

EPHESIANS

LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

Sermon 6 – Ephesians 4:1-16 – Growing up

1. You're at the art gallery, standing in front of a landscape or impressionist piece from your favourite artist. Explain the difference between standing back and being to take in the whole piece, when compared to standing one metre away.

IN THE IMAX THEATRE

2. As we've explored the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we've been standing back and viewing the whole sweep of God's plans for the universe for us, from eternity to eternity. Reread that opening section of the sermon, or play it again from our web site and recall the broad sweep of what we've seen. What are the highlights?

Now we climb down from our brilliant vantage point, to explore the impact of these enormous plans for our church, our lifestyle and behaviour; as well as our marriages, raising children, our work place and for living in a hostile world.

BACK IN TODAY'S WORLD -- God's people - united

3. Why does Paul urge us to 'keep' the unity of the Spirit, rather than 'work to achieve' the unity of the Spirit?
4. We 'keep the unity of the Spirit', by being completely humble, gentle, patient and bearing with one another in love. What gets in the way of these attributes? How can we better foster and embrace them?
5. The music seems to be getting louder during pre-service rehearsal and some aren't impressed. A snide remark at the band has caused hurt and discouragement. How might this issue be better approached in a way which keeps the unity of the Spirit?

God's people – gifted and equipped to serve

6. While there is unity in the Spirit, yet we have all been given different gifts. What is the role of the pastors and teachers? What is the role to which all God's people are called?
7. Someone says to you: "look, I like to go to church, but I just don't want to get involved OR I've tried many churches, there aren't many I like". How might you gently use what we learn here to gently point out that that is not what God intended for his church? (You may like to discuss the video played in the sermon!)

God's people – growing up

8. Describe the church where everyone is brilliantly contributing (vv 12-16). What are the strengths and what is the result?
9. What is the 'whole measure of the fullness of Christ'? See also 3:18-19.

ARE WE THERE YET?

10. When we look at this passage and then at the Anglican Church of Noosa, how do you think we are going? What are the aspects of our church life which match this description. Where do you think we could do better? Look at the questions with which the sermon finished and discuss.

REFLECT AND PRAY- give thanks to God for revealing his plans and then for showing us here what the life of the church is look like in the light of those plans. Pray that we will keep the unity of the Spirit, use our gifts to love and serve and keep growing to maturity in the Lord Jesus.

Date: 13th May 2018
Services: 730, 930, 930 Peregrian
Series: Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel
Passage: Ephesians 4:1-17
Title: Growing up
Outline:

1. In the IMAX theatre
..God's plans for all eternity – under Christ
2. Back in today's world
 - a. God' people – united
 - b. Gifted and equipped
 - c. Growing up

1) IN THE IMAX THEATRE

- Welcome to the IMAX theatre...
- Before us on the screen - the whole sweep of God's plans from **eternity to eternity**.
- we've had **excellent seats**... and we've been watching from on high as God's **breath-taking plan** has been unfolded.
- ...his plan to unify **everything UNDER CHRIST**.
- And from our **excellent vantage point** we saw God **first** gathering **people** UNDER CHRIST...
- **Showering** them with his **love**, **adopting** them as his **own**, and through the **death** of Christ, providing **forgiveness**.
- As he raised **Christ** from **death**, he raised **us** from **death** also and we looked on in **amazement** as God seated us with Christ on **high**...
- And we saw our status not only as chosen and adopted, but his **handiwork – his masterpiece – with good things in his plans for us to do**...
- In the **next scene** we looked with **amazement** as the **law** was **destroyed** and **abolished**... that **great wall** dividing **Jews and Gentiles** – came **crashing down**... like the wall of Berlin...as God created a **new humanity – all nations – Jews and the rest, reconciled to God** through the **cross**.
- And then we saw God **living** among his **people** as the **new temple**; moving into the very **hearts** of **believers** – into our **inner beings** – to **strengthen** us with his **power** that we might **grasp** his **immeasurable love**... ///
- I hope you've been **blown away** by what has been **screened**!
- And I **hope** you've been convinced of the **reality** that we have **indeed** been blessed with **every spiritual blessing** in the **heavenly realm**. //
- Now **today** – our **overview** from on **high** is **finished**.

2. BACK IN TODAY'S WORLD

- And we climb down from the **IMAX theatre** and we go **outside**... and our eyes **blink** as they **adjust**...
- ...and we enter **back** into **time** and **back** on the **ground** to begin to explore what all this **means**... how it **impacts** us... what **difference** it all makes... and over the coming **weeks** we'll go to the **work place** and see what it means **there**, we'll go **home** and see what it **means** – we'll examine **marriage** and see what it **means**; we'll see what it means for **sex**, what it means for what comes out of my **mouth**, what it means for **anger**... what being a **forgiven** person means for being **forgiving** **person** ...
- But first – I want you to come to **church** with me... and see what impact, God's plan to unify

everything UNDER CHRIST has for **church** – for **THIS church**... for **our life together**...

