**Sermon – *Stewards of God’s Varied Grace*** – (36.5 minutes allowed, including invitation and prayer)

(Part of the Series: *Same God: Empowered with His Gifts*)

###### INTRODUCTION (5.0 minutes):

1. Greeting & Background:
	1. Good morning etc…
	2. I love Big-Screen-Movies that assemble *Super-Hero Teams*.
		1. For me, nothing is better than getting out to a theater with a really big screen.
		2. Buying a tub of popcorn, some Twizzlers, and a cold drink.
		3. Then, sinking back into one of those reclining theater seats for 2-3 hours of action-packed, conflict-driven hero-emerging story-telling.
			1. The Fantastic Four, Justice League America, Lord of the Rings, Guardians of the Galaxy, and the best of them all – The Avengers!
	3. In these types of movies, one of my favorite pleasures is not the loud POWS!... Or splashy outfits… or silly banter… Rather, almost every movie takes time to tell a “origin story” or “back story”…
		1. In other words, each Super-Hero has a history of how they discovered their unique super-hero gift… and then how it began to develop… and then how they began to use it with greater and greater confidence… and greater and greater success… often against great odds and serious adversity…
		2. Eventually, this “back story” told how that unique individual became part of a larger team, flaws and all… and a team united with common purposes…
	4. My love of hearing many “back stories” makes me really excited to share this next Scripture about “Spiritual Gifts” in our series, “*Same God: Empowered by His Spirit*”!
	5. There are thousands of better preachers out there than me but… I am soooo glad to share this Word with you this morning because the 2 verses that we’ll consider together teaches a core principle about spiritual gifts that I am deeply passionate about because for many of us, this biblical principle is not well understood.
	6. It is my prayer that within the next 35 minutes, we will all have grown in our understanding and will embrace the truth that:

**Good Stewards of God’s Varied Grace…**

**…uniquely use their spiritual gifts for His Glory.**

1. Scripture Reading:
	1. So, if you turn your attention to our projected screen, I’d like to lead us in a Responsive Reading of 1 Peter, Chapter 4. I’ll read beginning at verse 10. [Pause]
	2. 1 Peter 4:10-11 (read responsively):

Slide One:

READER: ***10****As each has received a gift,*

ALL: …*use it to serve one another,*

READER: …*as good stewards*

ALL: …*of God's varied grace:*

Slide Two:

READER: …***11****whoever speaks,*

ALL: …*as one who speaks oracles of God;*

READER: …*whoever serves,*

ALL: *as one who serves by the strength that God supplies*

Slide Three:

READER: *—in order that in everything*

ALL: *…God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*

READER: *…To him belong glory and dominion*

ALL: *…forever and ever. Amen.*

REPEAT: Slide Four: (a copy of Slide One)

READER: ***10****As each has received a gift,*

ALL: …*use it to serve one another,*

READER: …*as good stewards*

ALL: …*of God's varied grace:*

REPEAT: (keeping Slide Four visible):

READER: …*as good stewards*

ALL: …*of God's varied grace:*

1. Prayer of Consecration:
	1. Bow your heads as I pray:
		1. *Heavenly Father… Speak to Our Hearts… And Change our Lives… Amen…*

