

Grace-Full Manuscript: 1 Peter 4:10-11 Thad Harris

Opening: I love baptism Sunday's! Isn't it thrilling to see God's victory in each one of these lives? God is accomplishing His will among us!

Image: I was quite perplexed by the Wall Street protests in NY City this past weekend. I don't know if you saw that or not, but a group known as Occupy Wall Street organized the protest in order to speak out against corporate greed and various other random grievances. 700 people were arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge because they were sitting down blocking traffic. The interesting thing about it is, you really can't nail down exactly what they were trying to accomplish. CBS interviewed a graduate student who was there with her boyfriend and she said they were there because they have significant loan debt and they just want to get up each morning not worrying whether they can pay the rent or whether their next meal will be rice and beans again. I thought to myself..."sweetheart, you're a graduate student...all graduate students wonder how they're gonna pay rent and what their next meal will be!" I know, I've been one for 7 long years! For two weeks, this group's been camped out in a park sleeping on air mattresses, using Mac laptops and playing drums. They are just sitting – desperately trying to make a difference, but quite frankly not really doing a good job of it. When you think about it, It seems EMPTY, doesn't it?

Need: This story intrigues me, though. It reminds me that deep inside all of us exists a desire to make a difference with our lives. If I were to ask you, "Who wants to be a part of changing the world?", most of us would say, 'absolutely' – that's why we're here. We want to right wrongs; heal hurts; and fix what's broken. But, if we're honest with ourselves, sometimes we just don't know HOW. And if I'm being honest with you, sometimes I'm far too consumed with my own world to even care about somebody else's. Despite our challenges, I've got great news for us today.

Subject: God has made us on purpose for a purpose! He made us to make a difference. And He fills us with the Difference-Maker, the Holy Spirit, to show us how. The Spirit of God lavishes upon us the grace of God so we know the thrill of accomplishing the will of God! And there is no greater thrill than to know we are accomplishing the will of God! ***So, today, we are going to discover how God intends for us to make a difference with our lives.***

Text: What was a mystery to over 700 folks in NYC, God has made abundantly clear in Scripture. Peter was a man who knew the difference the Holy Spirit could make in a person's life! At the end of Jesus' life, Peter literally denied that he ever knew Jesus, but after the Holy Spirit came upon him, he began to boldly make a huge difference in the world. In 1 Peter he teaches first century believers how God intended for them to make a difference with their lives and, folks, these words are just as relevant for us today as they were many centuries ago.

Preview: We're going to uncover four characteristics of people who are full of the Difference-Maker and conclude with a reminder that it starts at home!

Body: *The first characteristic of people who are full of the Spirit is that they are ... **gifted to make a difference!***

1. People who are full of the Spirit are gifted to make a difference. (Turn with me to 1 Pet 4:10 – Let's read the first part)

Explain: "*As each one has received a special gift*". Every believer has the Spirit-gifted capacity to change the world! Peter teaches us that every believer has been given at least one spiritual gift (every man, woman, boy and girl that is a believer has been given a gift from God in order to accomplish God's will). Our spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit at our new birth. Therefore, if you are a believer, you are already gifted to make a difference . So, what makes these gifts significant? The word Peter uses for spiritual gift is ***charisma***, which builds on the word ***charis***, meaning, '**grace**'. In essence, a spiritual gift is an individual expression of God's grace. Spiritual gifts are **grace-gifts**. Now, I don't want us to misunderstand grace, or we'll miss the whole point of grace-gifts. We tend to think of grace as a passive characteristic – tolerance, acceptance, permissiveness, or nice-ness. These may be aspects of grace but, they are – in and of themselves - insufficient views of grace. Grace is an action-oriented reality, almost militant at times. The cross is a visible manifestation of God's grace – Rom 5:8 says, "*God demonstrates His love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*". Grace is doing something on behalf of (or for the good of) someone else despite their circumstances. And, grace is void of the expectation to reciprocate. Grace is about **giving** to someone what they need, period! So, spiritual gifts enable us to be GRACE-FULL to other people. Through the gifts of God we have the grace of God to give others! We **are** gifted to make a difference!

