any Sunday School teachers, Women’s Bible Study leaders, Youth Leaders, or Vacation Bible School teachers? These are our teachers.

And finally some are Helpers or Servants. Helpers are often behind the scenes people who love to do whatever is necessary to support those up front. Or people who are always willing to jump in and do whatever is necessary to care for the Church and it’s people. Our Deacons are the Helpers and Servants in our midst. You’re not going to see them up on the stage, but Helpers or Servants are the ones taking meals to those in need, or visiting those who are shut in or sick. Our Benevolence Board helps with distributing funds to those in our community who are housing or food insecure. Helps is also the gift of showing mercy which scripture tells us to do it cheerfully.

Helpers and servants are also often here throughout the week attending to the grounds, picking up custodial supplies at Costco, fixing broken things, taking meals to people in need, or doing the many tasks of things that need to get done. To all our Helpers and Servants. Without you, nothing would get done around here. Unfortunately yours is a hidden job that often doesn’t get recognized. But one day, I hope you hear Jesus say, “Well Done Good and Faithful Servant.” Thank you.

⁴ IBID.

⁵ See Jesus’ Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, Mark 4, or Luke 8.

Then we have the Character Gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, encouragement, generosity, and distinguishing of spirits.

Some have wisdom or sophia in Greek. Billy Graham says that “there are three kinds of wisdom. The first comes naturally [to all humans]. The second comes from learning. But the highest kind comes directly from God and is associated with the particular work of the Holy Spirit.”⁶ Our daughter, Sofia, takes her name from this text as it is our desire that she would become a woman of Godly wisdom.

Some have knowledge or gnosis in Greek. This is spiritual knowledge. Some people can be so full of Biblical knowledge but not have sophia or wisdom. That is why the two often go hand in hand.

Some have faith or pistis in Greek. It can also mean belief, assurance, or fidelity. Billy Graham gives an example of George Muller of Bristol, England. He cared for thousands of orphans over the years, started several orphanages, and never once asked people for money. He just prayed the money in. I think Cascades had the gift of faith when we took off to build this sanctuary. We had no idea how we were going to pay for it. But God did. And through your sacrificial generosity and several unexpected estate gifts, we paid off all our loans in six years. That is faith!

Some have encouragement or parakaleo in Greek. Parakaleo means to call out. It can also mean to exhort, comfort, or urge. Do you know those people who always have a good or right word to say that helps you to keep plugging along? Those are people with gifts of encouragement.

Some have generosity in giving or metadidomi en haplotes in Greek. Metadidomi which means to impart or give. En haplotes means liberally, sincerely, or generously. People who have generosity in giving have a greater sense of being stewards of the resources God has entrusted into their care. And giving those resources away for kingdom purposes literally brings them great joy. As they open their hands to give liberally, God blesses them with more. And the cycle continues.

And finally some have the ability to distinguish spirits. We need these folks in the Church now more than ever. This is true particularly as American Christian Nationalism has infected the American Church today. There are SO many voices that are crying out for our attention. Sometimes it can be really tricky to tell which ones are from the Lord and which are not. I believe that the ability to distinguish spirits complements the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom from above and good biblical knowledge provide the foundation for being able to know what is from God and what is not.

⁶ Graham, *Holy Spirit*, 184.

Then we get to the Sign Gifts. These include healing, working miracles or miraculous powers, speaking in different tongues, and interpreting tongues. We call them Sign Gifts because they are designed to draw attention to something or someone. In this case, Sign Gifts should draw people's attentions to Jesus Christ working through us and not to ourselves.

Some have the gift of healing. We see this gift displayed throughout the pages of the New Testament, particularly in Jesus' ministry. Billy Graham states, "I believe that healing can and may come from God through the gift of healing and the gift of faith, but it also comes from God through the use of medical means."⁷ I would agree with him on this. God has blessed us with modern medicine...all of which God uses through people who have been specially trained. But they are not the healers. God is. They are just the instruments for God's healing to take place.

Now I don't have the spiritual gift of healing. But I still pray for healing at people's bedsides and anticipate that God is going to heal them. Healing can be physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual. But still God provides the healing.

Some have the ability to perform miracles or display miraculous powers. "A miracle is an event beyond the power of any known physical law. It is a spiritual occurrence produced by the power of God, a marvel, a wonder."⁸ In the New Testament when we see miraculous powers taking place, it was always aimed to draw attention to Jesus Christ or the work of the Church. This is why we call it a Sign Gift. It is a sign pointing to Jesus.

And finally we have what Paul calls the least of the spiritual gifts. Speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues. Glossalia in Greek. Paul describes it as the least of the spiritual gifts because it is the one that causes the most pride and divisions among Churches. Tongues can be human languages as we see taking place at Pentecost in Acts 2. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in the languages of all the people who had come to Jerusalem for the Holy Days. People heard them and understood the Gospel in their own languages.

Tongues can also be angelic languages which are not understood by humans. When Paul wrote about speaking in this kind of tongue to the church in Corinth, he was warning them because it had become a divisive issue. Those who had the gift thought less of those who didn't. They had become proud...as if they were super Christians because God had given them the gift to do so.

But Paul was also very clear that along with the gift of speaking in tongues should be the gift of interpreting the tongues. Someone should be able to help the rest of the Church understand what they were babbling on about. This way the

⁷ Graham, *Holy Spirit*, 199.

⁸ Ibid, 206-207.

Church would be edified, built up into their faith in Jesus Christ. Without this interpretation, it was just noise like banging cymbals. Paul also encouraged those who spoke in tongues to do it privately where only God would hear.

So those are the gifts of the Spirit. But how do we recognize our gifts? Billy Graham suggests the following:⁹

First, realize that God has given you at least one spiritual gift and wants you to know what it is and how to use it for his glory.

Second, pray about it.

Third, know what the Bible says about the gifts.

Fourth, know yourself and your abilities.

I would add these last two steps...

Fifth, ask others what they might think it is.

Sixth, take an assessment.

If you know your spiritual gifting, write it down now on that card in your bulletin.

Serving without ur spiritual gifting is like waterskiing behind a powerful speed boat. It's just easy and we get pulled along with God's strength. Serving in areas where we are not gifted is like trying to pull that speed boat where we want it to go. It's hard.

One last thing about spiritual gifts. Sometimes God gives us spiritual gifts for a season and then they go dormant. These are gifts that are given to us for God's purposes in our lives and in the Church. They are not for us. They belong to God and God can use them or not.

As we close our discussion on spiritual gifts today, "What do we sense that the Spirit of God saying to us?" We each have gifts that have been given to us. Do we have greater clarity on what they might be? Or do we need to do some more exploration? If we know what they are, are we using them? Or do we have them hidden under a bushel? If we aren't, I believe the Holy Spirit is inviting us to put them into use now so that the Church is built up and God is glorified.

Amen!

⁹Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 166-167.