

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 14 August 2022
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: Sharing Jesus for Life
Title: LIFE
Passage: Ephesians 4:7-16
Outline:

1. The **gifts** of **God**
2. For the **people** of **God**
 - a. To **build** them **up**
 - b. ...to **unity**
 - c. ...and **maturity**

- This is the **third** and **final** of three sermons following the launch the diocesan strategic plan – one on **each word** of the **catch phrase** – **SHARING JESUS** and **LIFE**
- If **SHARING** focuses on our desire to share Jesus with others - the second word – **JESUS** – focusses on our desire that every believer, every church, every ministry is centred around **JESUS** - so that are we **captivated** by him... **enlivened** by him – **inspired** by him – and so can't **HELP** but share Jesus with others.
- So now to **LIFE**
- When we say that our aim is to **SHARE JESUS for LIFE...** there is a little **word play** going here...
- That is – we are sharing Jesus so that **others** may find **LIFE** through **knowing Jesus**
- BUT also - we are **SHARING JESUS** – for the **term of our nature** **LIFE...** that is – this is not a **temporary measure...** not a strategy we are embracing for a **season** with a **time limit** – we want **all** our people in **all** our churches to be about the work of **SHARING JESUS** – - **all our lives...**
- We are talking about a **lifetime** of **servicing Jesus...**
- A lifetime of taking Jesus **seriously**
- A lifetime of **building one** another up in our relationship with Jesus
- A lifetime of **servicing others**
- A lifetime of **ministry**
- A life time of longing for others to know our shepherd too//
- Here is how the plan reads at the top of this third column

A **DISCIPLING** church producing
life-long disciples of Jesus who are
trained and equipped for ministry.

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- I commented last week that there is no such thing in the Bible as two types of Christians – the ones who just **turn up** for church every now and again and the *really* keen ones who are involved in everything.
- This reflects **that // a discipling church** – helps all disciples of Jesus become **keener and clearer** in their **discipleship** – which simply means – **keener and clearer** in their **following** of **Jesus**.
- A disciple is a **follower** and **learner**... and the **Bible's heart** – **God's heart** - is for **all** Christians – to be **life-long learners** who are follow the **shepherd** with greater **focus**, more **determination**, deeper **obedience**, less **distraction**... **all the time!** //
- I hope you'll turn with me now to Ephesians 4:7-16 –...

And we discover...

1. The **gifts** of **God**
2. For the **people** of **God**
 - a. To **build** them **up**
 - b. ...to **unity**
 - c. ...and **maturity**

- Frist:

1. THE GIFTS OF GOD

- Have a look with me – ⁷ *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*
- It's so clear and so exciting that God has given **each** of us **gifts** to use in the service of others.
- The **grace apportioned** us – are **gifts** he has given
- Thankfully – we don't all have the **same** gifts – and there are various lists of gifts in the New Testament, none of which are exhaustive.
- Might be hospitality – gift – ministry
- Music
- Serving
- Hosting
- Leading
- Caring
- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Flower arranging
- Speaking about Jesus
- teaching the Bible
- Leading small groups
- RE in schools
- Doing craft in kids' ministry
- Praying
- Listening

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- Organising
- ...doesn't matter
- God has apportioned to **you** // certain gifts ///
- What's my gift?
- many books and courses have been constructed to help people work out what their spiritual gifts are...
- It's not that hard!
- Your gift = what you're **good** at and what you **love doing** ///
- Can you think what that is...? or a number of things? Get on and use those gifts in the service of God...
- There are however, five **specific gifts** mentioned here which God gave to the early church at this time – have a look with me – v11 *Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers*
- Why were **these** gifts given? /

2. FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- Back to Ephesians 4... he gave these gifts - v12 *to equip his people for works of service,*
- Two were **foundational**... Ephesians 2:20 says 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 to establish the church**...
- 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**...
- 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 fishing nets**.
- **Here** - It means that **pastors** get **alongside** people – people from all sorts of **backgrounds** – and in a whole range of **conditions**... and through a range of methods, 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!** –
- we put **ourselves** at the **service** of others... we **wait** on **others**...we do **good** to **all** – as their **servants**... using our **gifts** – //
- and pastors and teachers // help **us** get **ready** to **serve**.
- And what is the **point** of all this?
- Where is all this heading?

