



*“FULFILLING JESUS’ CALLING”

Biblical Text: Ephesians 4:11-16

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It's good to be in Church this morning. Man! After nearly 40 years in ministry, the Church is my *“happy place.”* No matter what kind of week I've had! No matter what's happening out there in the world – and there's a lot of crazy going on out there.

When I come here, I get rebalanced. I get reconnected to “the Source.” We sing the songs of faith, and we pray the Lord’s prayer. And every time we do I remember Jesus’ vision, *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* Matthew 6:10.

Jesus’ ministry began with that vision of the kingdom of God. Luke 4. This vision undergirded his teaching, preaching, prayer and healing. Matthew 5. It shaped his whole ministry. And it was that vision that he entrusted to his disciples. John 14.

I need that vision for lots of reasons. It has been a couple of rough weeks for your sports fan senior pastor. And the Chiefs dropped two games in the same week! Don’t even get me started on how many fourth downs the Raiders got to play after the game was over in order to win Thursday night! And the Oklahoma K-State game just broke my heart.

Baseball wasn’t any better. Not only did the Royals not make it, but the Yankees / Astros will play the Dodgers in the World Series. Phooey! It almost is enough to make me swear give up on sports! Almost! But not quite.

But there’s nothing like praying that visionary prayer of Jesus, *“Thy Kingdom come,”* to remind me what is more important than any sports event, even the best ones.

In John 14, Jesus was preparing those he called that his work would continue in them. And he left them with four things to never forget in their work to build his Kingdom.

Verses 1-3: **Don’t worry.** I’m preparing a place for you. And you know the way.

Verses 4-11: **Keep my commandments.** I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Verses 12-24: **Do what I taught you.** You will accomplish great things if you do.

Verses 25-31: **Don’t ever give up.** The Holy Spirit will guide you and give you peace.

Those are great reminders whatever your situation in life may be and they are great reminders for those of us who are called to do the work of his Kingdom today.

And our text this morning reminds us that work is not just for bishops, clergy, pastors, elders, deacons, church staff – it belongs to the people of God. So open your Bibles with me to Ephesians 4:11-16 as we look at the last message in this series today.

Look at the first verse of our text, Ephesians 4:11.

It says, Jesus, he, Christ... *“*...called some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...*”¹ Most commentaries call those different roles, or ministries, or callings, the five different “leadership gifts,” – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

But in the original Greek, the last two are joined together, as in - *“*...some to be pastors and teachers*” and not *“*...some to be pastors and some to be teachers.*” So, the fourth gifting or calling is really *“*pastor/teacher,*” one word

That’s the first thing to know about Ephesians 4:11. The second thing to know is that those with leadership gifts, whether they are called as an “*apostle, prophet, evangelist, or as a pastor/teacher,*” are not the only ones called to ministry.

All of them are called to, according to Ephesians 4:12, “*...equip the saints for the work of ministry...*”² Or alternatively translated, as in the New International Version, “*...to equip God’s people for works of service.*”³ That tells us what we are to do.

Leaders are to fulfill their ministry and equip God’s people for ministry. The people of God are to do the work of ministry, in our areas of giftedness. But the second half of Ephesians 4:12 tells us that the goal is always “*...for building up the body of Christ...*”⁴

Every Christian is to be “in the ministry” in the sense that every Christian has a ministry to do for the Lord in building up the body of Christ. And there are both internal and external goals or purposes for that “building up.”

Internally that “building up” helping each of us grow personally in four ways. Look at Ephesians 4:13: “*...until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.*”⁵

Unity of faith. Working together for God’s kingdom promotes unity with other believers. How many of you have ever worked on a mission project, or one the ways we serve the community, or as a volunteer in VBS or one of our ministries or our 75th Anniversary Celebration? I thought so. Hands up all over the room. And have those things made you feel more a part of this Church and the work of Jesus. Yes.

Knowledge of the Son of God. It’s more than intellectual content, although that’s a part of it. It is growth in Christ that comes from knowing more about him and learning his Word. That’s why study groups, adult SS classes and Life Groups are so important. When we know more, we discover that God’s promises are true and can be trusted.

¹ Ephesians 4:11, paraphrased by the author based on the King James Version of the Bible.

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⁴ Op. Cit. Ephesians 4:12b, New Revised Standard Version.

⁵ Ibid. Ephesians 4:13, New Revised Standard Version.

Maturity, which is becoming more like Christ. And that's a lifelong quest which we never complete. The text says the mark of ultimate maturity is the full stature of Christ, being fully like him. Anyone there yet? That's what I thought. We have work to do.

And Verse 14 tells us that keeping our eyes on Jesus means we have no time for foolishness: "**We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.**"⁶

Instead of any of that, "**... speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...**"⁷ The song says, "Lord I want to be a Christian." Lord, I want to be more holy. Lord I want to be like Jesus."

In Christ, we are designed to function as one body. Verse sixteen says that the whole Church is connected in Christ, "**From him the whole body is joined and knit together – he connects every part...**" And when that happens, "**...as each part is working properly, it promotes the body's growth and builds itself up in love.**"⁸

I have a dream. I've been dreaming it for nearly forty years. It's a vision of a Church like that! Are we there yet, heavens no. We don't always get it right. But if you're going to dream of a Church, why not start with the dream of Jesus.

Too many times we dream of a Church that looks like us instead of like God's Kingdom. That's why we are committed to being young and old, black and white and every shade between, liberal and conservative, God help us - Republican and Democrat, richer and poorer, men and women. That's what the Teen Summit is all about tonight for youth.

Too many times we dream of a Church that looks like "*Six Flags over Jesus.*" And there's nothing wrong with that if it is secondary. Not primary. Even Church buildings as beautiful as this one are only a means to an end, not the end in itself.

The church is about building Christ's Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven, like we pray. But not for ourselves. We are called to make disciples of those who aren't yet. We are called to bring hope and healing to those who need it. That's what the series, "Hope Dealers," that starts next Sunday is all about.

Jesus' dream is as close as the Lord's Prayer, and as near as the next breath we breathe. It's a dream of being the Church.... One that loves God and loves people ... one that keeps our eyes trained forward toward the kingdom, rather than looking backward.

And it is one that remembers Jesus' words from John 14:12, "**The ones who follow me will do greater works than these because I go to the Father.**" Let us pray.

⁶ Ibid. Ephesians 4:14. New Revised Standard Version.

⁷ Ibid. Ephesians 4:15. New Revised Standard Version.

⁸ Ephesians 4:16, paraphrased by the author.