

Ephesians 4.1-16

The mystery of Christ #5

Time to grow up

Update

Today marks 1 month for Mercy. What an incredible month!! We are growing! Some exciting things:

- Already plugged in and serving in the community – Briar Creek Baptist that burned down, Mercy people were all over it helping out. High School students serving on our behalf yesterday at Pregnancy Resource Center. We've got yet another really cool opportunity to serve in the community I promised I'd wait until next week to fully reveal to you.
- Our leadership set some goals...and God has blown every single one of them out of the water. I told one of our supporting churches I don't know if we are doing this right but its incredible! 1st month: 6 community groups, 102 members, 105 people on a volunteer team, 139 first time guests, and 5 baptisms. (CLAP!) My job: "Stop underestimating"
 - Baptisms at end of service today! More members being commissioned next week.

- What I love is that we've put ourselves in a situation where it must be God doing this. We are working hard to do everything here with excellence because we believe that honors God. But none of us are seasoned experts you know. We are a clumsy new church that is 100% sold out focused on seeing a gospel awakening happen in charlotte. And that's God's heart. So he is into it. And I think the awakening is beginning. Gonna show you in a little bit how you can get in on it. There is an action step for every single person in here today.

Intro

We are going through the book of Ephesians. A letter to a new church plant about what the core of the Christian faith is and how to live it out in a culture hostile to it. Today we are going to look at the first half of Ephesians Chapter 4.

And the message Paul gives is essentially...you need to grow up. In verse 14 he says stop being children and In verse 15 he says he wants us to grow up.

This speaks to me. Cause I've got 4 young kids right now. And while I love them I often find myself thinking they need to grow up.

- Courtney & I have been changing diapers for 7 years. Those of you who say "cherish it" I'm pretty sure have

forgotten what getting up at 3am daily for 7 years in a row looks like. Nothing to cherish about that. But I do get it I want to cherish these years so that I can remember them. Because they better leave my house one day.

- They shouldn't be 35 living in my basement playing Farmville. Hitting too close to home? They are to grow up & at some point stop acting like little children. **because there is nothing worse than a grown adult who acts like a little child.**
- In our passage today Paul is saying this to the church: You need to "grow up." I think the timing of this message for us is very important. Because we are a new church many of you are checking this out and deciding if you are going to commit yourself to Mercy Church. And Paul right here this week is going to draw some very clear lines about what it means to grow up spiritually. Huge implications for the way you think about church.
- Paul is going to give us two main signs to know if we are growing up in the faith. The first is how we pursue unity (vv1-6). The second looks at how we use the gifts he gives us to serve each other (vv 7-16). **Pursuing Unity and leveraging our gifts.** Those are

two main signs of a healthy growing church. And I am confident God wants to use our church to bring an awakening to Charlotte but it will only happen if we are faithful to what a church is called to be. Which is right here. So let's look at the first section.

Sign # 1 you are growing up in the faith: You actively maintain unity with other Christians (vv 1-6).

[1] I therefore,

- The 'therefore' is based on the past 3 chapters. Everything Paul is about to say is grounded in the gospel that he has shown us from so many angles in chapters 1-3.
 - When I say gospel: You were far, God brought you near. You were dead, God brought you to life.
- Paul used only one imperative in chapters 1-3 (2:11 'remember'), whereas forty imperatives appear in chapters 4-6. Like a good pastor he's going to show you how this gospel applies to your life now. But he never wanders away from the gospel. That's because the Christian moral ethic only grows out of a heart and mind fully committed to the gospel. Watch...

a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

- The calling you have been called to is the gospel. To 'walk' means to 'order one's behavior.' It's how you live. And

right here is where so many of us often miss the real secret to the Christian life. A Chinese Pastor named Watchman Nee wrote a short book called 'Sit, Walk, Stand' and his inspiration for it came right out of this verse. And You will not get the rest of this letter unless you understand this whole 'walk' idea. And its counterintuitive to most religious teaching ok. So listen up. Nee says about this verse:

