

This morning, we are continuing in our journey through the Book of Ephesians.

We are continuing to look at Ephesians 4:7-16

Let's read **Ephesians 4:7-16** *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."⁹ (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

Last week we looked at verses 11-13 and specifically talked about the "5 Fold Gifts", Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, that have been given to the Church by Jesus to equip us and build us up.

This morning I want to look a little more at the topic of ministry roles in the church from the vantage point of Function versus Form.

The "Form" that has been created and initiated over the last couple of decades has leaned toward a group of "professionals" that run the Church and individuals in the Church attend, receive "ministry", give as they can, and if they are REALLY committed they get involved in some kind of support position to keep the "ministry" going.

This is the classic "Clergy and Laity" model.

This is far from the Father's intended Function of His Church.

Form is rooted in the "Professional Clergy" and God's Function is grounded in the decentralization of ministry, based on the spiritual gifting of each member/part of the Body.

We see this in **Ephesians 4:15,16** *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

The function of the Church is as a Holy Nation and Royal Priesthood – not a Clergy Laity model – *“from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

This isn't just a New Testament “thing” – as our KITI students are learning, many principles in the New Testament are first introduced in the Old Testament.

Exodus 19:5,6 *“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”*

Deuteronomy 14:2 *For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

1 Peter 2:9,10 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

The Church will never fulfill the Father's intent if we bottleneck “ministry” through a model that doesn't equip and release people in their giftings.

If we are to impact our communities in the way the Father designed, we must have the faith and courage to decentralize by equipping people to walk out who they are in Christ.

I think the inherent risk in that, and the potential challenges of “trusting” people has caused the modern Church to rely on the “Trained Professionals – The Clergy” to recruit and direct the rest – “The Laity”. In the short run it seems safer and “cleaner” but as we have seen over the last few decades, actually the last number of centuries, the grassroots impact of the Church is severely hampered in that model.

We live in a day and age where the need for True spiritual direction runs deep. Now more than ever we need a healthy Church as described in the verses we read this morning:

¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

This kind of health comes from a healthy Church/Body where everyone is operating in the gifts the Father has given to them and there isn't this great divide between the "Clergy" and the "Laity" and the "Professionals" and the "Commoners".

In his book, "Brothers, we are not Professionals", John Piper says it like this:

Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and the heart of the Christian ministry. The more professional we long to be, the more spiritual death we will leave in our wake. For there is no professional childlikeness, there is no professional tenderheartedness, there is no professional panting after God.

Brothers, we are not professionals. We are outcasts. We are aliens and exiles in the world. Our citizenship is in Heaven, and we wait with eager expectation for the Lord (Phil. 3:20). You cannot professionalize the love for His appearing without killing it. And it is being killed. The world sets the agenda of the professional man; God sets the agenda of the spiritual man. The strong wine of Jesus Christ explodes the wineskins of professionalism.

Don't let your pendulum swing too far to the opposite side of the spectrum – no need for any order or oversight – the "priesthood of the believer" doesn't mean that each person does what is right in their own eyes and there are no guard rails, etc.

The Truth of His principles as recorded in the Word are still our plumbline and the Father has instituted a process for this to be worked out within the context of the Church.

We see in the New Testament writings that there is a divinely orchestrated order to His Church, not based on a business model Form of governance, but a called, gifted, and anointed team of Elders that oversee His function for the church. These Elders may include various people that may be gifted in the areas we talked about last week and sometimes with other gifts.

We'll talk about the Biblical Principles behind this next week and some of the Spirit-led Procedures that we sense the Father is leading us to put into practice in order to function in a healthier manner as a local expression of His Church.

Hale Pule Question

Think about where you are in your life right now. Think about you family, vocation, school situation, hobbies, sphere of influence, etc. If you are a Jesus Follower, how do you think the Father wants to use you as part of His Royal Priesthood to *proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light?*

If you aren't a Jesus Follower yet, as you think about all the things I listed above, consider that the Father is drawing you into a relationship through relinquishing your life to Christ so that you can be used by Him to be an ambassador of His marvelous light to those around you.