



Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059
stjohnky.com

Message for October 11, 2020
“Well-Connected: Build Up”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Ephesians 4:7-13

Ephesians 4:7-13

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:

*“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”*

(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Giftedness

Giftedness is a sort of transcendent quality. To be gifted in something goes far beyond just being talented. Some musicians are not just talented, but gifted. That’s true for some athletes. They have to work at what they do, but what they do just sort of rises above what others are able to deliver.

The Los Angeles Lakers are vying for their 17th NBA Championship, and not surprisingly, LeBron James is on the team. Of course, it didn’t hurt that Anthony Davis is on the team as well. LeBron has won championships with three different teams. He has been the difference maker with each one of them. LeBron is a gifted player. He has that transcendent quality that rises above the rest.

You and I are gifted as well. Our giftedness comes from the Lord. He blesses each of us with certain gifts so the church is built up and the Kingdom prospers. The gifts God gives are a matter of grace. The Greek word for gift and grace are one in the same.

Because the gifts God bestows are a matter of grace, none of us can lay claim to the fact that they are anything less than a work of God. We’d do well to consider the work of God’s grace in our lives and the gifts he bestows. We’d also do well to consider how we might use those gifts to the glory of God and his Kingdom.

God’s grace is always at work and Paul was very much aware of that. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul spends the first three chapters talking about the basics of the Christians faith and grace is front and center among them.

In particular, Paul talks about grace and its tie to salvation. In Ephesians 2:8 he writes, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves—it is the gift of God.”*

Beginning with Ephesians 4, Paul shifts gears. He begins to talk about the church and in doing so he talks about grace as well. *“But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ has appointed it.”* Ephesians 4:7

Paul realizes that Christ is the one who orders his church and does that as a matter of grace. The free gift of his love is evident for all to see. That gift, that grace is evident even to this day. Christ continues to form his church.

Christ is all about assembling who he needs to do what he needs to get done. I have witnessed that over and over again down through the years. Jesus by his grace empowers and equips each of us for service in his Kingdom, and thereby builds up the church.

Qualities for Ministry

When an employer is looking to hire someone that employer usually posts a job description. That employer will also list some of the qualities that are needed for the job.

If you remember from last week Paul challenged the church in Ephesus to *“live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”* That same challenge is extended to us as well.

Those who are a part of Christ’s church are to be humble, gentle, and patient. They are to bear with one another in love and to make every effort to stay unified, all because of the Spirit’s work in their midst. These are the qualities that are needed for the job Christ has for us to do.

As we said last week, you and I are to *“huddle up”* when it comes to our common life together. We are to *“make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* There’s not much of a place for a *“no huddle”* offense when it comes to the church. We are to *“huddle up.”*

We Are In This Together

We are all in this together. I have said often that when it comes to church, *“What I do is no more or no less important than what you do.”* I may have a different place within the body, but it is by no means more important.

When it comes to church we are all on a level playing field. For the church to be truly healthy we all need to find our rightful place within the body and go for it. Sitting in the stands or standing on the sidelines watching me or the rest of the staff do our thing without you really engaging is not going to cut it. The mission of the church was intended to be shared by the whole body.

James Merritt has written that *“placing one’s gifts at the church’s disposal is a divine command.”* He goes beyond that to ask, *“What’s greater than investing your life in service to Jesus?”*

A first grade teacher asked her class the question, *“What do you do at home to help?”*

One by one the answers came back. One little girl said, *"I dry dishes."* One little boy said, *"I feed the dog."* Another child said, *"I sweep the floor."*

Everybody gave an answer, but one little boy sitting in the back. He didn't say a word. The teacher looked at him and asked, *"Danny, what do you do to help out at home?"* He said, *"I stay out of the way."*

Let it not be said of us when it comes to church.

Roles for Ministry

In our passage for today from Ephesians 4:7-13 Paul not only lists qualities essential for ministry, but roles that are essential as well. Verses 11-12 are, in effect, a job description for both pastor and people. Paul offers a word for the whole church, not just to leadership.

In Ephesians 4:11-12 Paul writes, *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ might be built up."* (Ephesians 4:11-12)

I am swayed here that Paul offers a word not only to church leadership, but to all who profess faith in Jesus. Remember what Paul said a bit earlier in verse 7, *"But to **each one of us** grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."*

Paul lists 5 things, in particular. He talks about:

- Apostles—they are the ones who are visionary, always looking to blaze new territory for the Kingdom. They are quick to serve Christ by leading the church into new ways of doing ministry.
- Prophets—they are the ones who seek to hear what God is trying to say and when they hear it are quick to pass it along to the rest of the church. Discernment is a big deal for prophets.
- Evangelists—they are the ones who bring the good news about Jesus and are ready *"in and out of season"* to share it. They are quick to remind other Christians that there are a lot of non-Christians out there.
- Pastors—they are the ones who shepherd the folk. They are quick to care for others with a tender heart.
- Teachers—they are the ones to explain the truth about Christ. They are quick to enlighten all who will listen.

A fellow by the name of Mike Breen, who for years led a discipleship ministry called 3dm, helped convince me that what Paul lists here are the fundamental roles in the church and that they are not reserved just to those who consider themselves to be in full-time Christian service.

These *"roles,"* as he calls them, apply to everyone. Interestingly, each of us leans toward one or another. God has shaped us that way.

Some of us are more into broadening opportunities for ministry. Others are ready to lay out where they feel God is leading. Still others are all about leading others to Christ. Some are all about extending compassion to those who are hurting, while others are looking for ways to expound on the truth and applying it to life.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are the so-called five-fold ministries of the church. Where are you when it comes to these five?

Let me suggest a tool that might help you discern and answer to that question. Take a few minutes and fill out a survey that I'm confident you will find enlightening. It's called The Five-fold survey and you can find it at www.fivefoldsurvey.com. Give it a whirl. Let me know what you found out about yourself and how God has designed you for ministry.

Just like the gifts we talked about a bit earlier, how God is shaping you for ministry is a matter of grace.

If I heard it once I heard it a hundred times in seminary, "*Equip the saints for the work of ministry.*" Of course this is borrowed directly from Ephesians 4:12. As we all live out the role Christ is calling us to, we will soon find ourselves well-equipped as a church and certainly in a much stronger position to further God's Kingdom.

It comes to us then to **discover** the role that Christ wants us to fulfill. We need then to let Christ **develop** that role to the end that we are effectively **deployed** to his service.

Getting Into the Game

Paul doesn't pull any punches when it comes to the church and those who make it up. He calls us to be built up until we "*reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*" (Ephesians 4:13)

Paul is not interested in us spinning our wheels or wasting our time, and neither is Christ. The mission is too urgent for us to do that.

A body builder can work and work building up his/her muscles, but to what end? All that work is for nothing but show. On the other hand, a person can work and work building up his/her muscles to become proficient in some sport. There's a big difference between the two.

We'd do well to get out of the stands, off the sidelines, and into the game when it comes to the ministry of the church. After all, we are gifted for ministry and called to certain roles.

God bless us all.