- "For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE.... we are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us; not to set out to try and attain it for ourselves.... We have sought to make it clear that the Christian experience does not begin with walking but with sitting, The Lord Jesus has done everything for us, and our need now is to rest confidently in him....It cannot be too strongly emphasized that all true spiritual experience begins from rest....Catch that? Gotta rest in Jesus first...
- But it does not end there. Though the Christian life begins with sitting, sitting is always followed by walking. When once we have been well and truly seated and have found our strength in sitting down, then we do in fact begin to walk. Sitting describes our position with Christ in the heavens. (he's saying you never stop sitting. Its our permanent position) Walking is the practical outworking of that heavenly position here on

earth."¹

How you live your life, or 'walk, is directly tied to where you are 'sitting.' Doesn't matter what you say, where the weight of your life is will actually determine your steps. Some of you claim to be a Christian but your life doesn't show it at all. You have never rested the full weight of your life in the gospel. Christian is your religious label but really, you are in charge & calling the shots. To use Nee's analogy you are sitting, or placing your hope in, YOU. Whatever you see is best, that's what you do. It is likely you are not a Christian. Others of you are exhausted because you started walking before ever sitting. Christianity is a to-do list for you. Do good, God will be happy. Don't, God will judge you. That's exhausting!! Your Christian life isn't joyful because you haven't tapped into the power for the Christian life. The gospel is more of a get-out-of-hell free card instead of a life source. You need to rest in the gospel as well. When you stop doing to earn God's approval and start resting in what he's DONE for you, THEN you can walk. And here is the character of that walk:

[2] with all humility and gentleness,

We become a humble people. What else could we be? We mentioned this if you were here last week but a true Christian sees their need for humility. The gospel shows me I'm not better than anyone else. I was a rebel, bound for death. God

¹ Nee. *Sit, Walk, Stand*, 27-28.

saved me. I didn't accomplish it so I have no pride. I'm just a benefactor of what God did for me. So you walk...with all humility and gentleness towards others.

with patience, bearing with one another in love,

This one gets me bigtime. When we were going to see the martian last Friday. Got a babysitter. Cause when you want to go out and you have kids you have to set that plan in motion weeks in advance. Set everything up..and even with my brother in from out of town & his wife. Babysitter for 6 kids. All wanting to go see martian. and Courtney looked up movie times. So we go to dinner near ballantyne because we are going to the theater over in Ballantyne and the movie is playing as scheduled...IN INDIAN TRAIL. She says "oops." Now in that moment certain feelings emerged. Because all that planning was not so that I could see Robert deniro as 'the intern.' I wanted to see how Jason Bourne was going to beat up the bad guys on Mars. Which I assume is what the Martian is about. In that moment why should I be patient and bear with her? Because the gospel tells me God was patient with me not just in my mistakes, but even when I openly rebelled against him. And he gave me his love when I didn't deserve it. That's now the model for how I love my wife. And the power to do that and not hold a grudge comes from a constant awareness of what has been DONE for me.

Would the people closest to you describe you as patient? Are you a 'difficult person to deal with?' or are you a loving person? This will hurt but maybe you should ask. Lately I've been short tempered with our kids. Painful to hear but causes

me to re-evaluate my heart. The answer isn't to try and love more. You'll just get impatient with your unlovingness and create some kind of crazy person who loves people in order to not hate themselves. Nobody will be comforted by your craziness. Instead, spend time in the gospel. You need to SIT. Rest. Jesus says; in him.

This is why we are telling you to read Ephesians! So you can SIT in the gospel. Like a good steak you need to marinate in it for a while! (15:35)

[3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

He's saying if you get the gospel, you will be eager to maintain unity and peace. You will not love division or controversy. You will have an eagerness for peace. Some of you love conflict. You seek it out. You have been in conflict with every person you know in the last 8 weeks and you keep thinking "what's wrong with THEM!" There is a common denominator to all those situations. YOU. Pursue peace.

