

**Title: "For the Common Good" Text: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 27-31 Series: "Holy Spirit: The Forgotten Member of the Trinity" Pastor Dave Sattler June 19, 2016 Sources:** NIV Life App Bible; Commentaries: Blomberg, Morris & Fee; Books: Buchanan's Church is Too Safe, Lewis' Church of 12, Brown's Boys in the Boat, & Bonhoeffer's Life Together.

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### Review & Introduction <Series Slide>:

- G'morning, Dave Sattler here, one of the pastors at NSAC today continuing our "Holy Spirit" Series.
- And it's been a sweet time. I've had a deep sense of the Holy Spirit moving among us.
- The schedule indicates we've had 7 different preachers in last 7 weeks.
- But the same Spirit. Who just keeps showing up.
- I've been excited to see different people coming forward to receive prayer for a 'fresh touch' of the Spirit. And a hunger for more of God in worship; one of our recent guest speakers commented,
  - Q: "There is something 'unique and special' going on at NSAC."
  - I say, 'Holy Spirit, bring it on! We're hungry for more!'
- **<Slide>** ILL - Daniel James Brown's 2013 bestseller, The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, chronicles the extraordinary saga of nine working class boys from the Pacific Northwest -- with diverse skills and personalities, who came together, stormed the rowing world, and galvanized the attention of millions in the midst of the Great Depression and the dark shadow of Nazi Germany.
- I confess I know very little about rowing, but I was fascinated by what I read.
  - On selecting rowers, Brown writes, Q: The most important quality to look for is the ... "ability to disregard [one's] own ambitions, to throw his ego over the gunwales ... and to pull, not just for himself, not just for glory, but for the other boys in the boat."
  - Q: "What mattered more than how hard a man rowed was how well everything he did in the boat harmonized with what the other fellows were doing. And a man couldn't harmonize with his crew-mates unless he opened his heart to them."
  - Further description of the Boys in the Boat: Q: "All were merged into one smoothly working machine; they were, in fact, a poem of motion, a symphony of swinging blades."
- **<Slide>** And this harmony, I believe, is a picture of what life together in the Spirit is to look like.
- Yet sadly, this is far from the experience of many Christian church-goers, who feel 'on the outside looking in.' And it hurts. While others, for self-protection, prefer it that way.
- One of our NSAC core values is 'interdependence,' a concept difficult to grasp in our intensely individualistic culture. From a young age, we've all been conditioned to 'be our own person.'
- And yes, part of this 'independent spirit' is good and natural. However, all of us have been designed for community. And we see this mirrored throughout the 'Christian Story':
  - God Himself exists, and has always lived, in community: Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.
  - Truth is: we need each other. Symphony. Harmony. "Body" parts. All working together.
  - This is Paul's vision for how the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to operate.
- **< Slide >** Which leads us to 1 Corinthians 12.
- Please turn there on your mobile device or p931 in the blue Bibles in the seat rack in front of you.
- Far too often the Church has been influenced not by the things that unite, but by the things that divide. Evidently, 'divisions' too plagued the 1st Century Corinthian Church. Paul calls them to unity.
- <Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 27-31> Prayer: "Control me by your Spirit, move me out of the way."

### Passage Outline:

- You may have 'sniffed out' a corrective tone in this letter.

#### 1. <Slide> Unity: "Same Spirit, Same Lord, Same God" (12:4-6)

- Paul uses powerful language to remind, yes, "different ... gifts" (4), "different ... service" (5), "different ... working, **but**, in all of them and in everyone, it is the **same God at work**" (6).
- He uses the word, "same," at least 6 times here.
- Central to Paul's theology is this: everything flows from our lives together in the Spirit.
- We know there were issues causing significant disunity in the Corinthian congregation.
- One in particular, surrounding the 'deeper work of the Holy Spirit.'
- It seems the enemy loves to divide the church on this one.