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #1: (5.0 minutes):**

1. My first encouragement today is that as Good Stewards, you acknowledge the spiritual gifts that you have received to share.
2. Last Sunday, Tanner began our series on Spiritual Gifts by looking at Ephesians, chapter 4 and its focus on gifts related to “gifted leaders” – Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers (APEST).
	1. I was so pleased that he reminded us about the Apostle Paul’s statement in Ephesians 4:7 that “grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift”.
	2. Upon reading that, he encouraged us to point to ourselves and say, “That’s Me!”.
3. This week in our Scripture, the Apostle Peter reminds us once again that:
	1. ***10****As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another…*
	2. And, just like last week when we pointed to ourselves and said, “That’s Me!”, when we read Peter’s words this week, we should point to ourselves again and say…. (Pause)… “That’s Me!”.
4. Both Paul and Peter state this biblical principle as fact. If you have repented of your sin and yielded to God’s authority over your life, then the Spirit of God has made you a new creation that includes the deposit of at least one spiritual gift, if not more. It’s a fact… take it to the bank… count on it as truth…
5. This deposit, however, comes with a command. The deposit of spiritual gifts comes with an obligation or expectation or even command to “use it”… “to serve one another”…
6. The analogy that Peter uses is the analogy of the steward…
7. What exactly is a steward, in its essence? While the use of this term is not common in our current culture, I suspect that as you have read the Bible, you’ve encountered this idea many times:
	1. In Genesis 1-2, Adam and Eve were the first stewards, as God entrusted them to over see His creation. They were to have dominion and rule and take care of all that He had made.
	2. Throughout the Old Testament, the Bible points to property managers, or stewards, several times. A steward works for an ultimate owner, managing money, land, and employees while the master was away.
	3. David, Solomon, and every king in Scripture was a steward of God’s kingdom.
		1. They did not rule in their own right, nor in the name of the people who had chosen them, but partly as servants and partly as representatives of Jehovah, the true King of Israel for a steward is an agent for the true and better Master.
	4. In his public ministry and teaching, Jesus often referenced this idea of stewardship.
		1. In Luke 16, he talked about an unscrupulous manager, or steward, who nevertheless was shrewd in his management – if not dishonest too.
		2. And, in the Parable of the Talents, in Matthew 25, he describes the necessity of using what has been given in a wise and productive manner – whether you receive 1 coin, or 2 coins, or 5 coins.
	5. The heart of biblical stewardship starts with the acknowledgement that everything belongs to God, including whatever He has given us.
		1. Once received, we must look after what we are given.
			1. Receiving a Gift doesn’t necessarily that mean that that gift is automatically used.
		2. That includes being good stewards who invest and share what has been given with joyful responsibility, not grudging burden.
		3. The results of assigned stewardship can either be missed opportunity and rebuke for neglect or mismanagement or increase and favor for wisdom and development.
	6. This morning, Peter expands stewardship beyond creation, or property, or kingdom to spiritual stewardship.
		1. Yes… each one has received a gift but… that gift comes with a holy responsibility to understand and develop that gift – in service to others.
	7. Joyful stewardship is a sign that one day we will come face-to-face with our True Master as promised and will account for how we managed what He entrusted.
		1. This is just one way that we can demonstrate how much we love Him and… how much we love His Bride, the Church.
8. My prayer for us this morning is that as Good Stewards, we all acknowledge the spiritual gifts that you have received to share as we carefully consider what those gifts are and how we are to use them with wisdom and joy.