- Notice the 'maintain' language. You can't create peace. God creates this unity together in the church through the gospel and keeps it through the Holy Spirit. When we experience disunity its usually a sign we've lost the gospel as well. He explains:

- [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

- If the church is ONE body, joined together by the one hope (that's the gospel) then we MUST seek to cultivate the unity God has given us. That means a couple things for us as a church:
- **1. We need to be intentional to build friendships in the mercy family.** We are new & new faces continue to join us. Which means its easy for Sundays to just feel like a crowd. But, according to Paul we've been given this great unity together! As a new church we haven't experienced the depths of it yet and I know some of you feel like "where are *my* people?" Which is natural Because deep unity comes from *time* on mission together. I need to encourage you: The deep unity is there though for you who are in Christ. You can not to create it, but we do need to discover more of it. Let me put the urgency of this on you this way: **Unity isn't a friend request you can click to accept and then ignore forever. It doesn't work that way. Unity either deepens or dissolves. It is not static.**
ACTION STEP: Community Group & Volunteer Team. if you aren't in a community group or on a volunteer team, get on one. And if you ARE, you need to be intentional with those people. The way best way we build unity is living everyday life with

gospel intentionality. Going to the store? Go with a mercy friend. Got a soccer game? Invite some mercy friends to come. Our community group is carving pumpkins together Thursday. We were going to do it anyway, lets do it together. **Being the church is living Everyday life with gospel intentionality.**

- **ACTION STEP: Eat a meal with someone in the church.** Such an easy way to build a friendship
- **2. We fight against anything that would create disunity.** You got beef with somebody, repent of your pride and then go talk directly with that person. Period. That's gospel love working out. Think about it. What happens when someone in your community group or on your volunteer team lets you down? Or does something you don't like? You gonna hold a grudge and be passive aggressive with them? That's what a toddler or a senile grandparent would do. Or are you going to grow up and love them, talk it through where need be? I know this sounds like first grade but unity is too fragile to assume we know how to maintain it! And if you were here last week you know the story I shared about my background. I refuse to let disunity be what keeps God from using Mercy

Church.

ACTION STEP: Resolve conflict TODAY with gospel humility.

- [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
 - One. One. One. One. Are you catching Paul's emphasis for the church? We are one! And that oneness all stems from our 'call' which is the gospel. We are one in Christ. Like it or not...this is the Mercy Church body. We are one. And we have to actively maintain that unity God has given us.
 - BTW – one baptism. That's the step we each carry out to signal to the rest of us that we are joining into this 'one' faith. It's baptism.
 - **ACTION STEP: Baptism.** Today, at the end of service, 3 people are getting baptized. We don't normally do this but we are giving you the chance today to join them. We have all supplies you can think of. And we have people for you to talk to about it. I'll mention more on that later but if you claim to be a part of this "one" people and have never take a step to make that public, today is the day.

- Now, the next 3 verses represent a shift he's making into our second sign we are growing up spiritually. And it is linked directly to the first...

- [7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Here Paul shifts to unpack how we live out this unity we share in the gospel. And its pretty remarkable. Its through our 'gifts.' watch

[8] Therefore it (The OT) says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." [9] (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [10] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Jesus descended to earth, all the way to the grave. He died for our sins. Then he got up. He resurrected. ascended to the right hand of the father. He took us with him. We who were captives to sin are now positionally seated with Christ...and he gave us gifts. Why? V.10 - That he might fill all things. That the presence of Christ could be manifested *in and through* you.

- Let me read the rest of this passage and then make some observations about this whole 'gifting' thing connects to spiritual growth.
- [11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up 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 mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Sign # 2 you are growing up in the faith: we use the gifts God gives us to build up others in the church.