A. TO BUILD THEM UP

- back to v12 – he gave pastors and teachers to *equip his people for works of service so that the body of*

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Christ may be built up...

- What a beautiful **picture**
- Pastors and teachers get the people of God **ready** to serve each **other**...
- And as we **serve** each other, the **body** of **Christ** – the **family** of God is **built up**
- We grow **strong, clear, focused, passionate, immovable**... we stay **focused** on **Jesus** – we're not easily **swayed** or **distracted**...
- And where is **this** heading?

B. TO UNITY

- Because – v13 - *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God*
- So we all end up on the **same page**
- **Unified** in the **faith** – that is – in **doctrine** – in what we **believe** –
- And **unified** – in the **knowledge** of the **Son of God**
- Unified in **knowing Jesus!**
- Again – what a **great picture**...
- Not heading off in **different directions**
- No one promoting **one idea** or one **ministry** over **another**...
- To **UNITY** -

C. AND MATURITY

- – v13 again - *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*
- mature...
- **Grown up**
- That maturity which Paul describes as attaining to the whole **measure** of the **fullness** of **Christ**...
- **Maturity** – which is God's people – being **full** of **Christ**...
- ...being **all** God **desires** for us.... /////
- Let me ask you – if you are a part of one of our churches – what is the **best** thing about your **church**? /
- I was part of many presentation boards in another diocese... and when we had a conversation with a prospective minister for a parish, the bishop would often ask the parish nominators – what do you love about your parish – what keeps you coming back?
- And more often than not, the answer was something like – well – the morning tea is great – and we are very close....
- What I longed to hear was – well – we are using our **gifts** to **serve** one another... and as a result – we are being **built up** – so that we are **united** in the **faith** and in our **knowledge** of Jesus Christ – and are becoming **mature**!... or **SOMETHING** like **that**!!
- **This** is the church as God **intended it to be**...!
- So – how do we get there...??

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- I want to finish then... by taking you through that **right hand** column of our **strategic plan** – it would be good if you had a copy **handy**...

A **DISCIPLING** church producing life-long disciples of Jesus who are trained and equipped for ministry.

....Such an exciting prospect

How does it happen?

This is what the plan says...

- Church services that involve and develop the gift ministry of believers – people using their gifts
- Preaching which transforms and equips believers for life-long discipleship – preaching by which people are mended – restored – so that they can serve...
- **Then with regard to Bible study groups:**
- All church members encouraged to join a Bible study group – that is going help people in their life-long discipleship!! (Example – people who joined who had never been in one before...)
- Structure and content of Bible study groups facilitate personal growth in all aspects of discipleship – these are not academic exercises... but where the word of God – touches our very hearts and lives.

MORE GENERALLY: (have a look at the list if you have it there)

- Develop and promote resources to facilitate personal daily Bible reading and prayer – what a great difference that makes in the life of every believer!
- Encourage and facilitate personal prayer partners, for the purposes of mutual encouragement, accountability and support in walking with Jesus – I used to meet with two other guys every week – to share and pray... so good!s
- Train and equip Bible study leaders – so that those with the gifts, have the skills
- Train and equip pastoral carers
- Train and equip lay service leaders
- Train and equip Bible readers and prayers for church services
- Train and equip a welcoming team for services and events
- Train and equip people to disciple others
- Train, equip and develop a growing team of preachers and teachers
- Develop and resource age-appropriate ministries (such as children, youth, young adults, retirees, young mothers, etc)
- Encourage and facilitate participation in conferences, seminars and online courses for people wanting to go deeper in their faith

And what difference would all this make?

- ↑ trained leaders for ministries

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- ↑ people in Bible study groups
- ↑ number of ministries
- ↑ people involved in ministries
- ↑ number of people across all ages and backgrounds within the church

Again - I trust you may continue to look prayerfully and carefully over the strategic plan – and see what are the **3-4 ideas** which you can **immediately implement** which will make a difference in the **life** and **ministry** of your **church**...

...in THIS instance – from this **right-hand** column – so that **our churches are full of people committed to life-long discipleship**

People who use

The gifts of God

For the

People of God

So that God's people are built up

To unity

And maturity

... for when that happens,

...we will be **people, churches,** and a **whole diocese**

...**immersed** in – and **ready** and **equipped** for - the **work** of – the great **privilege** of

SHARING JESUS FOR LIFE
