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Sermon 16 January 2022

Title: Batteries Included

- Good morning church family, we are so glad that you have joined us this morning and we hope that you are being recharged and invigorated and empowered by the Holy Spirit today—whether you're joining us at our Sunday brunch at the church or you're worshipping with us online, we welcome you again.
- I trust that you have had a good week—we certainly have—Pastor Tasha and I are preparing to take some time away—just a couple of days-- from this afternoon until Wednesday around lunchtime to do some future planning—to allow space for God to speak to us and to guide and direct us—and so I'd ask that you would pray for us during what is always an exciting time of praying and dreaming and re-charging our batteries for the road ahead.
- And on that note, some time ago I was re-watching one of our online services—I like to do that every now and then just as kind of a quality assurance measure—to make sure there are no typos in the titles or the words on the screen, that the lighting is Ok and the sound is optimal—and I was re-watching the service from Boxing Day, and as I was listening to Pastor Tasha tell us about the Wednesday Prayer meeting and the need to take lateral flow tests, I was reminded of a sound that was captured on the video

as she was talking—and because she was in mid-sentence I couldn't edit the sound out without messing up what she was saying, so I just left it in—I wonder if you noticed it—it sounded like this (play)

- Here it is again if you missed it—(play) it sounded like the chirp of a cricket—but it wasn't a cricket—it was the sound of a smoke alarm whose batteries were going dead—and right after Pastor Tasha recorded that bit of video, it chirped again, and just seconds later there was another chirp, but that one came from the hallway, and then another, but that one came from the kitchen, and then the living room again, and then all three chirped together and then they started all chirping every few seconds, it sounded like midnight at the old South Carolina campground (crickets)—like Jiminy Cricket and his little cricket friends were having choir practice in our flat—and we were trying to record the service, we couldn't have that—and so I got out the ladder and I climbed up in the living room and the hallway and the kitchen and took down the smoke detectors and took the batteries out and made a mental note that I was going to have to walk down to the hardware store and get three new batteries, because without that charged-up internal power source, those smoke alarms were not going to work—and a smoke alarm without a working battery is a completely useless thing—so they have an alarm that gets your attention so you'll change that battery.
- And you'll be glad to know, I'm sure, that all our smoke detectors are now functional because they've had their batteries changed.

- We have so many things in our lives these days that run on batteries—and we have to keep them changed or charged so that they’ll work—our phones have a battery, our cars have a battery—Pastor Tasha’s Dad drives a Tesla and it’s got a serious battery—the computer I’m writing this sermon on has a battery, the mouse I use with it has a battery, my earphones have a battery, the wireless microphones we use at the church have batteries—we recently purchased a new scale for the kitchen at church and it came with a battery already installed—this little cheapy watch I got a few weeks ago did too
- —they came with the battery included—so right out of the box they were ready to use, all charged up and ready to go
- I love it when a tool or a gadget comes with the batteries included, because then you don’t have to wait to make use of it—it doesn’t require anything from you except to use it—and I’ve noticed that a lot more things these days come with the batteries included—and that is certainly convenient
- But that has not always been the case—I remember when I was a kid, at birthdays or Christmastime, anytime that you were going to get gifts to unwrap, there was always going to be one, sometimes more than one—that you would unwrap, and as you were unwrapping it you could see that it was something you really wanted, something super cool like a Nintendo Gameboy or a Walkman or a 6 Million Dollar Man action figure or a remote-control Batmobile or an EZ-Bake oven or a Mr. Microphone—you get the picture—but as you were unwrapping it you’d be excited and happy and then you’d look down in the corner of the box or the packaging that it came in and you’d

- see those 3 words that every kid hated to read—you probably know the ones--Batteries Not included—and your heart would sink, and your joy would turn to disappointment because you knew that you could just set this one aside, put it on a shelf until your Mom or Dad took you shopping to get whatever kind of batteries it needed. And it was useless until you got them.
- And one of the things that I loved about my late big sister, Kathy, was that whenever she gave me a gift that needed batteries—some gadget or toy or tool—whatever it was—I knew that after I opened that gift, I was gonna get another gift from her and it was usually smaller and heavier, because she would wrap up the batteries that I needed—so I not only got to unwrap two gifts but I also got the power source I needed I to make the first gift work. Because a gift that doesn't work—that isn't energized—isn't activated—doesn't have the power it needs—is a pretty useless thing—so Kathy would make sure that the batteries were always included with the gift.
  - In the passage that Pastor Tasha shared with us this morning, the Apostle Paul is writing to the church at Corinth about spiritual gifts, and at the end of this passage of scripture, Paul lets the Corinthian church, and us, know something about the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the followers of Jesus, and it is this—in verse 11: All these—all these gifts that the Holy Spirit gives—are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.
  - We're going to be talking about spiritual gifts and Paul's words to the church at Corinth today and for the next 2 Sundays, but before we talk further about

what Paul is saying to the church in the verses that precede this one, I want you to notice something about the gifts that the spirit gives to those in the church—about spiritual gifts—and it is that spiritual gifts come with the batteries included.

