

Five-Fold Ministries

Readings: Ephesians 4:1-16 & Luke 10:1-11, 17-20

Prayer Lord, may our minds be open to hear and understand what you are saying to us this morning; may our hearts embrace it; and may our wills be ready to obey your word. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Intro

As most of you know we are beginning a series loosely based on the book by Danny Silk called *Culture of Honour*. As Susan explained last week, one of the reasons for doing this is that we hope it will help us to become better at being Church. We want to become a Church where all sorts of people can meet with God and have their lives transformed - and that includes us as regular members of this congregation. We want to foster an accepting environment, a safe place where people can be themselves and have the time and opportunity to become the people God wants them to be.

So, how do we do this? Well, we don't; -- we don't - it is the work of God and of his Spirit working in and through us. But one of the ways in which we can help this along, if you like, is by looking at God's pattern or blueprint for how the church should work – if all else fails read the manual, right! So today we are going to look at a passage from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus: Ephesians 4:1-16.

We are going to look at three ideas in particular:

Relationships

The five-fold ministry

Goals

Relationships

Ephesians 4:1-3

One of the problems about choosing a passage like this is that we forget that we that we are coming in half way through the story. Paul has just written three chapters trying to explain to the Christians in Ephesus who they are now in Christ. I want to go back and read a few verses from the previous chapter so that you get a feel for what Paul has already told them.

I pray that out of his glorious riches [God] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Amen!

So, Paul has already shown them who they are in Christ and prayed that they may be rooted and grounded in love, and now he goes on to explain how that should affect the way they live and the way they do church. Later we are going to look at God's blueprint for the Church, which we have called the five-fold ministry, but Paul realizes that that won't work unless we get our relationships right first

V1 Now, in view of all that, in view of all that I've told you about who you are now, says Paul, I'm begging you, live up to that calling. Live a life that's marked by these five things:

Humility
Gentleness
Patience
Forbearance
Love

Let's unpack that a bit.

Humility or lowliness was no more popular in Paul's time than it is now. The Greeks thought of it as having a slave mentality and despised it. It really is a peculiarly Christian virtue because it was not until Jesus came and modelled it for us by humbling himself, as it says in Philippians, that anyone thought it was something to strive for. The Greek word Paul uses here is made up of two words one means humility and the other has to do with the mind, so that what Paul is saying here is be humble minded. Be humble-minded, In other words don't think you're better than everyone else, don't disrespect others.

It's easy to do without thinking sometimes. We were at a church meeting once, back in England so nothing to do with anyone here, when 'George' got up to speak. Now George was an older guy, in his sixties, lived in a caravan, wore clothes he bought from either Oxfam or jumble sales, and was not very socially adept. He spoke, and what he had to say made good sense but the chairperson, a mature and respected Christian man basically dismissed it and made a joke out of it. I really felt for George. But its easy to do, isn't it – to dismiss something just because of who said it rather than what was said. Sometimes we are the 'George'. How do we handle that? It's hard, but knowing that we are loved and valued by Jesus can help; so can looking at Jesus' example in Philippians 2.

John Stott made an interesting comment on this verse:

"The people we immediately, instinctively like, and find it easy to get on with, are the people who give us the respect we consider we deserve, while the people we immediately, instinctively dislike are those who treat us like dirt. ... If we give [people] our respect by recognizing their intrinsic God-given worth we shall be promoting harmony in God's new society [the Church]."

We all want to be treated with respect, don't we? You know, I think Paul put humility first because it is essential to unity and good relationships with one another.

Meekness or Gentleness is different, it's more about not throwing our weight around or stridently asserting our 'rights.' It was often used to describe kings who acted wisely and justly instead of abusing their power. It's about restraint and not abusing

our position, and once again Jesus is our model he described himself as gentle and lowly in heart.

What about patience? In some ways I prefer the old word – longsuffering because it describes the attitude we have to have towards those aggravating people who always rub us up the wrong way, - and keep on doing it! For example, if you are a big picture person there is always the tendency to see a details person as 'picky' and if you're a details person that big picture person may seem to be decidedly flaky! But we need to recognize that we need both kinds of people.

That's why we need forbearance or mutual tolerance. It enables us to rub along with one another. But in fact what Paul is asking for is more than that: he tells us to bear with one another in love. And that's the secret isn't it? When we were discussing last week's sermon in our housegroup, as we often do, we talked about what we understood by a 'culture of honour.' We came to the conclusion that we didn't really know what it meant. We decided that for us the word respect was better, and then, as we talked some more, we decided that the word we really wanted to use was love because that covered so much more. Not love in the sense of some mushy emotion but rather love as an action word – love as constructively seeking the welfare of others and the good of the community, which of course, sometimes involves tough love.

That can be hard work which is why Paul urges us, commands us even, to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He is telling us that we have to work at it – it won't just happen. It's why one of our 'up-in-out' focuses is 'in' we do need to be doing things that will help build relationships within the church, between nine o'clockers and ten-thirty people for example. We are going to have an opportunity to get together on Trinity Sunday when we have a shared breakfast followed by a joint service.

Five-fold Ministry (4:11)

Well, I've spent quite a long time talking about relationships and attitudes to one another because they really are foundational. When we come to look at the five-fold ministry we will see that the people involved in them all have different qualities, different strengths and weaknesses, different things they think are important and want everyone to focus on.

This is where we really need to make sure we have a culture of honour so that we respect one another and can learn to work together.

Visual aid – umbrella. (Put up umbrella).

How many of you knew that the Church is like an umbrella?

I hadn't realized that either until I was thinking about this sermon!

The covering represents all of us together.