GOD'S PEOPLE - UNITED

- I'd like to welcome you this morning to **church** as God **intends it to be**.
- Come **with** me and have a look around and we'll gain some **first** impressions.
- Notice firstly that there is real togetherness – a **oneness** of **purpose** and **direction**...
- Like those rescued off the **Titanic**, they share a **common story** – only ever so much more **profound**...
- Together they've all been **rescued** from **death** to **life**; from **without God** and **without hope**, to being seated with **Christ** in the **heavenly realms**!
- And they share something **profound** in the **present** too – for each person has the Holy **Spirit** in their **inner being**...
- So there is a great **unity** – that runs deeper than a mere kindred spirit among them... and this is seen in their life together...
- And **every effort** is made to **keep** that **unity**.
- v3 – *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*
- there is (Paul goes on to say in vv4-6) – **one body** and **one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all**...
- ...the implication? how absurd if there is **unity** in the **Spirit, unity in hope**, unity in the **Lord** they serve and the **faith** they share...etc... but **division** among **themselves**...
- **And** what **tragedy** if people are actively working **against** one another in a way which **destroys** the **unity**!
- How **tragic** if people are **undermining** the **leadership**, if some **groups** are **criticising other** groups or if some are insisting that on **their rights** or their **tastes** or their **preferences**!
- So – **how** is this **unity kept**??
- the **opening verses** of the chapter **show us**... as Paul exhorts his readers... *To live a life worthy of the calling they have received*...
- When Steve Smith was found to be involved in ball tampering – he was found unworthy to be Australia's cricket captain...
- ...as the people of God – we have been given a privileged position – we are to live a life worthy of that calling..!
- If God's people have been **adopted** as **his**... they are to **live** like **people adopted** by **Him**!!
- If they've been **chosen** to be **holy** and **blameless** as we saw in ch 1, then **that** is what they are to **be**!
- **How do you live a worthy life?** v2 – *be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love*...
- In this church that God **intended** us to **be** – people are **humble** – not insisting on **their** needs being met before the needs of **others**... and people are **gentle**... even if there are things they **disagree** with... and when people **annoy** them or let them **down** or **muck things up** – they **bear** with them **in love**.
- ...and its behaviour **like THAT**, which will **keep** the **unity** in of **Spirit**!
- **Church as it was meant to be**...unified UNDER CHRIST... let's now take a **closer look**...
- we **discover** in this wonderful church – that everyone is

GIFTED AND EQUIPPED TO SERVE

- Let me explain...
- we saw clearly in – ch 2 – it is by **grace** we have been **saved**... and now we see that it is by **grace** that we **live together** and **serve together** and **grow together**...
- **Psalm 68** is quoted by way of **explanation**.
- when a triumphant **ancient King** returned home from battle with a load of **trinkets** captured in war, he would in turn give these as gifts to his subjects as they lined the **road** welcoming him **home**.
- And here the thought is of **Christ**... having **descended** to **earth**... then even to **death**, and then **raised** by **God** in **victory** over **death** and **evil**, returning on high in **absolute triumph**, giving **measures of grace** to his **people**... **grace for you, grace for you**...
- Grace to do **good**, grace to **serve others**.
- but the risen and ascended victorious Christ, also gave some **other** gifts to the church...
- **namely** v11 – *he gave some **apostles**... and some **prophets** and some to be **evangelists** and some **pastors and teachers**...*
- what **great gifts** were **these**!
- Two were **foundational**... we read two weeks ago at the end of chapter 2:20 that the church was built on the **foundation** of the **apostles** and **prophets**... they were **1st century** offices... not **repeated**... **sent** and **commissioned** by **Christ himself** as **the early church leaders**...
- And then **evangelists** – who to **this day** proclaim the **good news** of Jesus...
- And **pastors** and **teachers** – like ministers and others who teach and care for God's people...
- **Great gifts** of God to the church...
- And what's their job?
- v12 – *to equip/prepare God's people for works of service...*
- **Fascinating** words used here... the word translated '**prepare**' means to **restore** to **original condition**... in **secular Greek** it was used of **setting broken bones** or **mending broken fishing nets**.
- Here - It means that **pastors** get **alongside** people – people from all sorts of **backgrounds** – and in a whole range of **conditions**... and help **mend them**... **restore** them... **equip** them... so they are ready to **serve**...
- And that brings us to the **other** fascinating word here – the word used for **works** of **SERVICE**... - the word originally meant '**waiter**' – one who **served** on **tables**... but comes to be used of **any sort of service**.
- And that is the role of all God's people – all **saints** – **serve**!
- To put **ourselves** at the **service** of others... To **wait** on **others**... To do **good** to **all** – as their **servants**...
- It's not at all **glamorous** is it? But that is what we're given **grace** to do – to **SERVE**...
- Want to know what **your** role among the people of God is? It's to **serve**. In **whatever** way you can **find** to **do**...
- ...and **pastors** and **teachers** are given by God to **prepare people** to **serve**...
- ...to **love** them, **care** for them, **teach** them... to as the Word of God itself does – **teaching, correcting, rebuking, training in righteousness** so the man or woman of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work!