- Let's take a look at one of the words Paul uses in verse 11—it's the word for "activates." When Paul says that God "activates" these gifts that the Spirit gives—the word is *energei*—God through the Holy Spirit provides the energy that makes a spiritual gift work—the battery is included—
- But to really get a grasp on this word we need to look back to verse 6, where Paul says that growing out of various spiritual gifts, there are a variety of activities—there are a variety of things that happen as a result of the use of spiritual gifts—they can make different things happen—the word for "activities" there is *energēmatōn*—continuing in verse 6, but it is the same God who activates *-energon*—them in everyone
- Now catch this now, there are activities that result from the work of spiritual gifts—the word there is *energēmatōn*—and it is the same God who activates them in everyone—*energon* and *energei*—do you see that root in all those words—*energ*? All of these have the same root, the same root as the English word ENERGY, because the same Holy Spirit who bestows a gift, out of which grows activities, [energēmatōn](#)—the way it works—also activates--[energōn](#)—--gives energy to that gift and that ministry and its results—makes it work
- so the same God, the same spirit, who gives the gift, who is behind the ministry, also activates, or energizes, the results—so none of what happens

as the result of the way a gift works is a result of our own efforts—the Holy Spirit GIVES the gift, and the Holy Spirit energizes—activates—the ministry and its results

- What is Paul saying here? He is saying that the energy that it takes to make a gift work doesn't come from the one the gift is given to, but from the one who gives it, the Holy Spirit—and in the same way that a watch, and a kitchen scale, and a laptop computer, and an electric car all do different things—different activities—it's the same thing, a battery, that provides the internal power, the energy that makes them work, and in the same way all the different activities that result from different spiritual gifts are a result of the activation, the energizing of the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit.
- And so before we say anything else about spiritual gifts, I want you to understand this point, that Paul is saying that spiritual gifts are not simply our talents or our skills—they are gifts given by God—and they are not simply given—they are also empowered, energized, activated, by the Holy Spirit
- We are not given a spiritual gift like a present we might receive that doesn't have the batteries included—SO DISAPPOINTING--hey thanks this looks really neat but it needs an energy source that I don't have so I can't use it right now—no—the Holy Spirit's gifts come with the batteries, with the energy, the activation included—all we need to do is acknowledge the gift and allow the Holy Spirit to work through us—they are ready to use

- And you might say, “well that’s nice to know, but I don’t have any spiritual gifts—I’m not even sure what spiritual gifts are”
- And we’ll get to what spiritual gifts are in a moment, and over the next couple of weeks, but before we get there, I want to point out one more thing the Apostle Paul writes in this last verse of this Passage, verse 11—he writes: All these—all these gifts that the Holy Spirit gives--are activated by one and the same Spirit, who **allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.**
- The Holy Spirit allots TO EACH ONE just as the spirit chooses—this doesn’t mean the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to a few followers of Jesus, or to some followers of Jesus, or even to almost all followers of Jesus, but TO EACH ONE—that’s each and EVERY ONE—if you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will give you one spiritual gift or another, or several, but the Spirit allots to EACH—that means nobody’s left out
- This is such an important point that Paul says it twice—he repeats himself--he’s said it already in verse 7: **TO EACH** is given the manifestation of the Spirit.
- I remember when I was in grade school—there were always kids who were in what was called the “gifted” program—kids who had scored particularly high on an IQ test, or who had in some other way demonstrated that they were above average in their abilities or their intelligence or talent--and sometimes they went to separate classes or sometimes they were in the same class as the other kids and they just did different things, maybe more advanced things, but at any rate, they were not the majority of students, in

fact they were just a small proportion of the student body—the gifted students

- But this is not what Paul is saying to the church at Corinth and it's not what he's saying to us—among followers of Jesus, there are only the gifted—there are no ungifted disciples—there are certainly different gifts, a variety of gifts, but you are not gifted as a disciple of Jesus based on how talented you are or how clever you are, or how hard you work—gifts aren't only given to those with the right last name or the proper accent or enough education or the right colour skin or based on any other qualification—the Holy Spirit allots gifts to EACH
- If you hear nothing else in this sermon, hear this—if you are a follower of Jesus, you have a spiritual gift—probably more than one—and you are uniquely called to use it to minister in ways that no one else can
- And if you are a follower of Jesus and you don't think you have any spiritual gifts then let me suggest that you need to ask the Lord and your brothers and sisters around you to help you understand what your spiritual gift might be and what to do with it
- I remember about 10 years ago, Pastor Tasha and I gave my parents an iPad—and they had no idea what to do with it, they really had no idea of the breadth of its capabilities, and they sure didn't know how to operate it, how to make it work, and do you know they didn't put it on a shelf because they didn't understand what it was or how it worked—they asked us to help them understand it, what to do with it—and we wrote them a user's manual that