Given our topic this morning, what do you think the spokes represent? – The Fivefold ministries that support us and enable us to function. They hold up the material to provide cover and shade.

What about the handle? That represents the Holy Spirit – the link between heaven and earth, and all spokes have to be related to it.

Now this has its limitations as an illustration and I wouldn't want to take it too far but helps us to start thinking about the five-fold ministries.

The first thing to say is that they are gifts. All of us have been given gifts of various sorts but this morning we are looking at five in particular that have been given by Christ to his Church.

He has given: some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers – the Greek lumps these two together.

What for: equipping church for work of ministry
And to build up and strengthen the church and bring it to maturity.

Each of these gifts has a different focus and purpose. Here's how it works:

The Apostle announces: "Let's climb that mountain!"

The Prophet asks: "Is this the right mountain?"

The Evangelist says: "Let's get a bunch of people to climb that mountain."

The Pastor comments: "Let's make sure everyone gets to the top safely."

The Teacher communicates: "This is how we're going to tackle the climb."

What does that look like in a Church context?

(One important thing to say right at the beginning: the apostles and prophets are not the same as Jesus' twelve apostles or the Old Testament prophets. They were unique and have a unique authority that today's apostles and prophets do not have).

Apostles

Apostle = one who is sent. Apostles are sent to bring change and innovation. They are often involved in church planting or starting up new ministries or kingdom initiatives. They are visionaries and pioneers.

Biblical example: Paul setting up churches on his missionary journeys.

Modern examples: Christians who established a church for surfers based in an old Methodist Chapel in Polzeath, Cornwall.

Messy Church pioneers who set up a new way of doing Church to reach people who wouldn't come to a normal church service.

Gift to the Church – otherwise we might never get to do anything new.

But – keep wanting us to move on when we are happy with the way things are. Also, they are not always good at following through so may need pastors teachers administrators etc to keep things going.

Prophets

They have a special gift of hearing from God. Anyone can have prophetic insights or a 'word' sometimes but prophets have a special anointing. They are the discerners, the ones who hear and communicate what God has to say. They enjoy spending time with God and listening to what he has to say.

Gift to Church – can help to discern what we should do in a particular situation.

But: Often they are very passionate about truth and justice and can be quite confrontational. They are often misunderstood, like Jeremiah.

Also Paul tells us in Corinthians that they need to be tested by other prophets or people in the Church.

Evangelists

This means the bearer of good news. They are the ones who are keen to share the gospel with others. They have a particular concern for those who do not yet know Jesus. They will often engage people in conversation or set up ministries to reach out to the community.

For example Ron and Kay Peterson who have helped to set up and Lunch on Hill and the Christmas Lunch.

Gift to the Church – bring more people in.

But can get frustrated with other Church members who are sitting around having Bible studies or pot-luck dinners! That's why we need all the ministries – to bring balance.

Pastors

Most church leaders today are either pastors or teachers. Their focus is on people and their aim is to create community. They want see others find their true identity as dearly loved children of God and to grow to their full potential.

Gift to the church - often they are the relational oil that makes the church work over the long term.

But their compassion draws needy people to them and then they may become overwhelmed and suffer burnout. Also because feelings and relationships are so important to them they may find it difficult to confront when this is necessary.

Teachers

Teachers are often focused on Scripture and want to see people grasp and apply the truth. They want people to be sure of their faith so that they are not “tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching.” (v14). They also want to see people apply the truth to their lives and live out their faith.

Gift - help the Church keep true to the Bible and remain faithful to Jesus.

But can expect everyone to share their passion, can become too focused on knowledge for its own sake.

Let's remind ourselves of why Christ has given us these five groups of people:

To equip God's people for work in his service

To build up the Church to a position of strength and maturity

The ministries as we have seen are all very different that's why we need a Culture of Honour so that we can respect one another's priorities and abilities and learn to work together rather than being jealous to protect our own ministry. Cooperation not competition.

Also giftings don't come in nice little boxes, like the Christmas shoe boxes that Brenda organizes. Instead they come people-shaped – and people are a lot more fragile and difficult to handle than shoe boxes. They need nurturing and encouraging, and sometimes may need to be restrained. Apostles, in particular, are likely to go storming off up the mountain leaving the rest of us puffing and panting and struggling to keep up! So we are back to relational stuff again.

V15 in most translations says something like speaking the truth in love but the Greek doesn't say anything about speaking – it is literally 'truthing' in love. That may include

speaking but it also involves living and doing truth. Living in a way that is true to what we believe and doing it with love. Truth and love – both are needed if the Church is to grow to maturity. Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and the first fruit of the Spirit is love so as Spirit-filled believers we can call on him to help us do this.

But here is one challenge I want to leave with you.
Paul calls on each part to do its work.

(Picture of wheel)

A wheel is also a picture of the Church. The hub in centre represents Jesus/Spirit and all ministry must flow from there. The spokes as with the umbrella are the structure that enables the wheel to function.

But –then we have the tyre – where the rubber hits the road. All this stuff about the five-fold ministries is leading up to this: equipping God's people to go out and do God's work in the world. Remember our Gospel reading in .Luke 10. Jesus sent out 72 people – not the special guys – the twelve but 72 others. He sent them out to heal the sick, tell people about the kingdom of God and get them ready for an encounter with Jesus. What was the result? They returned with joy – and made Jesus joyful too.

Do we want to see things like that happening in our Church? In Richmond? I hope we do.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for calling us to be part of your family, the Church. Thank you for giving the gifts of the five-fold ministry. Please help us to recognize those you have called to this special task. Help us all to love and respect one another and show each one of us what part you want us to play in building up your Church and in reaching out to others. Help us to draw on your Holy Spirit so that we can live with love and truth. Amen.