- When it comes to the theory & practice of spiritual gifts like tongues or healing [intended by God to bring transformation & unity], pride, jealousy, & suspicion often rear their ugly heads.
- I'd argue churches have largely moved away from the pursuit of a deeper life in Christ via the Holy Spirit [and many of the gifts, and left them to fanatic Pentecostalism], as a direct reaction to some of the manipulation that often accompanies circles where the miraculous gifts are practiced.
- We hear messages on 'inviting Jesus into our heart' - conversion. But what about the rest of our life with God?! Rare is the teaching on cultivating the ongoing work of the Spirit - sanctification - in our lives. And, out of fear, we squelch the Spirit's work. In our churches. In our lives. To our peril.

## 2. <Slide> Purpose: "For the Common Good" (12:7)

- So, why do the gifts of the Holy Spirit exist?
- See V7: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."
- "Each one" means all Christ-followers have been given at least one gift. God is not choosy.
- "Manifestation" means 'God's activity in our midst,' His presence; that's what authentic exercising of our spiritual gifts does: it manifests, makes God's presence happen in real-time on earth through us.
- Cf. Ephesians 4:12 says, Q: "so that the body of Christ may be built up."
- Here it's worth noting the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not intended to be just about me and God.
- We truly grow when we look outside ourselves: my spiritual gifts are for God, and other people, meant to be shared. Christianity is "fundamentally corporate." - Blomberg.
- <Slide> ILL - Ushers me back to that hit-song by Sister Sledge from c.1979:
  - Q: 'We are family. I got all my sisters with me. We are family. Get up everybody & sing!'
- Oh, how easy it is to forget. In the thick of it. With different, difficult people all around us! This is our family! Who we are, what we have, the gifts we've been given are meant to bless one another.
- ILL - I've had friends who've come to faith here in the past few years,
  - And joined our church community, tell me, Q: 'It's so great to be part of a family.'
  - Beautiful. Life together in the Spirit trumps all barriers, even our pain. It welcomes in.
- <Slide> Another purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is: **to reveal Christ**.
- First to our brothers and sisters who already know Jesus but need to see more of Him.
- Robert Lewis (Church of Irresistible Influence, p41) gives vision with his compelling definition. Church is ...
  - Q: "a community of people who present living proof of a loving God to a watching world."
- A church, full of people **on mission together**, engaged in using their spiritual gifts to build others up, is a great revelation of who Jesus is and what He's about to watching family, friends, & neighbours who don't yet know Him, but get to see Jesus working in us and through us by our gifts.

## 3. Diversity: "To One, To Another" "Are All, Do All?" (12:7-10; 28-30)

- In V8-10 and 28-30, Paul offers a list of spiritual gifts. These are not exhaustive.
- <Slide> There are several other lists in the NT and none are identical. Let's roll through them.
  - "Wisdom" (8) = gift to receive divine insight and apply it to a specific situation.
  - "Knowledge" (8) = divine insight not necessarily applied.
  - "Faith" (9) = not faith for salvation, but special trust that God can work miracles, or an extraordinary faith to carry on when God chooses not to work a miracle. I wish I had this.
  - "Healings" & "Miraculous Powers" (9/10) = regular expectation of God's supernatural touch.
  - "Prophecy" (10) = gift of Spirit-inspired messages about present circumstances or future events intended for the encouragement or exhortation of others.
  - "Distinguishing between spirits" (10) = ability to know if something is from God or not.
  - "Tongues" (10) = Spirit-inspired utterance in a non-earthly language intended to bless God and others. [Whenever I hear tongues, though I don't understand, I get a powerful sense of the God's presence.]
  - "Interpretation" (10) = ability to interpret and articulate what the tongues-speaker has said.
  - Next are some 'ministry roles' ...
  - "Apostles" (28) = sent out on mission to 'blaze new trails' for the Gospel.
  - "Teachers" (28) = gifted to come alongside and disciple.
  - "Able to Help Others" (28) = the ability to care for the poor and marginalized.
  - "Administration" (28) = a gifting for the oversight or governing aspect of church leadership.