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #2: (15.0 minutes):**

1. ***10****As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:****11****whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
2. My 2nd encouragement today is that as Good Stewards, you celebrate the uniqueness of God’s gifts to you for others.
3. You see, Peter not only exhorts us to use our gifts but he gives us as sense of the great variety of gifts distributed - what Peter memorably calls “God’s Varied Grace”.
	1. “Grace”, or “charis” in the original language, represents “a gift that is graciously given”.
		1. (Charismatic, charismatic, charisma-secular intent)
	2. “Varied” describes the form of that distribution, within the church, that we are to exercise giftedness. It is best understood with the widest range of possibilities available.
4. To help me illustrate this principle in a ministry setting, I invite Meg Lewis, Dir of RK.
	1. Thanks Meg for agreeing to come out and help me illustrate one of my points this morning.
	2. Can you tell us a little bit about the volunteers that make up your Ministry Team?
		1. My name is Meg Lewis and I’m the Kids’ Director. I love my role because I get to spend a lot of time with kids. But I also love getting to serve alongside volunteers who are sacrificially choosing to spend their time loving children. There are a total of about 40 volunteers, 10 who are teenagers. We are all the *same* in that we enjoy interacting with children, yet there are many differences between us. We all have different preferences, whether babies, toddlers, or kids, and all of us are gifted in different ways.
	3. That’s great. I love hearing about the wide range of individuals serving within Redemption Kids. Can you be a little bit more specific about the kinds of individuals that are serving together with you? (Meg want to briefly tell you about 3-5 individuals to illustrate that point.)
		1. EXPECTED – TEACHER:  Everyone leads the classroom in a slightly different way. For example, there’s Cindy Proffit. She teaches middle- and high-school math for a living, and it’s clear to anyone who meets her that God has given her the gift of *teaching*. Whether she is teaching toddlers or 5th graders, she can take the Bible lesson and perfectly mold it to the developmentally appropriate age. If you peek in her classroom, all the kids are sitting peacefully, chins resting on their hands, listening. One day a few months ago she taught in the Pre-K class and told me afterwards, “It was magic. The kids were all amazing today! It must have been that new schedule we just implemented.” I can tell you. It wasn’t the schedule. It was Cindy. God in Cindy.
		2. UNEXPECTED – ANOTHER TEACHER:  But I also want to tell you about someone who is NOT a teacher by trade. Jon Tawfik is an engineer, with an engineer-mind. But I love seeing how he puts his God-given gift to use in a classroom of 5-year-olds. I think of the times he had the kids construct an altar out of sticks, or Jericho out of legos, or the times he used his artistic abilities to draw a cartoon sketch of the Bible Lesson for kids to imitate.
	4. Okay… that’s great but… what about folks that are not sure that teaching is their gift? Is there any room for them to serve in an area like Redemption Kids?
		1. Ok, so let me tell you about someone who does not directly interact with kids in the classroom. Mayson Donaldson serves by giving of her time - showing up early on a Sunday morning to help set up the kids hallway, and then she sits at a table and checks kids in. What makes her unique is that I believe she has the gift of *encouragement.* As she greets families and checks-in kids, she is smiling and full of joy.The words “I wanted to encourage you by telling you that…” frequently come out of her mouth.
		2. Also, I think of Jason Lu, who serves in the Grades 1-5 classroom, but the way I see him serve the most is behind the scenes, not even on a Sunday morning. With the gift of *faith,* Jason faithfully prays by name for the kids, and he is full of hope for their spiritual futures in a way that builds me up.
	5. That’s great! Anything else that you think we should know?
		1. First, I want to tell you about 2 teenage boys, Nate and Jayden Burns. God shaped them to be really awesome boys who naturally connect with other kids. They came up to me and asked if they could start serving, and they jumped right in. Playing with toddlers, assisting preschoolers, or being a “buddy” to a kid who needed extra attention – they’ve done it all. Nate saw me in the lobby after serving one week and he asked me, “Do you need me to help next week?” Romans 12 tells us that *serving* is a spiritual gift - and I believe these boys have that gift.
		2. Whether it’s serving, teaching, encouraging, musical or artistic talents, or even ninja-fast diaper-changing skills, I am so grateful that God gives gifts to each of us so distinctly. And to show my gratitude, there will be an ice cream bar in the Kids Hallway today for all Redemption Kids volunteers!
	6. Thanks Meg for sharing some real stories of real people using their gifts for others through Redemption Kids. Let’s give her, and all of those who serve there a hand!
		1. And, as she leaves, I’d be a bad Pastor if I didn’t let you know that Meg and her Team has plenty of varied opportunities in Redemption Kids for folks who want to explore and apply their different gifts.
		2. Currently, they could use additional volunteers in Nursery, Toddlers, and PreK/K as well as Assistant Team Leaders. And, if you are willing to explore, they are scheduling opportunities to commit for Summer Coverage right now.
5. In this morning’s Scripture, Peter illustrates “God’s varied grace” by naming two distinct and different possibilities: speaking and serving (or word and deed)
