

Feb 23, 25 – Leader’s Guide

Ephesians 4:1-16 “Walk Worthy of the Calling”

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

1. Paul opens this chapter with the word “therefore”– What does 4:1 lead you to expect will be Paul’s focus in chapters 4-6?

Chapters 1-3 were about the glory of the gospel – chapter 4-6 are about living out the implications of the gospel.

Chapters 1-3 are about the riches of what we have in Christ – chapter 4-6 are the lifestyle of those in Christ

Chapters 1-3 are about the alternative reading of reality – chapters 4-6 are about the walking into that new reality

2. From our exploration of chapters 1-3 how would you define the calling that we as the church are called to?

Living in light of the new future that Jesus has brought into being.

Living out the new humanity that Jesus has for us “in Christ”.

Living into the reconciled relationships of the new society that is the church.

In this text Paul shares with us the 3 gifts that God gives so that we might walk in a manner worthy (in balance, in equilibrium) with the calling. There first is the gift of unity

3. (4-6) What provides the basis for our unity? What do each of these mean?

The basis of our unity is what Christ has done for and to each of us. It is not common practice and conviction that unifies, it is Jesus who unifies.

What Paul is saying here is that if you are in Christ by faith and I am in Christ by faith, we have the same God, we call upon him intimately and personally as father. We are siblings in the same family.

We are both baptized into the saving death of Jesus.

We have the same hope for the future, a renewed cosmos.

The presence of the living God by the Spirit dwells in you as he dwells in me.

The eternal life of father, son and spirit binds us together as one.

So if we have all of that in common what is so important that it would divide us??

4. (2) How do each of these virtues help us to “maintain the unity”?

Humility – let us hold onto our convictions tightly but with a humility that says I could be wrong here.

Gentleness – don’t repudiate the convictions of the other that you find problematic, ask questions, seek understanding.

Patience – it takes time for another’s convictions to shape and change, give it the time it needs

Bearing with one another in love – lets be honest we are not going to like everyone who calls themselves Christian – we will struggle with their convictions.

The second gift we are given are Jesus’ ministering abilities lavished upon each individual in the church.

5. Read Ps 68 for the context to Paul’s quotation. How does this Psalm help us to see the work of Jesus on our behalf?

This is a Psalm that’s central image picks up a reality of the ancient world. When a people were being oppressed by an enemy the king will descend from the throne to the battlefield to take on their enemies. If victorious he would return to the city leading a triumphal procession of the captives and spoils of war and ascending the throne would lavish gifts upon his people. Read at Pentecost this psalm gave expression to the desire – God you rescued our people in the past - come and do it again!

Paul by using this psalm is saying God has done it again in Jesus. Jesus has descended to take on our enemies of sin, death, and hell, binding them captive upon the cross. Ascending he has won a new future for the world and sitting down upon his throne he by way of his Spirit at Pentecost (see the connection?) showers gifts upon his people.

What gifts? Out of the measure of Christ’s gift – meaning out of his ministering abilities.

6. What ministering abilities has Jesus bestowed on each in your group? How could you as a group support one another in the use of each of your gifts? (Depending on the comfort level of your group you could explore this right in the moment or simply ask your group to write a note of encouragement to someone within the church or group for how you see God’s work in and through the gifts they have been given.)

For reflection sake: Here are the ministering abilities that Tim reflected upon.

He taught – he preached – he revealed the character of God – he called people to repent and enter into the kingdom of heaven.

He also healed – cast out demons – broke the power of evil over people’s lives.

He loved, he comforted, he had compassion, mercy.

He broke down barriers of classism, racism, sexism – he moved against systems of injustice. He was present with the lonely, offered hospitality to sinners and tax collectors.

God also gives specific individuals to the church – apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd teachers.

7. (11-12) These are word-based ministries – given to expound and teach the apostolic faith so that the people of God might be equipped (restored to the condition they should be in). In what way does the teaching and preaching of the word of God do this work? How can we as a community come more under the equipping of the word of God?

The word calls us to repent – to turn away from the works of a world that is passing away and to live in step with the world that is coming into being – the kingdom of Jesus.

The word animates our hope for a future world where all things will be made new – and we are invited to live in anticipation of it in everything we do and say and pray.

His love meets us in our wounds, our sorrows, our pains.

His forgiveness covers our sin – resting us in the truth that there is “no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus”

8. (13-16) What does a church that is living in balance, in equilibrium with the calling look like?

Until we reach the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God – by this Paul means that we would know the father as Jesus knows the father – that we could trust the father as Jesus trusts the father. If we know and trust the father as Jesus knows and trusts the father we will not be tossed around by the winds of culture but will be much more able to keep the main thing the main thing – that is to be a foretaste of his coming kingdom.

We would be a community of truth in love. Yes God loves us exactly as we are but loves us enough to not leave us exactly as we are. Love has a goal. That we would grow up into maturity in Jesus – that would come to reflect the goodness, love, justices, mercy and grace of Jesus.

It might be helpful to reflect on that nature of a church that is marked by truth in love. Tim sought to bring this into clarity by reflecting on experiences of churches where there is truth and no love – or love and no truth. This could be a helpful place to start.