- **<Slide>** Paul's To-one-To-another" language reveals God's intended diversity.
- Tongues, or the so-called 'more miraculous gifts' are not the only gifts the Spirit gives.
- And, if you have been given one of those gifts, you're not more 'spiritual' or more 'saved' than your Christian brother or sister who has the gift of teaching, for instance.
- In Paul's "Do-all-Are-all?" rhetorical questions in V28-30, the intended answer is 'no.'
- We glean also from Paul's language that no one possesses all the gifts. There are no 'super-star believers.' All the gifts are needed; at the same time, no one gift is to be esteemed above all others.
- Perhaps this funny little video will help it sink in ... **<Mr Potato Head VIDEO - 2 min.>**
- Here's the crux of Paul's argument: Tongues are fine, but not everyone should speak in tongues. That would make everyone the same, which is like a body with only one body part.
- If Mr Potato Head only had ears, he'd be in a lot trouble. If every one tried to be an eye, we wouldn't function well. Unity is found in our diversity and God has designed it that way.
- **<Slide>** APP - Which speaks to an issue many battle when it comes to spiritual gifts:
- Constantly comparing ... and never feeling 'good enough.' Perhaps this is you; you've felt, for one reason or another, that your gifts aren't 'up to par' or, as good as that person.
- And you've kept yourself 'on the sidelines.'
- This is a lie; because of Jesus and by His Spirit, you are good enough, you do belong, you do have lots to offer, and the church needs you to bring your unique gift. God's design for unity, not uniformity affirms the absolute uniqueness & necessity of every person in the Body. Believe it!

#### 4. **<Slide> Focus: The Gift-Giver (12:11).**

- The flip-side of 'never good enough' is the dark notion that 'I'm so gifted I'm enough' ...
- Paul calls us back, V11: "The Spirit distributes [gifts] to each person, just as He determines."
- ILL - Honestly I have lost the plot on this way too often.
  - I find myself tempted to idolize, pin my hopes on gifts I think will make me stand out.
  - Congregations & pastors can get bamboozled by preaching or healing or leadership gifts, and badly miss the focus -- that Christ be revealed & glorified; and the Source -- not us, not our gifts, but God's power, & the HS showing up in our midst! Without which, we're dead.
- Unless our gifts point to Jesus, they are not in harmony with the work of the Spirit.
- Q: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." - Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5. Paul gives credit to the one and only Source.
- God is the Gift-Giver. He alone, Father, Son, & Spirit, is to be praised.

**Application:** Now, a few application points to 'land the plane' on the message today ...

#### 1. **<Slide> "You together, who follow Jesus, are the Body of Christ!"**

- None excluded, you all belong to it. Such a powerful statement. What a privilege!
- I think it was his uncle who gave a young and very-gifted Spiderman this advice, Q: "With great power, comes great responsibility." And it's our responsibility to steward the gifts God has given us.
- St Teresa of Avila said, Q: "Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no feet but yours; yours are the eyes through which to look at Christ's compassion to the world, yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good, and yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now."
- While it's okay to ask for more, rather than fixating on the gifts we don't yet have, let's make sure we're stewarding well the ones we've already been given. There's much riding on this.

#### 2. **<Slide> How can I know my spiritual gifts?**

- Takes effort. Doesn't just happen by osmosis.
- We are encouraged to to ask God, in prayer, to reveal how He has wired and gifted us.
- Another way we find out is to simply get involved in a ministry. This challenges the common notion that it's okay to believe in Jesus but not engage in the life of a local church. No!
- Join God's mission. Invite feedback & mentoring. This is how we grow in our gifts. In community.
- One barrier to discovering our spiritual gifts is **not being open**, not anticipating fresh manifestations of the Spirit. NT Wright suggests, Paul's not just concerned about Christians working harder on their own spiritual growth, but also about their desire for a "touch with the divine."

