

Using our gifts to serve each other

Ephesians 4:7-11

subject: he gives us gifts

objective: that he might fill all things

Theme: unity in diversity

FCF: using gifts to serve ourselves

Point: Jesus graces every member of the body with gifts

App: identify your gifts and use them to build up one another

The command (1-3), the basis (4-6), but the method...?

1) What it requires, what it includes, and what it accomplishes.

context

What this unity requires (8)

Psalm 68

Scholars often rank it among the most difficult Psalms to interpret¹

1. Psalm of Kingship

1. captivity, rescue, tribute

1. The whole psalm: displays a coherent movement from God's past faithfulness to Israel (68:1-18), God's present salvation (68:19-20), and God's future salvation (68:21-23).

2. Paul quotes from the section on God's continuing present salvation...with some changes...

2. Paul's alterations

1. "You" (Yahweh) to "He" (Christ)

2. "You received gifts from people" to "He gave gifts to people"

1. Paul is using a different reading of the text to bring out the messianic fulfillment of Christ²

1. Satan is taken captive (Eph. 1:21-22).³ **what does unity require? A King.**

Corporate world: change of management = cleaning house! (lose my job?)

Regime change: displaced refugees.

A drive for uniformity.

But with Jesus we see something different...

What this unity includes (7) *the point of the whole operation*

Remember "One, one, one, one, one, one, one <-- unity

This "oneness" is now presented in terms of our individuality.⁴

Howard Thurman (*The Search For Common Ground; An Inquiry Into The Basis Of Man's Experience Of Community*)

There is a sense in us to know that "for all men to be alike is the death of life in man, and yet perceive harmony that transcends all diversities and in which diversity finds its richness and significance."

¹ Frank Thielman. *Ephesians. Commentary on the Old Testament Use of the New Testament*. Ed. D.A. Carson and G. K. Beale. p.820

²Tremper Longman writes, "The New Testament transforms our understanding of the Psalms as we read it in the light of the coming of Jesus Christ." (How to Read the Psalms, 74)

³ Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002) p.529

⁴ Ibid. 243-246

Martin Luther King Jr. (Strength to Love)

"In a real sense, all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I'm what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality."

Unity without uniformity

an atmosphere where diversity is allowed to thrive for the benefit of the whole.

Christ affects this by...

He graces every member with a gift (Eph. 4:16b)

This gift is the power and capability requisite to complete a mission⁵

• **Spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament** **AP!**

1. Romans 12:6-8

1. prophecy
2. serving
3. teaching
4. exhortation
5. giving
6. leadership
7. mercy

2. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10

1. word of wisdom
2. word of knowledge faith
3. gifts of healing
4. miracles
5. distinguishing of spirits
6. tongues
7. interpretation of tongues

3. 1 Corinthians 12:28

1. helps
2. administration

4. Ephesians 4:11

1. Apostle
2. Prophet
3. evangelist
4. pastor-teacher

5. 1 Peter 4:11

1. whoever speaks
2. whoever renders service

⁵ BAGD. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, F.W. Danker, W.F.Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3rd. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) p.1080

• **Listed gifts are not an exhaustive list**

1. Paul probably isn't giving us an exhaustive list of every possible gift available, he's just making a point, just as he did in Ephesians 4:4-5, stressing unity around certain things, but not mentioning everything.
 - worship leading
 - hospitality
 - don't get weird!

• **These are spiritual gifts not human talents**

- gifts of "grace" (7)
- It's easy to see giftings like "administration" and think of it as less supernatural than "prophecy." It is true that one can be naturally gifted in administration, but there is also Spirit-empowered ability.

• **Don't get "gift" envy**

- Do not envy the giftings of others (e.g., people want the gift of healing, but not admin)
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (HCSB)
Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God activates each gift in each person. A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial.

• **A healthy environment for gifts AP!**

- 1 Corinthians 14:26b
All things must be done for edification.

Paul's churches were small in number and allowed gifts to be used in an edifying way. Our Sunday morning gatherings are too large to cultivate certain gifts in a way that is edifying to all, and faithful to the Scriptures.

But the assembly is more extensive than the Sunday morning gathering, and allows that the Scriptures (esp. 1 Corinthians 12-15) are speaking of all sorts of different gatherings for the spiritual gifts to be exercised in, including, but not limited to, prayer meetings, homes, comm groups, and smaller communities.

• **The way to identify gifts: serve!**

- 1 Peter 4:7-10 **AP!**
Above all, maintain an intense love for each other, since love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.
- Galatians 5:13
For you were called to be free, brothers; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.
- Philippians 3:3
For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh
- Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you showed for His name when you served the saints—and you continue to serve them

• **1 Corinthians 14:12**

So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.

Problem: we normally use our gifts to further our own ambitions *conflict*

Sin: we don't use gifts to unify, we use them to distinguish

He retrains us by grace...

charis related to the cognate *charisma* = "a manifestation of grace"⁶

What occurs in an individual thrives in community

gifts of grace are **to benefit the whole**

- in a church this size, it is easy to think you're not needed. Nope. (16b)
- older people: we need you.

so that...

What this unity accomplishes (8)

Filling all things <-- (the goal of the whole operation)

the building up of the body is inextricably linked to his "filling all things"

this all sounds pretty harsh and imperialistic

gospel

but how does he take over the world?

through the *incarnation*

He wins by losing.

He conquers through suffering.

He ascends by descending.

resolution

Lasting unity requires a king so mighty that the rebellious must follow him.

And a savior so loving that the selfish will emulate him.

Jesus takes his gifts/power/wealth, and loses it to find you

He did not come to serve, but be served.

Applications

1. identify giftings that God may have given you

1. Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. - Thurman
2. grace in your life is manifest in giftings used for one other

2. recognize that gifts are not for or about you

1. gifts are grace-oriented, and others-oriented
2. ask the Lord to show you how you can build up His body

3. use gifts in such a way that Christ's rule would be evident in our church

Pray for a fresh empowering of the Spirit!

⁶ Clinton E. Arnold. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians*. p.246