

# Ephesians 4:1-16 One Body

Welcome this morning to Church at the Peak, my name is Tom and I look after youth and young adults ministry here. Today I have the joy of going through a passage that holds a lot of significance for me in my own personal faith because it captures a number of the features of our faith that first attracted me to church. We have been going through a series thinking about mission and spreading the message of John 3:16 as part of our regional mission, thinking about the core elements of our belief and also about how we can express that to others. Today we are thinking about one of the most important expressions of Christ in the world, this thing we do called Church.

Im going to start by praying for us.

## Intro: Therefore...

The nature of our series means that we are looking at different books of the Bible every week. This week we are in Ephesians, a letter written by the apostle Paul to the Ephesian church and we are jumping into it in chapter 4 which is a really key moment in the letter. In the first half of the letter Paul has outlined the Gospel. The core beliefs of our faith and why we believe them. We get incredible sections of scripture like this one:

**2** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>[a]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

And then, following these three chapters of declaration of how we are saved we hit chapter four and a key word. Therefore. In the bibles you are holding it says, As a prisoner of the lord, then. But a more literal translation would start with therefore. Because where the first half of Ephesians explains the Gospel, the means of our salvation, this section, therefore. This is what we believe and so therefore... today we are reading the first part of what Paul thinks is a response to the gospel as a church. This is the context of the passage today, we are reading about how Paul says we are to respond to the Gospel. I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

If you are new with us today I'm so glad you are here. What I want to be clear, what Paul is saying is that all these things I'm going to talk about today. They aren't some points to be scored on the leader board for Christians to earn our salvation. It's a response. That we see the incredible works of Jesus in the world to save us, and we want to respond to that love.

In a very Anglican fashion I have split this up into what I think are the 3 elements of church unity.

## 1. Other Person Centeredness

Dani and I don't watch a lot of tv but there is one show that we cant get enough of...

...They just cant hold it together.

The nature of humanity is that we are actually pretty bad at unifying., We are bad at walking alongside one another, caring, supporting. Don't get me wrong, a lot of people around our church are great at these things. But overall I think we know that we are much better at doing it with people who are similar to us, the same interests, who we find it easy to talk to and spend time around. And so this is where Paul starts.

<sup>2</sup>Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

People often jump straight from this verse to church disagreements and how we deal with them. But what is often much more damaging and common are the little choices we make to not engage with each other. Disagreements, undermining each other, people avoiding more difficult people, that we do because its too much effort to talk to someone who isn't similar to us or that we find difficult, or we feel awkward and want to avoid it. But Paul says no, we love one another through patience, gentleness, through being humble enough to give people our time and not think we are above anyone else or that our time and energy is any more valuable than be engaged with other people. He explains why:

<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Our society emphasises the differences between us and our culture teaches us to pursue particular character types to avoid the awkward person to pursue relationships for our own personal benefit.

But if you are a Christian, who has the one spirit, is part of the one body, saved by grace through the power of the one true Lord of all. Then it doesn't matter who they are, if someone else is a Christian then whether they lived 500 years ago or they are in Iran, you have more in common with them, more that unites them to you than your next door neighbour.

Church is a messy place, it is hard to make it slick, because there are so many differences between different Christians, a group of people who may never consider speaking to each other in the world but because of Christ are united as one, brothers and sisters because of the faith we share and the spirit we hold. And so we need to bear with one another. To reach out to one another, a response to the

Gospel is to be together in this way. So I challenge you, talk to someone at morning tea out of your comfort zone, who you don't know, pursue relationships with new people because of what Christ has done and not out of self interest. This was one of the biggest things that attracted me to church as a 14 yr old who didn't know Jesus. I saw this united community of messy people. Who sought each other out who care for one another.

## 2. Service of the Body

<sup>7</sup>But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

We are corporately united, but we are individually saved and if you are a Christian then you have a personal faith and personal interaction with Jesus and have been blessed in individual ways.

<sup>11</sup>So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

And so Christ has provided his people individually with their own gifting, and so we are all different to each other in our talents, and our ability to serve in certain areas of church life. This includes leaders, teachers, but it also includes members of the church. And this is a really great thing.

I used to study at a place called ADFA which is essentially a military leadership academy...

...

