



LIVING A LACK NOTHING LIFE

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

A sermon preached by the Rev. Theodore S. Atkinson

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IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Do you like to read other peoples' letters? You know you shouldn't. There's such a thing as privacy that even our children should enjoy – unless of course you have evidence that they're involved with drugs, alcohol or other destructive behavior. We all have a right to privacy. Well, despite the right to privacy, we're going to read a letter addressed to someone else. I'm referring to an ancient letter written by the apostle Paul to Christians living in the city of Corinth which is now located in Greece.

Paul spent a year and a half establishing the church in Corinth. After leaving Corinth he sent them a thank you letter. He writes, "I give thanks to my God always for you because you have been enriched by Christ, in speech and knowledge" and "you are not lacking in any spiritual gift." Paul knew the church in Corinth wasn't a perfect church. Far from it! But they had people with so many gifts. The church in Corinth was kind of like the Oxford Presbyterian Church, very gifted.

I'm convinced that what was said of the Corinthian church is true of us. We're not lacking in *any* gift. Here's just a partial list of the gifts God has given us for the building up of the community. To begin with – we have the greatest gift of all Jesus Christ and the hope of salvation. But beyond that we have members with journalistic gifts. We have members with computer skills, construction skills, nursing skills, teaching skills, and administration skills. Some of our members have outstanding verbal communication skills. Some, in fact, have the gift of tongues so that you can speak another language. Others have the gift of writing beautiful letters. At least one member has the gift of remembering birthdays. Some of you have gifts in

relating to difficult people. Some of you are gifted fundraisers. Others have fantastic cooking skills, painting skills, skills in business, selling and promotion. Many of you are gifted musicians. athletes, dancers Every member has at least one gift. Some have many gifts. But, together, as a church we're not lacking in any spiritual gift. Some of you have used your gifts to build up the church. At Christmas we had a little orchestra where some of you shared your gift of music. Some shared your gift of time by delivering food baskets. Ask yourself this: Do I have a gift I could use to make us a better church – a more Christ-like community?

On the basis of my ministry among you for 16 years I can say with Paul, "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched... you are not lacking in any spiritual gift." We have at our disposal all that we could ever possibly need to live a life filled with hope and promise.

But if we *really* lack nothing, why do we feel like ...

If I just had more time...

If I just had more money...

If I just had more power...

If I just had more confidence...

If I just had more influence... then I could really be something.

Our problem is not that we're lacking. Our problem is that *we have gifts we don't know we have*. In the first Harry Potter book we learn that young Harry Potter had wonderful gifts he isn't unaware of until he discovers whose son he is. Like Harry Potter some of us have amazing gifts we're not using because we don't know we have them. And we won't know we have them until we realize whose daughters and sons we are. We're children of God.

But even after Harry Potter discovered who his parents were and what wonderful gifts he had he was still unable to make full use of his gifts. He had to go to school to develop his gifts. Like Harry Potter, we need to develop our gifts and learn how to use them. For example, I got a new computer for Christmas. A wonderful gift but I'm just now beginning to learn how to use it. It has so much more capability than the computer I use to have. But I'm nearly computer illiterate. I need my son to explain how to use the computer. It's loaded but I don't know how to use what I have. And our church is hampered so often from accomplishing the mission God has for us because we don't know how to use the gifts we have in abundance. But we can develop our gifts. We can learn how to use them. We learn in Sunday school, in choir, or in small discipleship groups. We learn by doing – by painting a wall in the second floor Christian education building, by preparing a meal for a shut-in, by visiting a sick person, by writing a letter to a member you haven't seen in a while. We are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

I came across words by Marianne Williamson that speak to our fears about living a life that is "lacking in nothing." "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us. It's in everyone, and, as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

If by the grace of God we are "lacking in nothing" we'd better start discovering our gifts. We'd better start using them. "Use it or lose it." Our lives will be so much more *pleasurable*,

our community will be so much more *livable*; our families will be so much more *fulfilling*, our church so much more *alive* if we discover and use the gifts God has given us. "Lacking in nothing" means God intends our lives to be full, not flat; fluid, not stagnant; surprising, not staid. The assertion that we're "lacking in nothing" doesn't mean we're perfect. We still have besetting sins and weakness. But God has given us resources to overcome. We shall overcome — if we persevere, if we discover our gifts, if we use our gifts.

God our father has given us wonderful gifts beyond anything we can imagine. And God finds no greater joy than to see his children enjoying his gifts. *Watch* a mother or father *watching* their child opening a Christmas gift. Their little girl begged for months for a certain toy and then on Christmas morning she opens a beautifully wrapped present and discovers the toy she's longed for. As the delighted little girl plays with the toy she doesn't realize that she's also giving her parents a gift - the gift of joy. We're not perfect children by a long shot, but we're all gifted. And nothing fills the heart of our heavenly father with more joy than to see us enjoying and using the wonderful gifts he's given us.

AMEN