

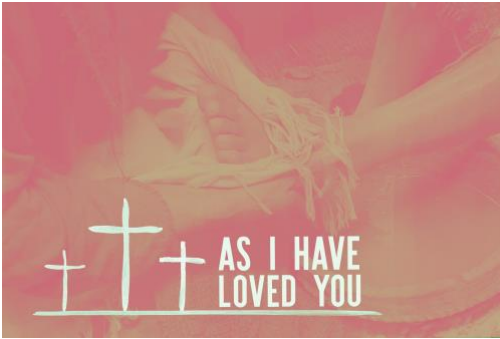
Sermon #6: Building Up the Body

May 28, 2023

Text: **Ephesians 4:1-16**

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Sermon Open

Within the church we often connect through shared life experiences. We might work in the same career, cheer for the same sports teams, enjoy the same hobbies, or like to discuss politics and current events. But what happens when something disrupts that connectedness? Perhaps we change jobs, or do not have time for the hobby, or share a political opinion that offends another. In those cases, when the shared life experience disappears, so does our community. But the reality is that God's plan for connection in His church is so much bigger than shared life experiences. He brings us together and connects us to one another in a way that should never be disrupted. We are united in the same faith, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And Jesus then calls us to maintain this unity as we all live and grow together. And God knows that maintaining this unity is hard work, which is why He gave to us both individual and corporate gifts (tools) to help us.

Walk in a Worthy Manner

God has given to His people certain tools (dispositions) to live out in the church, and by doing so we will maintain the unity that God has established among us in His Spirit (v2-3). This includes the disposition of humility (*thinking of yourself less*), gentleness (*sensitivity and kind behavior*), patience (*choosing to be steadfast & endure with someone*), and bearing with one another in love (*to put up with one another in relationships and circumstances*). We have an objective foundation to look to, which is the unity that has existed for all eternity among the Father, Son, and the Spirit (v4-6). Furthermore, these tools that God gives us to maintain unity are based on the work of Christ, not our own. Only Jesus can create in us this fruit of wise living (v7-10)

Corporate Offices

God has also given to His people certain corporate offices that help build up the church and equip the Saints, preparing them to use their gifts when the opportunities come. Every person in the church is called to work properly as they have been designed to do by God's grace; those in corporate offices (v11-13) are working to help the members of the local church walk in their calling. These offices are the Apostles (courageous pioneers), Prophets (bold truth tellers), Evangelists (gracious ambassadors), Shepherds (caring pastors who invest in the lives of the local body), and Teachers (disruptive instructors, who may ruffle feathers not intentionally, but by teaching that which is counter-cultural). Leaders in these offices know that they are walking in their own gifts as those under their influence begin to bear Gospel fruit.

Application

Every member of the body of Christ is called to build up their local church by the use of time, treasure, and touch. Each person should ask of themselves: Am I living with such a disposition as to maintain unity? Am I using my gifts to help others grow, being stirred to love and good works? Am I helping other believers attain knowledge of the Son of God and His Kingdom? We may come into the church immature and broken, but there is a point when we must grow up. We must grow up so that we are eager for Jesus and eager for one another. We have a shared responsibility to build one another up; that means that we have to set aside some things that are holding us back and keeping us from the gathering of the believers. Think about your role in your church – whether you have an office or not. God is calling you to step up and step into your gifts for the glory of Christ and the good of the people where He has placed you.