6. Now, as Tanner indicated last week, we are going to cover all five major texts in the New Testament that discuss spiritual gifts. All of them list some spiritual gifts but none of these lists appear to be exhaustive.
7. And, I suspect that introduces one of the greatest challenges when I talk to Christians today about their spiritual gifts.
	1. Simply put, when they read one of these major texts, like 1 Peter 4 today, they feel a kind of pressure to narrowly fit into whatever picture they have in their head about that specific spiritual gift or whatever are the few most observable and celebrated gifts within their church.
	2. And, if their dominant picture of that imagined or observed spiritual gift doesn’t precisely match their consideration or experience up-until-that-point, then they are left feeling confused, disenfranchised, or paralyzed.
8. So, in the next few minutes, I’d like to offer 7 quick insights about “God’s varied grace” that I hope will provide greater understanding and perhaps some new found freedom in your exploration of spiritual gifts.
9. First, let’s state what appears to be obvious. The Scriptures point to the **creative variety** of spiritual gifts available to the local church through its people.
	1. Depending upon the scholar, there are at least 19-29+ gifts listed as examples spread throughout the New Testament and hinted at in the Old Testament:
	2. Personally, I suspect that because the lists are given as samples that there are gifts that God deposits in His Church that are not even listed, bringing my list to 29+.
		1. Example: Worship Leading is not clearly listed. Yet… we sense as a people when someone has been uniquely gifted to guide God’s people into corporate worship through music, right?
10. Second, Last week, Tanner mentioned that when it comes to spiritual gifts, sometimes we get a little confused discerning the **differences** between a **general call** to obedience in an area that all Christians experience and the **deposit of a spiritual gift**. I think that it’s worth considering again. Let me use the example of Christian hospitality.
	1. Hebrews 13:2 tells us that all Christian are called to hospitality to strangers. It is simply a command to understand and to follow. Regardless of you personal giftedness, it is a grace that we extend to others as a mercy that we have likewise received from Jesus.
	2. Even for the most hesitant, over time, with maturity, it is quite possible that you might find your heart becoming more in synch with God’s heart for extending welcome and creating safe spaces for others. You may even begin to get good at it as you learn and develop greater skill. And that it wonderful! Good for you!
	3. However, in the life of the church, there will be those who have a clear dispensation of God’s empowerment that outstrips the mere development of greater heart and skillful advancement. Overtime, it will be clear to them and to others than somehow God is moving beyond their competencies and doing something consistently miraculous as they exercise a spiritual gift of hospitality. The result will be extreme fruitfulness and corporate fulfillment. [Pause].
11. Third, as a related consideration, we must recognize that we are all taking **different steps in time** in our spiritual journey.
	1. Yes, at the moment of repentance and conversion, God gives us His Spirit and a deposit of at least one spiritual gift.
	2. But, right now, in this theater and viewing from home, we are a collection of individuals with different starting points in time… and therefore, at different points in understanding, development, and release. [Pause].
12. Which brings me to my fourth point: Many times, we see great variety in the **depth of development** in our spiritual gifts.
	1. In some cases, new believers “don’t know what they don’t know”. They are early in their discovery. That’s okay. Keeping reading, and learning, and experiencing.
	2. In some cases, access to good “teaching” and faithful “discipleship” is lacking.
		1. Early in my Christian walk, I was blessed to have an seasoned saint named Cam who saw God’s spiritual gift deposit in me and began to call it out and help me develop that gift. Frankly, her assistance was invaluable as I struggled to mature.
	3. In some cases, spiritual apathy has lead to disinterest and no growth. It is like the person who gets their coin and buries it. This breaks the heart of God for we are all called to increasing maturity over time.
13. As we consider why we see such variety in our discussion of spiritual gifts, my fifth consideration would have us look back to last week’s Scripture – Ephesians 4:7.
	1. There, Paul reminds us that, “***7****grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift*”
	2. In other words, it seems that there are **degrees of strength** or different levels of deposit in spiritual giftedness from one-person-to-another. Think of it as a spectrum.
	3. This shouldn’t surprise us. Earlier, I alluded to the Parable of the Talents where each servant received different “coins” with no apparent explanation “why”… it just was the Master’s sovereign choice.
14. Sixth… when we consider “God’s varied grace”, we should consider what I call **“Environments of Application”**. That is, the settings where our spiritual gifts seem to flow most naturally.
	* 1. In the life of the church, there can be multiple ministries operating in multiple ministry settings.
		2. You might serve in a highly personal way, or within a structured team, or within a leadership team overseeing other teams, or even within the universal church somehow.
		3. Regardless, most of us probably have ideal “environments” or “settings” of operation where we experience a sense of “right place” and where our giftedness thrives.
		4. Let me return to my earlier example of “Hospitality”:
			1. Home – invite someone over (Personal Space)
			2. Group – in the classroom (Work place)
			3. Crowd – Anniversary Celebration (Church)
				1. Different points of engagement:

Connections Team, Ministry of the Chair, Event Leader

* + - 1. Example: Samuel – Take Hospitality wherever you go…
				1. Coffee Shop, School, or Work Place
1. And if all of these considerations weren’t enough, my seventh observation is that many are **“Multi-Gifted”** – that is, God’s varied grace works in several different ways in individuals in different permutations and combinations.
	1. You may experience what I call “Gift-Mix”, a blending of more than one spiritual gift making up your “spiritual personality”.
	2. It is likely that one gift appears dominant and more recognizable than the others.
	3. It is possible that the emergence of a spiritual gift occurs in synch with an occasion of “need” or during a season following dormancy then greater awareness.
	4. It is likely that this gift-mix may provide clues to your unique calling or ministry focus as you move from a general call issued to all Christians to a general call to you to serve using your spiritual gifts to a specific call to you to serve in a certain ministry capacity.
2. “God’s varied grace”… (Summary)
	1. Spiritual gifts are dynamic, not static
		1. More like “video” rather than “photograph”… Fluid… active…
	2. They don’t “stand alone” or in isolation. They are just one part of who we are as vessels of service within the church.
		1. Spiritual gifts are impacted by our passions, our skills, or personalities, and even our experiences. (SHAPE)
	3. Unfortunately, sometimes, some gifts sometimes appear more valued than others…
		1. Maybe because they are more observable in public than those operating in smaller settings (less visible) or…
		2. Because one gift seems to be more sensational than others that appear “ordinary”
		3. But, we must to fight remember and remind each other that all spiritual gifts are “supernaturally endowed” by God’s varied grace.
		4. All should be valued and celebrated – beginning with you but also by the Church
3. And so, my prayer for us this morning is that as Good Stewards that we celebrate the uniqueness (in all of its magnificent variety and complexity) of God’s gifts to you and to us for others.

**Main Body – Encouragement #3 (5.0 minutes):**

1. My final encouragement today is that as Good Stewards, you seek God, the Great Giver, and His glory at all times.
2. ***10****As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:****11****whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
3. When it comes to spiritual gifts, why is it that God deserves the glory? I know that it seems obvious but… let us stop and think about it for a moment. [Pause].
4. When we think of spiritual gifts, do we think about God and His Gifts or… do we think of God in His Gifts?
5. Let me quote Pastor Sam Storms as a way to help us understand:
	1. *“Spiritual gifts are not God bestowing to His people something external to Himself. They are not some tangible “stuff” or substance separable from God. Spiritual gifts are nothing less than God himself in us, energizing our souls, imparting revelations to our minds, infusing power in our wills and working His sovereign and gracious purposes through us… Spiritual gifts are God present in, with, and through human thoughts, human deeds, human words, and human love*.” [[1]](#footnote-1)
6. God gets the glory not because we are great at performing… God gets the glory because it is He who is the initiator, supplying, and guarantor of anything good that we accomplish with Him!
7. One of the great tests of the good stewardship of spiritual gifts is this…
	1. **Who gets the glory?**
8. When you came in, our *Connections Team* handed you our *Vision 2022: Empowered Card*. Go ahead and pull that out. It declares that: [SKIM]
	* 1. *We see a church full of people gifted by God’s Spirit for the good of others. As each person’s unique design is discovered, lived, and celebrated with equal excitement, we will collectively take thousands of joyful steps to serve others!*
		2. So far so good, right? Let’s read more…
		3. *Countless deeds of mercy, kindness, hospitality, healing, teaching, encouragement, and more*
		4. Sounds like what we’ve been talking about this morning…
		5. *…will lead to story after story of the supernatural becoming natural and God’s love going public in every corner of our church and city. Redemption Hill will be a church where everyone lives empowered everywhere!*
	1. Who’s love goes public? God’s…
	2. Yes, we’ll be empowered to be living and loving but… it is His name that gains the fame!
9. My prayer for us this morning is that as Good Stewards, you seek God, the Great Giver, and His glory at all times.