- APP/ILL - The older I get, the more 'closed off to God' I'm tempted to be. My brain likes to tell me,
  - Q: 'I'm a cagy veteran, years of experience, I got the Christian life pretty much figured out.'
  - But God keeps whispering, Q: 'Try being more open to Me. I've got more. Hunger for My touch.' Being a stagnant crusty old pastor does have its merit, but I've met enough of those!
  - As I open my heart more to God, it's scary, yes, but it's becoming sweeter and sweeter.
  - BQ: How can I be more open to the Spirit's fresh filling, fresh gifting? This is my desire!

### 3. <Slide> ("No Passengers!")

- As soccer coach and pastor, these are some of my favourite sayings, Q: 'We need contributions from everybody tonight!' 'Bring what you got!' 'Don't just come along for the ride, get involved!' 'No passengers!' One scholar I read this week says this, Q: "Post-conversion, the next most important task is knowing and using one's spiritual gifts." - Blomberg, p250.
- ILL - Probably the most beautiful thing I have ever witnessed is the Body of Christ coming together with all sorts of people and spiritual gifts, building one another up, & revealing Christ.
  - I saw it last week at the Queen Mary BBQ, I witnessed this across the street at CityFEST last month, I feel it in my home group as we gather on Tuesday nights, I've seen it time and again the past almost 2 decades in this very auditorium as we've come before the Lord, brought our gifts, and seen God show up. And transform us, right before our eyes.
- ILL - In the 1930's, pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer left his native Germany to further his studies in New York City, where he joined an African-American Church in Harlem and experienced deep community.
  - **<Slide>** Returning home, under a Nazi regime that threatened Europe, Bonhoeffer penned these words about Christian community, Q: "Christians need other Christians who speak God's word to them. They need them time and time again when they become uncertain and disheartened because, living by their own resources, they cannot help themselves." - Bonhoeffer, Life Together, p32.
- APP - In good times and bad, I need you, to minister to me, to speak God's truth to me. Or I will fall. I've said this before: a key reason we need each other is because, at any given moment in our community, there are both ... people 'living the dream' and ... people 'living the nightmare.'
  - When I'm living the dream, I need to share the success of that victory with you as celebrating on my own is way too boring; and frankly, victory in life is so elusive / so seldom; when I do experience it, I mustn't hoard it; I need to share the sweetness of it with you.
  - And when I'm living the nightmare, I need you to bear that burden with me, because it's way too heavy to carry on my own; we are built for life together, to depend on one another.

### 4. <Slide> Love is Paramount.

- The Lord knows spiritual gifts have a way of causing us to lose sight of first things.
- Perhaps it's why, there, sandwiched between Paul's words on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 & 14, is 1 Corinthians 13. All about love.
- Next to Jesus, loving relationship is the greatest gift the Christian church has to offer.
- ILL - Most historians deny the identity and mission of Jesus Christ.
  - However, few deny His message. Overwhelming evidence authenticates the Message of Jesus: "Love your neighbour - love the 'outcast' - love even your 'enemy.'" Jesus' message of love is undeniable. Countercultural in its day, it's stood the test of time for 20 centuries!
  - Truth is: our love speaks powerfully to the world. So too does our lack of love.
- **<Slide>** Pastor and author, Mark Buchanan asks this "Question:
  - Q: is the love in your church such that people in the world ... would be willing to forsake all other loves just to know this love? Would they give up their addictions, their diversions, their compromises, their resentments, because the love your church has is better and truer than anything they've found anywhere else?" - Mark Buchanan, Your Church is Too Safe, p16
- When I look around the room this morning I know there are many issues that can and do divide us.
- But with the Spirit's help, we can love one another deeply. And this love fuels our mission.
- I still believe the Christian community, this church - us, together, even with all our flaws, exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit, has something incredible to offer to the world:
  - The matchless love of Jesus. That alone can transform. Amen.