In these verses we just read Paul has woven together the unity we have in Christ with the diversity we have in our

giftings. Its remarkable and I want to make sure you see it. So, for these verses lets ask 3 questions:

1. What are spiritual gifts. 2.why is it important I know my gift.
3. Why should I be committed to the local church. ²

- **What are spiritual Gifts?**

- **Spiritual gifts are differing abilities God gives each believer that he uses to build up the faith of others (leave this up for a minute).**
- Remember verse 7 – grace was given to EACH one of us....why? verse 12 “for building up the body of Christ...until we attain unity in the faith and knowledge of the son of God.”
- Basically, I come to know God better through your spiritual gift. God has given you an ability, or maybe an experience, that builds my faith in him up.
 - If you are gifted in compassion, I feel God’s love for me in the way you genuinely care for me.
 - This is our FTG team. One of them could punch you in the face and you’d leave feeling welcomed & encouraged. They are that nice!

² Structure for this section modeled from J.D. Greear “Grow Up” sermon on this passage preached in the “Mystery & Clarity series” in 2010.

- Some of you God has given you the heart of a servant and I see Jesus like crazy as you give your time & sweat away for others.
 - I know team members of Both our kids team and our set-up tear down team who bring a change of clothes because of the sweat they give away on Sunday. That is church! Some of you need to join up with them.
- Some of you are gifted in generosity. You give away your money and your resources and the rest of us are reminded of God's great generosity towards us. Which points our hearts to the gospel and the gospel begins to stir a new love of giving in us!
 - Who is that person? That's you. You just needed me to point it out.
- And these gifts are different for every believer. In fact, one of the beauties of spiritual gifts is that they help create diversity inside of the unity we have in the body of Christ. Because each one of us, as we employ these gifts, helps the other to experience a different angle or characteristic of God himself.
 - So the more I am embedded into community the more of God I can know.
- You might ask "how are gifts different than talents?" For example: Spence you used to be in sales, now you are a pastor. Aren't you just using

your natural talent of communication? Well, 2 things. #1 there is a reason I *used* to be in sales. #2 what makes a gift a gift is that God uses it to reveal himself to others. JI Packer says it this way:

- *"The ability to speak or act in a certain way... is only a spiritual gift if and as God uses it to build up the body. Some natural abilities or talents that God has given He never uses in this way, while sometimes He chooses to build up his body through performances that in our eyes seem substandard. Explain What makes something a spiritual gift is not the quality of the performance, but the blessing of God."*
- So yes you may have a talent, but it is only a spiritual gift as God uses it to build up the church. Which is why a CEO may be a talented strategist, but she may be a prayer warrior in the church. Because God *may* bless the church through your business savvy, but may not. May unleash power of God through prayer in you.
- **Ok so you ask: what is my gift?**
 - Some of you that have been in the church a while: have you ever taken one of those online spiritual gift inventories?
 - They are the worst. A better way:
 - 1. What are you passionate about?
 - 2. What do others say you are good at?

▪ 3. What is there a need for?

• #2 : Why is it important I know my gift?

- Not to go all PBS on you, but you are uniquely created by God and uniquely gifted by him. You have unique gifts and experiences God has given you and he's given them to you for a purpose. EPH 2.10 – THAT YOU SHOULD WALK IN THEM.
 - People he wants you to reach that no one else can reach like you can
 - People in Mercy church who need to see God in a way that no one else can show them like you can.
- Not only that, when you finally start putting your gift to use, you will know it because you will COME ALIVE in a whole new way. You will experience the thrill of being used by God in someone else's life.
 - When I preach, I LOVE IT! I told Paul C this week I feel like I'm getting away with something because studying & preparing sermons is my JOB and I love IT. But I also love evangelism. I love sitting down one on one with someone and hearing their story and helping them take a step towards following Jesus. It's a rush for me. I could meet a new person every day and consider that an exhilarating, fulfilling life. Some of you introverts are like..."THAT SOUNDS TERRIBLE! People are the worst!" U know

what though? ask the people closest to me about my bedside manor. Struggle. I need compassionate people cause, terrible as this sounds for a pastor to say, I struggle to be compassionate. I think subconsciously we named this MERCY church so that I would be daily confronted with the character of Jesus I most struggle to emulate.