**CONCLUSION (5.0 minutes):**

1. Earlier, I told you how much I loved the Avengers. In the film, “Endgame”, there is a climatic scene culminating in a crescendo of climax…. Where the arch-villain Thanos, and his evil army is overwhelming the good guys… defeat was imminent and all hope appeared lost… Then, Captain America, shouted his iconic, memorable line, “**Avengers… Assemble!**”…
2. When this occurred, the whole theater erupted in wild applause! You could feel the energy in the theater as one-by-one unique super-hero after unique super-hero picked themselves up off the ground and formed a wall of intention… And, then as ONE, they committed to task-at-hand and overcame great evil. [Pause]
3. I kid you not… at that moment, I was emotionally moved… the film-making was powerful but… my mind asked this question…
	1. What if the Church of Jesus Christ assembled?
	2. What if the Apostle Peter was standing here and said, “**Church… Assemble!”**
	3. What if every single follower of Jesus within the sound of my voice recognized that they had been given at least one spiritual gift by God himself…
4. At RHC, we celebrate the rich diversity that God bringing together here.
	1. Certainly, that includes diversity in race, ethnicity, language, vocation, income, and age.
	2. But what if we expanded our awareness to celebrate diversity in spiritual giftedness?
	3. What if collectively we rejoiced in God’s varied grace?
	4. Can you imagine the impact that would have on our region?
5. Look back at that *Vision 2022: Empowered Card*. That’s the future that we see for Redemption Hill Church in the midst of Greater Medford:
	1. *We see a church full of people gifted by God’s Spirit for the good of others.*
	2. *We see each person discovering their unique design and then living empowered lives everywhere they go.*
	3. *We see day-after-day and week-after-week concerts of exuberant celebration as we witness our faithfulness grow in lock-step with God’s Spirit.*
	4. *We see a day when God’s name is honored because He is seen working in, with, and through His people. with equal excitement, we will collectively take thousands of joyful steps to serve others!*
	5. And, if it can be imagined then it can be acted upon….
		1. Think…. Imagine… Hope… Pray… Act!
		2. What if we embraced God’s varied grace with such humility and unity amongst ourselves that God’s name was elevated in the places that we live, work, worship, educate… everywhere…
		3. What if?... Can you imagine?... [Pause]
6. So let’s resolve this morning… right now… to confidently embrace the fact that God has given each follower of Jesus at least one spiritual gift…
7. Let’s resolve to discover it… in all of its uniqueness and varied grace…
8. Let’s resolve to develop it… as good stewards… trusting that through wisdom and counsel; trial and error; affirmation and encouragement… we will grow in our impact…
9. Let’s resolve to celebrate it… as our spiritual gifts collectively point towards The Giver and His glory.
10. After all,

**Good stewards of God’s varied grace uniquely use their spiritual gifts for His glory.**

1. Let us pray…

**INVITATION TO RESPOND & PRAYER (1.5 minutes):**

1. *Heavenly Father… We thank you for your decision to deposit varied and precious spiritual gifts in each person who acknowledges you as Abba, Father.*
2. *Jesus, help us to serve the Body of Christ faithfully as good stewards in your name.*
3. *Spirit, grant us supernatural strength and growing maturity even as we discover and release all that you impart.*
4. *For it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirity, we pray. Amen.*
1. *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, Sam Storms, p12 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)