It's the worst. Can you imagine a church of only people who are gifted in preaching? Not only would it be unbearable but the whole place would fall apart. Each of our gifting is important, but not only that on its own, its important that you use your gifting for the church so that the whole body of Christ can be built up. The entire church functions and thrives around the bodies inter dependence on the gifts of the individual.



Here's an example. Some people are really gifted with evangelism and you might not think that's you. But the work of God in someone's life, the work of the church in their life, its doesn't stop with the evangelist. They are told about Jesus, invited to church, but it doesn't stop there. They are welcomed by people who see that as their gifting as they come in, they are intentionally engaged with, they come through to the church and people engage in conversations with them, getting to know them, getting passed that initial welcome, they sit in church and people gifted in music worship with them, people gifted in children's ministry look after their kids and engage with them on a gospel level. They are lead in prayer, they hear the word read aloud, someone explains the passage and they are invited to reflect. After the service they eat food someone has prepared, hopefully someone speaks to them and starts to form a genuine relationship, maybe they are invited for lunch and someone is hospitable, invited to bible study where they engage with the bible in relationship with others. How many people are

involved in that? How many of them are the evangelist? How many are the preacher? The gifts of the entire body are at work for the building of the church and the building of the Kingdom.

I went on a family holiday with my wife's family in January...

...you are a puzzle piece. – ***Apply to them***

All the church is needed as we pursue unity in the church leading to:

<sup>13</sup>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.

If you are new with us today, please know that these things aren't tokenistic actions. They are expressions of the love Jesus has for us and for you. That we desire all people to come to know his love and be saved by putting their faith in him. And that you become a part of this body in response to that.

### 3. Mutual support and correction

The last one is something we are afraid of because of the connotations we often connect with this.

<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

A sin that I struggle with in particular is being overly sarcastic...

...I need that correction, and when people love me they do that for me because they care about my walk and also the body of Christ I am a part of.

The fact is as Christians we are all still sinful people, we are pursuing Jesus but we screw up all the time whether at church or at work or in our private lives and often we are blind to a sin or we are intentionally ignoring it. And sometimes we need a Christian brother or sister to point that out. Because while I said before we need to be patient and gentle and humble we are not to allow someone to

continue to walk in sin without helping them. We aren't to avoid accountability and holding members of the body accountable.

Rebuke, correction, its meant to be a form of response to the Gospel and so it must be done in the context of verse 2. We don't rebuke out of our own pride and anger. But we don't avoid it either. If you know someone is walking in sin and you don't correct them or talk to them about it, then you become responsible for the damage it is doing to them and the body as well. My recommendation is if you identify something in someone, then use verse 2 as a checklist, am I being these things, do I genuinely love this person, do I desire what's best for their faith and for the body. If the answer is yes, then its right to approach.

The thing is, because we like to keep the peace we worry about how it will go, and we avoid it. Church is full of conflict avoiders, I am, Stu is constantly pointing it out to me and he's right. But when we leave something unaddressed it gets bigger, and harder, and sometimes it

gets to the point that it has to be dealt with but by that point it is so big the fallout is inevitable. What could have been a small correction becomes a huge intervention. Speaking the truth in love should act as a stabiliser like on a bike or like I need at bowling, just little nudges to keep you on track. They don't hurt someone's pride too much and they protect them.

Different people different parts of the body will inevitably fall and fail at different points. But out of a true love and care for each other we need to speak into those things with loving truth and commit to support and help. Rebuke is a commitment because it isn't dropping what you think of someone and leaving, it's raising something someone seems to be struggling with, and then walking with them in mutual care and support for their benefit as part of the body. Do you see how in this context it's not only not a scary or mean thing, it's a must if we are to claim to love one another.

## Conclusion

If we think about these three things, these three responses to the gospel that set us on the path of being united as the body of Christ's people.

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

We will be firm in the truths that we know, supported, protected by mutual care, and our community will be strong as we stand as a full body under the head that is Christ. And those who we reach out to in our community wont just pass us by coming to one service and then not again but they will see the love of Christ in his people as they join us and become one as they take on the faith we believe.

<sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

We need to be a church of people who are other person centred, who use our gifts for the benefit of the body, and who stand in mutual support and correction of each other.

Coming back to verse 13 where we see the purpose of all these things.

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.