- See God has gifted each of us differently. And when we start serving in our gifting we experience the rush of being used by God in someone else's life.
 - Want you to be on a volunteer team
 - In a community Group
- BTW – look at verse 12. Did you see what it says about my gift? [11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
- My job is to...EQUIP the saints. That's you. Some people call my job the ministry. The reality is, when I stepped into pastoring in a real sense I stepped **out** of the ministry. My job is to help you discover your gift so you can then leverage it to do the ministry! If you think church is come watch one man use his gift and all you ever do is just sit there then you are acting like a spiritual 2 year old. You are also in the wrong church. I hear people say "I need to get fed man." And while I do believe it is

my job to give you Gods word in a way that nourishes your soul, if all you do is sit around every Sunday and say "EAT! FEED ME!", you are no different than my 2 year old. You don't ever give anything back, you never serve you just sit and eat. Like my 2 year old you are a spiritual chubby little baby. And I don't need another hungry mouth yelling at me for food. Got enough of that in my life man.

- You need to grow up. Now, this isn't intended to beat you up. Its not weird or abnormal to be young in the faith, its abnormal to STAY young in the faith.
 - Pan & the lost boys. Never grew old. Stayed in neverland. That makes for a great bedtime story...and a terrible church.
- We are a new church & you know what, this is an awesome group to call your church family. Here's why: 105 people on volunteer teams and only 102 members. It means the whole family is serving. And when everybody is rolling up their sleeves and getting after it together, that is like gasoline on the fires of both Unity AND Mission. Its contagious! Its why I love our church so much. And if you are new it allows me to say hey, just get around some mercy people cause you will see the gospel sometimes literally pour out of them in the form of sweat beads. And you need to get in on that because your spiritual life has been lacking some exercise. Metaphor is flowing.

Which naturally leads us to our final question:

- **#3. Why should I be committed to a local church?**

- 7 – grace was given to EACH one of us...why? verse 12 "for building up the body of Christ...until we attain unity in the faith and knowledge of the son of God.
- Up to this point I've been showing you how You can, and indeed are called by God, to use the gift he's given you to serve the church. So, that should be enough for you. BUT, lets turn the table around and talk about what you get from the church. Because this question is one of THE most common questions I get: "why should I be committed? What benefit is it to me?" Here we go:
- **If God reveals himself to others through you, how do you think he reveals himself to you? Fairy dust?**
 - God reveals himself to you through others in the church. In fact, your faith is to be built up through others...in the church. And what we saw last week is that the power of God, the power for life change for growth in Christ, is given TO THE CHURCH!
 - But if you want the power of God that is given to the church, you have to be involved in...THE CHURCH!!
 - Listen, some of you really want God to help you with something in your life. That's why

you are here. So you pray 'God help me because I am feeling so depressed. Or God I just need to kick this habit. And God is like well, I want to help you with that. I've given my power to set you free from that to the church. Go plug into the church. But then you don't plug into the church and you wonder where God is when u need him. God's given his power to the church!

- **Action step: Join the church!**

○ Closing:

- Paul in this passage looks at a young church and calls them to grip tightly the unity they have. And the way that unity will flourish is through serving each other. So God gifted each of us with supernaturally charged gifts so that we will serve each other in a way that reflects him and strengthens our unity. And that church, A church that serves one another in the spirit of love is a fiercely effective church for this mission of God.
- Listen today there have been several action steps mentioned. I want to point out 2 to you that you can really act on.
- 1. Volunteer Team – when you came in there was a card on your seat. Gives you a chance to sign up to serve on a team. We know you may not be a member of mercy

yet. But we couldn't pass up on the chance in light of God's word to help you experience the power of God through serving in the body. Fill it out and drop it in if you want to serve.