Illustrate: I'll never forget the first time I discovered my spiritual gifts – I have to admit, it wasn't that thrilling at first. I was in college and worked on a grounds crew for a golf course. I can remember sitting on the back of a fairway mower, having just completed a spiritual gifts assessment, wondering, "Well, God, I've got these results here, but they don't seem so special". You see, a couple of the gifts that popped up were intercessory prayer and evangelism. I thought to myself..."now, I don't know a lot about Christianity, but, I do know this...I think every Christian is supposed to pray and to share their faith – so, I'm a little lost on the big deal about this spiritual gift stuff". So, I began to politely ask God what we were supposed to do about this. And, as I was praying (since I was 'gifted' for that, it sounded like a good idea), God began to direct my attention to two coworkers – one was a middle-aged, self-professed Jesus-resistant kind of guy (used drugs, tatted up, piercings everywhere, funky hair – you get the picture). The other was another middle-aged guy, active in his church...but didn't really open up and share a lot with the crew (he kinda stuck to himself) – two opposite dudes. Over the course of several months I began to share my faith publicly because the "Jesus-resister guy" would just ask. And, I spent some lunch breaks with the other guy. He started coming out of his shell and opening up about his faith in public. All this came to a head for me when one day we were greasing our machines together and the believer began to speak up about the gospel and his faith to the other co-worker in a very gracious way. And then I got it! Maybe the gift was supposed to help me help other believers share their faith. Just maybe, I **was** gifted to make a difference.

Relevance: When I look out at you right now, can I tell you what I see? I see a room full of gifted, world-changers! That's who we are! We lack nothing necessary to impact our world. Don't believe the lies that you don't have what it takes. Put it on a card, stick it on your mirror and remind yourself daily...***you are gifted to make a difference!***

Transition: *We've just seen that we've been uniquely gifted with God's grace-gifts so that we know the thrill of accomplishing His will. Next, we'll discover that people who are full of the Spirit are...***gifted to have a ministry!****

2. People who are full of the Spirit are gifted to have a ministry. (Let's read verse 10b)

Explain: “employ it in serving one another”. Another way to translate this phrase would be ‘minister the gift to another’. I don’t know if you knew this or not, but every believer has a ministry waiting to happen! In John 14:12, Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” When Jesus ascended to the Father, He gave us gifts through the Spirit so that we would minister like Jesus. Please don’t let me scare you by the term, ministry. Ministry is nothing more than Spirit-empowered works of grace to others – it’s ‘sweaty grace’. Ministry is grace with a little sweat on the brow. Our spiritual gifts are not a means of self-esteem, nor superiority...they aren’t about us...they are for others. We are ministers of grace when we use our gifts to bless others!

Illustrate: While Lori and I were planting churches in NC, we met Audrey. Audrey had a really neat ministry. As a matter of fact, we named our 2nd daughter after her. Audrey was converted out of prostitution. She obviously had the grace-gift of mercy, because she spent every fall and winter collecting and delivering coats and gloves to prostitutes on the streets in Asheville, NC. She had little money, lived in government housing; but she had the grace-gift of mercy and she knew Jesus and she knew the streets. Audrey was no professional Christian. And she didn’t have her life all put together. She just took action with what she had been given to help people who needed what she had.

Relevance: Friends, If Audrey could embrace the reality that she has a ministry, so can each of us. Every believer is gifted to have a ministry. I want you to turn to the person sitting beside you and say, ‘you have a ministry’. If you are married, you have a ministry to and likely even with your spouse. If you’re a parent or a grandparent, you have a ministry to your kids or grandkids. Ministry always STARTS AT HOME! I joke with people sometimes, but it’s true – I’m still a Children’s Pastor...at home, Monday through Saturday, with 6 kids...I just get some help on Sunday from all o’ ya’ll! If you are single and live alone, just look around you...who has God placed in your life...your ministry starts there!

Transition: *So far, we’ve just seen that people who are full of the Difference-Maker are gifted to make a difference and gifted to have a ministry. Next, we’ll see that people full of the Spirit are ... **gifted with God’s possessions!***

3. People who are full of the Spirit are gifted with God's possessions.

(Let's read verse 10c)

Explain: "*As good stewards of the manifold grace of God*". You and I are **stewards** of the grace-gifts God gave us – He owns them all. It is by God's grace that we are who we are and have what we have. God has diversified His possessions (grace-gifts) among us. He gives us **WHAT** He wants, **WHEN** He wants, and they are for **WHOMEVER** He wants! You and I don't get to decide what we have, how many we have, or who we have them for! What God expects of us is that we treat the grace-gifts like they are **HIS** – not ours! Good stewards take responsible care of someone else's possessions. So, we submit the ownership of these gifts to God to be used however and whenever and for whomever He wants.