- This is as about as opposite to **this** as you can imagine:

Roll video – Me Church (next slide)

- Once everyone is looking to serve **one another**... the **rest** of the **story** of this **church** unfolds **pretty quickly**...
- Because then the **body of Christ**... one of **many** images used to help us understand church – the **body is built up**... i.e. it **grows stronger**... it grows up
- Just like when a personal **trainer** goes to work on my **body**... and prepares **this part** and **this part** for **working properly** – my **body** grows **strong**... so when **pastors** and **teachers** do their **bit** and **this part** and **this part** starts **working properly** – the whole **body** grows strong...
- And it's not long before there is a great **synergy** and **excitement** in **trusting** Jesus and **knowing** Jesus... v13... everyone working toward the **same end**... all eyes on Jesus, all **hearts beating** as **one**... all **singing in harmony**...like a great **basketball team** pulling **together** and **working** as **one**...
- ...and there comes a great **maturity** – as together this church is **filled** with **Christ**...
- Are you getting the **picture**...? can you see some of the **excitement** Paul feels in this? //
- One final **snapshot** to look at in this church **UNDER CHRIST**...
- Having reached this unity in **trusting** Christ and **knowing** Christ – and this **maturity**...
- Then this church doesn't get **knocked around**... v14 *we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown about by every wind of teaching... and cunning men and deceitful scheming etc.*
- Again – it just stands to reason – the **stronger** the **body**... the less likely it is to get **blown** over or **bowled** over...
- And whether there is stuff from **outside** the church – perhaps **opposition** or even **persecution** – or from **inside** – wrong **teaching** and scheming people trying to **lead it astray** – it won't **budge**... but **stand firm!**
- And instead of people **hiding** things from one another, and being **deceitful** and **planning** to **undermine** the work, there will be **instead** – great **honesty** – *speaking the truth in love* says v15... people being willing to be **open** and **honest** yet all the time **caring** and **gracious** with one another...
- With the result that we grow up all the **more**... grow up **into Christ our head**...
- It's a strange **picture** isn't – of a **body** growing into its **head**...? – some **babies** are like that...! But here I think it means – and this ought not be a **surprise** – it means that this church is **unified under Christ**... at **one** with **him**... him as the **head** calling the **shots** and **each part** doing its **work**... doing **HIS** work and working under **his rule**...
- That's **quite** a **church** isn't it?
- A church were Christ has given grace to everyone... and given apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers to restore people to serve, so that the body is built up until there is unity in trusting Jesus and knowing Jesus and people become mature... filled with God... and are therefore not easily led astray or distracted but speak the truth in love and are growing into Christ as each one plays their part...!!!!
- **Is that a church you'd like to belong to?? ///**
- **Is that the church you already belong to??**
- Well, let me ask you....

ARE WE THERE YET?

- **Seriously** – how **close** are we to being like the church described here?
- And this is really hard for me to say – because do you see the inherent **problem** in a pastor **praising**

his congregation for how **well** they are doing? The danger is that it could be taken as suggesting **he's** doing such a **fantastic job**...

- Well – I'm not saying that **at all** – but I do think this is an **amazing** church... and I think **you** the people of God are **fantastic**..
- And as I look at **Ephesians 4** and then look at **the Anglican Church of Noosa**, I'm so **thankful**....!
- For I see a lot of **humility** and **gentleness**, a lot of **patience** and a lot of **bearing with one another**... I do think there is a terrific sense of **unity** here... a great **oneness** in **direction** and **purpose**...
- My role – and others who teach and pastor here – is to people **back together** so they can be **servants**... we are to help and **inspire** people to **serve**... and **many many** people are working **very hard** in the life of this church in all **sorts** of **capacities**...
- And we're growing in our trust in **Jesus** and our **knowledge** of him... I think we are **maturing** and are filled with **Christ** – **filled** with his **Spirit**...
- I **don't think** we'd easily be knocked about by opposition or by people trying to lead us astray...
- And with more and more people in **connect groups** I think there is a lot of **speaking the truth in love** – of people being **open and honest**...
- I think we are **growing up under Christ** – our **head** as each member does its work... //
- Nevertheless... here are some **important questions** to **ponder**...
- 1. Are we living a life worthy of our calling...?
- 2. ...by being humble, and gentle; patient, bearing with one another in love?
- 3. ...keeping the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace?
- 4. ... using the **grace** Christ has given us in the **service** of **others**?
- 5. ...are you being equipped to serve others... ?
- 6. ...so that we're growing strong and standing firm?
- (Those questions will be taken up in our **connect groups** this week – if you want to be part of a **connect group** answering such questions – please see Gary or contact Mark... ///)
- but let's press on **towards this**... being completely **humble** and **gentle**, **patient**, bearing with one another in **love**, making every effort to **keep** the **unity** of the **Spirit**...
- ...**waiting** on **one another**... and each **part working**... thereby **growing up into** and putting ourselves **under**... **Christ**, our **glorious head**.