- 2. Baptism – Listen, lots of action steps. But the bible very clearly points to Baptism as the first step you take in identifying with the gospel. Some of you have been fighting God on this. You need to surrender to him today and go get baptized. We've got fully stocked supplies for men and women, we've got clothes we've got it all. Listen, The gospel says you are washed, clean, set free by the blood of Jesus from the sin that entangled you. Do you believe that? If you do, that is REALLY, REALLY GOOD NEWS. Why wouldn't you celebrate that? And why wouldn't you celebrate it in the way God gave you? I promise we are going to celebrate with you. When we start singing in a second, I'm going to give you a chance to go talk with somebody. Talk about what God is doing in your heart and mind.

- **Close in Prayer. Stand everyone up. Send people back to talk with a prayer team member.**

BENCH

- And like every parent I dream when they grow up, one of them is going to be the leader of the free world. That's why I took such great care in naming them. One of the categories was that the name had to be presidential. President Benjamin Graham Shelton. Might not be a free world, maybe a dictatorship, but the name works. The point is, they are going to grow up!
- One Body. Everybody hold up their hand and look at it. You didn't sew your hand onto your arm today did you? Unless you are Frankenstein's monster. The unity between your hand and your arm is something that grew together. Your mom didn't say, "don't forget to put your hand on today" before you left for school. It was always there. But it is important that you maintain the unity of your hand. Don't say yes to one of those "for \$500 would you cut off your finger?"
- Yes, there are some lists in the bible but there is never a single exhaustive list. If the fact that he creates us uniquely isn't enough evidence, The absence of one exhaustive list shows us there is no limit on the ways God can gift people
 - For many of you, church is the back-up plan if God doesn't just resolve your situation after you pray about it for a bit. What you

need to see here is the Church is God's Plan A for unleashing his power into your life. So do not pray to him for change if you refuse to plug into the place where his power is: the church! Really. Kind of like standing in the grocery store praying for food. God is like...ummm are you serious? Stop praying & look in front of your face! grab an organic, cage free, hand fed, sang a lullabye to it to make sure it wasn't stressed ever in its development banana sitting right beside you and EAT. As weird as it is for a pastor to say this, Stop asking God for an answer he's already given you!

- Keller
 - Back when Britain was more class-conscious, Martin Lloyd Jones quit his prestigious job to be a pastor in a small church that consisted of very poor, uneducated people. Jones began to come under the acquisition of the devil and started asking himself "what makes you think you're really a Christian?" He turned to the voice and replied "explain to me this then: I would rather spend 3 hours talking about the Lord to the humblest fisher woman on the shores of Wales, then I would sit and talk about philosophy, history, and all the

things that I was educated in with people in my own class who don't share the Lord." That he wanted to be in relationship with and care about someone utterly different from him in every possible way was evidence of his Christian identity.

- Spiritual gifts means each of us have a ministry-ability that is part of the ministry-ability of Christ.
- V. 16. When you think of your own body, you think of yourself as in all of it. Your life is in every part of it.
- The ministry powers and abilities of Jesus Christ have been divided up and regimented in different parts of the body.
- A mosaic is a great metaphor of the ability. If you have a mosaic picture of Jesus Christ and take away a piece, the piece may be beautiful alone in itself, but it's incomprehensible alone. Like pieces of a puzzle, you can't tell what they are or what their purpose is when they're by themselves. They don't really function appropriately.
 - When the body is all together, it has the ability and power of Christ.
 - Jesus is continuing to minister to us and through us.
- What is the goal of gifts?
 - To build up believers...the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
 - Gifts make us a body.

- **Illustration** – there is a difference b/w an **aggregation** and a **congregation**. An aggregation is like a bag of marbles. There is no pattern, just one bag. A congregation is a body. Every gift is different but every gift is necessary. The purpose of all of this is to create Christ-likeness.
- New Yorkers only care about being able to produce. Are you good enough? The point of the Spiritual Gifts is not perfection of a skill, it's whether or not it produces Christ's likeness in people.
 - Some preachers just aren't good, yet they instill in people a desire to be like Christ. This is because it's not the form of the action but the blessing of God.