explained in detail what they could do and how to do it—how to take a photo and how to search the internet and how to get on Facebook and how to FaceTime and how to watch TV and how to listen to music—and when they needed some direction they'd ask us directly or they'd consult the user manual—and you can do that too if you're trying to figure out what your gift is and how to use it—you can go to the giver directly and ask, or on the other hand, you can consult the user's manual—not the Nazarene Manual, but this one right here--you'll find all the direction you need right there—in the next couple of weeks, before our next Second Helping bible study, we'll be looking at some other resources as well that will help you to understand your spiritual gifts

- The members of the church at Corinth were certainly trying to figure out what spiritual gifts were and how they worked and who had them. And so Paul writes to them and says, in verse 1 of chapter 12: Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.
- Now Corinth was a big, busy bustling Roman city with lots of cultural and religious influences—there were Jews there, and temples to the Greek and Roman Gods like Poseidon and Apollo and Aphrodite and Asclepius, the god of Medicine—and in that environment there were new Christians figuring out what a Christian church was—what Christianity was, really—there were no old approved guidelines, no historical examples to follow--no Manual like we have in the Church of the Nazarene,

- And if the amount of space Paul gives to the subject in his letter is any indication, the church at Corinth was very interested in what we call “spiritual gifts”—particularly the gift of “tongues”—now this could mean the gift of speaking in other languages or it could mean what we call *glossolalia*—that ecstatic uttering of words and sounds that aren’t recognizable as a language—Paul seems to be referring to both in Chapter 13 when he says, “if I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”
- But Paul wants the Corinthian church to know that “tongues” is not the only gift of the Spirit, nor is it the most important one
- And so he says that he doesn’t want the Corinthian church to be uninformed, to be ignorant, about , *pneumatikōn*—that’s the word that is translated “spiritual gifts”—it really just means “the spiritual”—stuff associated with the Spirit—*pneuma*—that breath, wind, Spirit that inspires us—and that we inspire—so that the Holy Spirit fills and moves inside and outside us like the wind, like the air that we breathe
- And Paul makes sure they are not uninformed—he spends all of Chapter 12 discussing how spiritual gifts work and what they are
- But Paul doesn’t jump right into a discussion of specific gifts here in chapter 12, no he begins by referring to a very specific situation—He writes in verse 2, “You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.”

- Paul is referring to the polytheism of the Greco-Roman world—at Corinth there were temples to multiple Gods, and people would visit them—they could frequent the temple prostitutes at the Temple of Aphrodite, who was the protector of the city of Corinth and its maritime economy—and if they got a sexually transmitted disease from doing that, they could visit the Temple of Asclepius, the God of medicine and leave a sacrifice for healing—it wouldn't work, but they could try— or if they wanted to know about their prognosis, they could visit the Oracles—the Temples of Apollo where they could find out what the future held
- And if that seems very primitive and foreign, I think that a pretty good case could be made that in our modern, big, bustling cities, like Glasgow, with lots of multicultural influences, there are still temples to the idols of this world that people serve just as religiously as the people of Corinth—temples to the idols of materialism, of wellness, of commercialism, of sports, of celebrity, of business, of money—where people make sacrifices and try to find meaning in their lives
- And in these verses Paul contrasts the polytheism of Corinth, where there are a variety of gods and temples from whom one might request one gift or another—with the ONE God of Christianity—with whom there are many gifts but one and the SAME GOD
- Paul is saying that unlike the polytheism of Corinth, where you'd visit a different temple for a different God depending on what you were looking for,

- there are lots of very different gifts of the Spirit, and it is the same ONE God, the same Spirit who gives them all—wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretation—and the ONE God doesn't just GIVE all these gifts, but the Holy Spirit also activates, energizes them, and so we can say about the gifts of the spirit that they all come with the batteries included.
- Now for the next two weeks, and in our next Second Helping on the 30<sup>th</sup> of this month, we are going to be learning about, and thinking about, not only THE gifts of the Spirit, but about YOUR spiritual gifts—those that the Holy Spirit has given to you, specifically, and whether you've ever considered that before or not, I believe that you're going to find this time helpful and inspiring, and maybe a little bit challenging, too, as we work through this short series—be sure and join us next time—God bless you and we'll see you then.