Illustrate: Jonah is a model of how not to steward! I don't think Jonah minded having the gift of prophecy, but I know he didn't want to use it for the Ninevites! I think God preserved the story of Jonah to remind us...*life ain't no fun for Bad Stewards!* But you know...if you think about it, I don't think Jesus, the True Good Steward, would say it was a blast hanging out in the garden of Gethsemane or dying on the cross. But, I know He said that the joy of accomplishing God's will was worth it!

Relevance: Stewarding God's possessions will not always take us where we may want to go or let us do what we may want to do, but we will know the thrilling joy of accomplishing God's will.

Transition: *So, people who are full of the Spirit are gifted to make a difference, gifted to have a ministry and gifted with God's possessions. The last characteristic I want us to see today of people who are full of the Spirit is that we are ... **gifted to make much of God!***

4. People who are full of the Spirit are gifted to make much of God. (Let's read verse 11)

Explain: "*Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*" The gifts allow us to make much of God because we experience God's power and grace as we use

them. He speaks through us as we speak and He provides strength for us as we serve. Spirit-empowered gift-use leaves no room for self-boasting! God does it all, so we make much of Him! The God who gives the gift, fuels the gift. So, if I speak, using the gift of teaching, evangelism, wisdom, knowledge, or prophecy, I am to speak as if speaking the very utterances of God Himself – with the words He provides. Likewise, if I serve, using the gift of leadership, administration, giving, helps, faith, discernment, mercy, or encouragement, I am to serve with the strength He provides. The gifts aren't about our strength, our genius, our cleverness, our fame. It's all about God, so we make much of Him!

Illustrate: Michael Young made it all about the Rangers this year! He played for the fame of his team. In January 2011, sports headlines read, YOUNG PUTS RANGERS FIRST WITH MOVE TO DH. Michael Young played 3rd base last year with the Rangers. He was moved during the off-season to the Designated Hitter slot, which means he doesn't play in the field...he just gets to hit. The Rangers picked up Adrian Beltre, a two-time gold-glove winner at 3rd base and Young was repositioned. Here's how Young responded to the move, *"I want to play with the Rangers. I want to win with this team."* This year, Young became the Rangers' all-time leader in at-bats, hits and doubles. He's having a fantastic year! The beauty of it all is that this year wasn't about Michael Young. It was about the RANGERS – the fame of his team.

Relevance: Like Michael Young, people who are full of the Spirit, make it "all about God". Be delighted to play wherever God puts you on His kingdom team – it's His team, His win, His fame. And we get to taste the joy of His victory. You see, the gifts are not to make much of us – we are gifted to make much of God.

Transition: So, how does God intend for us to make a difference in this world? Simply by using the gifts He's given us. *People full of the Spirit are gifted to make a difference, gifted to have a ministry, gifted with God's possessions and gifted to make much of God. So, let's bring this home!*

(Homework) Discover and deploy your gift. Ask the question to God, **"Lord, who do YOU want me to bless with YOUR gift this week?"** In 1 Cor 12:1, Paul said, *"concerning the spiritual gifts, I do not want you to be unaware"*. Well, nor do we...so, you're going to receive a spiritual gifts assessment on your way out (it's far from perfect, but simple). We want you to complete it with those at home

(your spouse, your believing kids/grandkids; a roommate/friend) and then bring it to your community group this week and discuss it with others. Please hear me, we believe the best way to discover your gifts is not from an assessment, although helpful; but, to serve in community.

I learned by serving that I may not have the gift of administration! I was leading a student mission trip. We were on our last day of the project and had packed everything up – it had been a long week, we were all ready to be done. We got back to the housing area and I jumped in the whirlpool! After about 30 minutes of pure, blissful relaxation, I walked one of our students, Shane Lancaster. He sat down beside me and asked, “Hey Thad, did we bring everything back from the work-site?” “Oh yeah, it’s all in the trailer, we’re ready to head home tomorrow!” With a calm tone in his voice, he replied, “Thad, you left me!” I felt horrible. But, I learned a valuable lesson: I may not have the gift of administration! My point: it’s through serving in community that we really learn what gifts we have and don’t have! And, by the way, let’s agree to avoid the temptation to limit what we will do or won’t do based upon our gifts. Just because I don’t have the grace-gift of mercy, doesn’t mean I get to be a jerk for Jesus.

For those of you with kids or students, I urge you to help them discover and deploy their gifts. Remember, God has gifted every believer to make a difference **and** has a ministry for them too. So, before you leave, stop by HP and pick up some helpful resources. We have a gift assessment available today.

So, who does GOD want you to bless with HIS gift this week? I am confident He will use you because the Spirit of God lavishes upon us the grace of God so that we will know the thrill of accomplishing the will of God!

Let me pray...