

Series: Gospel Culture

Text: Ephesians 4:1-16

January 11, 2015

Title: The Gospel Displayed: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ

I. HE HAS CALLED US (vv1-6)

-to be holy (vv1-2)

To strive for holiness which is Christlikeness is a community project, and the Apostle Paul gives us several exhortations as to how we should do this together as a church in this vv1-2 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15. Likewise, William Still, an Scottish pastor in the mid 1900's, offers these words about life together in the local church:

"Next to the ministry of the Word, the most fruitful pastoral duty is to help all sorts of odd sheep to live together, and show them how to live in the world amongst goats without becoming goats...The testimony of a true Christian church ought to be how Christians love one another including the 'odd bods'. Christ likes odd bods. I sometimes say that nearly all the fruitful Christian ministers, and fruitful laymen I know, are odd bods. But they are odd bods with a mission, a mission to fit other odd bods, along with themselves, into a fellowship." (William Still, The Work of the Pastor)

-to be one (v3)

What brings us together is something more than anything within us, encapsulated in our ethnic, or social, or political culture. It speaks of a culture outside of us—a culture that is established and brought into existence by the very gospel itself! (Ephesians 2:14-15)

-by the gospel (vv4-6)

We are called from death to life by the sovereign work of our Triune God (2 Corinthians 4:6).

II. HE HAS GIFTED US (vv7-14)

-each individually (v7)

How do you know how you've been gifted and what your particular set of gifts might be? One approach that has become popular is the method of a self-analysis questionnaire. While commendable, this approach has its drawbacks. For one, the discovery of our gifting is a joint effort, meant to be worked out in community. Second, we are prone to wrongly assess ourselves. A better way that I think is more in line with the trajectory we see in the Bible is the ebb and flow and growth and self-discovery that takes place in the context of community.

-as a church body (v11)

He gives each person a gift, and then he gives the gift of certain people to the church.

- apostles and prophets: ceased, this office no longer exists
- evangelists
- pastors and teachers (not all teachers in the church are necessarily pastors, but all pastors teach)

III. TO DISPLAY THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST (vv15-16)

As we live together, serving one another, submitting one to another and our leaders, our corporate life together not only helps to grow and mature believers, it simultaneously becomes a powerful witness and aroma of Christ to an onlooking world.

Five ways we hinder the display of Christ in the local church:

1. By not joining
2. By not prioritizing gathering
3. By not participating in the life of the church
4. By not serving / not thinking about how to use their gifts
5. By lingering in disappointment
 - *"Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christian in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves...By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world...Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it."* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Life Together)