

“Building each other up”: Ephesians 4:7-16

Third Sunday after Pentecost – June 13, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Scripture reading – Eph 4:7-16

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” ⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ And Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the holy ones for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Introduction

- In the previous section (vv.1-6), Paul said we are one in Christ. Each of us is joined to him individually and brought together by his Spirit into one body.
- In this text, Paul says that, within this oneness, there is a wonderful diversity of gifting in two ways. 1) God has individually gifted each of us for ministry (v.7), and, 2) God has given us gifted Christian leaders to help equip each of us for ministry (v.11-12). The purpose is the same: to build up the church fully in Christ.

1. Verse 7: God gives “grace” through Christ to every believer to minister to the rest of the body of Christ.

- “grace” (*charis*) – favor, help, gift, resources (cf. 1 Peter 4:10; *charismata*, “grace gift”).
- Each expression of God’s grace is necessary for the church to be strong! (cf. v.16)

2. Verses 8-10: (Psalm 68 predicted this of Christ through his descent to the underworld, his victorious ascent to heaven and his gifting of the Church)

- A parenthetical explanation to emphasize Christ's victory over the powers of darkness (cf. 1 Peter 3:19-22). The point is: we get our gifts and power from the one who decisively defeated the dark forces, so we can stand against them!

3. Verses 11-12: God further blesses the body of Christ by providing various leaders gifted to "equip" the "holy ones" for "ministry."

- Five are listed here but the list is not exhaustive (e.g., no elders, overseers, deacons)
 1. Apostles (*apostolos*) – delegate, messenger; one sent forth by God (missionary)
 2. Prophets (*prophetes*) – one who speaks for God (foretelling, forth-telling)
 3. Evangelists (*euangelistes*) – one who proclaims the "good news"
 4. Pastors (*poimen*) – one who leads, defends, feeds and cares for God's people
 5. Teachers (*didaskalos*) – one who explains God's Word and models it
- The goal: to "equip" (*katartismos*) the "holy ones" (*hagioi*) for "ministry" (*diakonia*)

4. Verses 12-16: God's long-range plan was to give the Church all the resources it needs through his Spirit to grow into full, mature Christlikeness, firm and stable, resistant to false teaching and self-sustaining as each member of the body stays connected to Christ and continuously infused with his power and gifting.

- God wants us fully "formed" (cf. Gal 4:19). This means we reflect Christ's nature, virtues, love, holiness, etc.
- God expects us to be strong, vigilant, able to identify and reject false teachings. He gives us what we need to be mature and stable; not infantile, naïve and weak.
- This requires a moment-by-moment "walking in the Spirit", "being filled" with him (cf. Eph 5:18).

Take away

- What has the Lord spoken to you about? (Using your gifts? Growing stronger in faith? Christ's victory of the powers of darkness?) Talk to the Father and Jesus about it this week. Ask them to help you to obey the Spirit's promptings and trust him to lead you and grow you into deeper Christlikeness.