
Church in the New Covenant

Ephesians 4:7-16

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Big Idea: *Unity in the midst of diversity leads to maturity as leaders equip the people for ministry.*

Clearcreek Chapel is supernatural or it is nothing at all. Look around. There has been noticeable change and growth at Clearcreek Chapel. In numbers, in ministries, in styles and lifestyles, in budgets and parking lots, in plans and strategies – the Chapel is changing! But I revisit my first sentence. Clearcreek Chapel is supernatural or it is nothing at all. If all this change and growth can be attributed to managerial insights and growth techniques we are nothing better than a club that needs to be shut down. Oh, but wait. The next 25 minutes will stun you.

The Bible will take us to a place; a supernatural place where people talk to each other and forgive one another and serve each other and simply live together in peace and work together in joy and find rest together as sweet. Here we find a place where the color of your skin won't get you in or keep you out, justice here is enjoyed and love is exchanged. Here we find people unified though they are diversified – a people who fight; not each other but for each other in the war against fear and doubt. We are about to peer into the Church of the New Covenant. We are ready now to look at Clearcreek Chapel.

<pray> Open your Bibles to Ephesians 4:7-16.

In the New Covenant Church

Inside the New Covenant church we see fascinating things that God is doing to build His people together into maturity so that He is glorified and the church is edified.

The structure of the message will follow the structure of the passage. The passage has four sections. Each section is summarized in one word. These four words will function for us as summaries of the four sections. So, put together these sections describe God's way of growing Clearcreek Chapel. They are: Gifts. Christ. Maturity. Church. In this message this morning we will be probe how God is growing the Chapel by answering these questions.

- **Gifts** (7,11) – *What is given to Clearcreek Chapel?*
- **Christ** (8-10) – *By whom and how was this given to CC?*
- **Maturity** (12-14) – *Why was this given to CC?*
- **Church** (15-16) – *How is this distributed and received at CC?*

How is God adding to and growing up Clearcreek Chapel? Take a listen to the passage as I read Ephesians 4:7-16. <read text>

Gifts

v7,11

The first section we come to can be summed up by the word *gifts*. Look carefully at two verses; 7 & 11.

to each one is given grace

7

Starting with verse 7, we see plainly that to each one is given grace. The gift according to this verse is Christ's grace to each member / believer in the church. What it is and how it is to function will be teased out later in the passage. But for now, note this – each of you. If you are born again, brought into Christ's body by the Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, you are graced!

to everyone is given leaders

11

Now drop down to verse 11 and notice another gift given by Christ. This gift may be a bit more difficult to notice in the passage. The verse says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers..."

apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds/teachers

These people functioning in particular roles are given as a gift from Christ to the church. They are leaders in the church using the word of God to start and establish and grow the church. The apostles and prophets according to 2:20 were seen as the foundation of the church. And the evangelists and shepherds/teachers were seen as the word agents used of God to establish and grow the church. Much can be said regarding these leaders that will have to wait for another time. But for this morning I simply want you to notice that at the Chapel the shepherds/teachers of this verse are your 10 Elders. These men according to this verse are word agents functioning as shepherds who care for and feed each of you by teaching / explaining the Bible to you. These men are given as gifts to everyone in the church.

Christ

v8-10

God's way of growing Clearcreek Chapel is first seen as gifts given to everyone. The second section of this passage is in v8-10. We will summarize this section with the word CHRIST. The apostle Paul talking about God's way of building his church seems to go off in a tangent. Somewhat of a digression Paul takes in these verses. To treat this section as a mere parenthesis or afterthought would gut this passage and neuter it from the power and pleasure the church so desperately needs today.

As the conquering King

v8

In verse 8, Paul proves that Christ is the one who gifts the church by applying Ps.68 to Jesus Christ. By seeing Jesus in the Psalms and by talking about his descending to earth and ascending to heaven Paul preaches the gospel. By applying an OT text to Jesus, Paul makes plain that Jesus is God almighty; the conquering King of kings.

who descended to earth

v9

What does this (v9) mean that the conquering King descended to earth? God sent forth His son, born of woman...this glorious King from all eternity did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself and took on the form of a servant. He came to earth – not as the triumphant king but as a suffering servant.

Though he was the greatest he made himself a nobody. Though he was without sin and glorious, He allowed sinful people to treat him sinfully. He did this to conquer the most profound problem we have in this church (and in this world). He overcame sin's penalty and power over us not by regal power but by crucifixion as a sacrificial offering in our place. He won by losing everything. But let your eyes continue on to v10. Did he lose everything?

who ascended to heaven

v10

“Out from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph over His foes”. He arose from the grave. That's what it means when it says, “he ascended far above all the heavens. He was resurrected as the new Man to begin the New Creation. He ascended to take His throne far above all rule and authority. He is seated. He reigns. He is sovereign over all. He fills out eternity with His glory and power and might and beauty and majesty — that's our King! And this is how he provided the grace and gifts necessary to create and grow his church. It is all done by the gospel!

Maturity

12-14

Now the question before us is this. Why did he give us this grace and our leaders?

To equip everyone for ministry

v12

The gifted word agents know as our Shepherds/Teachers have according to v12 a specific task to exercise. Your 10 Elders are to carry out the first part of v12 in order for each of you to experience the graces from Christ and grow in Christ-likeness. This task is called *equipping*.

Paul has something specific in mind when using the word “equipping”. We are not left to our imagination as to what this means.

The task of equipping the saints has maturity as its goal. In other places in the Bible this word *equip* means fixing something that is broken. For example in Matt.4:21 the word means “mending fishing nets”; fixing the tear in the fish net so that it will be useful and productive for fulfilling what the net was designed to do.

Or in another place in the Bible the word *equipping* means supplying what is lacking in your faith (1Thess.3:10). When you are weak and fainthearted your leaders using the Word of God are to supply you with grace-enabled confidence so that you can carry out God-given ministry at Clearcreek Chapel. This “fixing the tears and supplying the lack” results in maturity.

What does maturity look like according to this passage?

Mature manhood

v13

According to verse 13, what the gospel created is a new community / a new family in which all members grow in soundness of doctrine and firsthand knowledge of Christ. This means that understanding what the Bible truly teaches and experientially understanding Christ are evidence of maturity. When a congregation is steadily Christ-centered and growing in full conviction over Bible teaching you have unity.

You have not a bunch of individuals running around selfishly. You have one body that is characterized by Christ.

To make this plain, Paul talks about what maturity is not as seen in v14.

Not immature children

v14

If a church sounds like, smells like, talks like, thinks like our church nursery – the church is not growing. I do not care if only the budget is swelling and the number of attendance is increasing. Mere surge of “nickels and noses” is not necessarily a sign of growth. If the church stays childish the church is not being equipped for the work of ministry to the building up of the body of Christ.

What does it look like to stay as children in the church? Paul describes it for us. Look back at your Bible at v14.

If the people in the church are easily tricked and effortlessly tossed around the church is (at best) immature. Babies are both gullible and unstable. As your leaders lead – empowered by the Gospel, enthralled by the ascended Christ, skilled in the use of the Word, equipping each of you for your grace-enabled ministry – we see people growing in discernment and stability.

This is the third characteristic of the supernatural church we see in Ephesians 4. It is gifted to serve, it is Christ-centered by the gospel, and it is matured by leaders equipping members for ministry.

The last question remains.

Church

15-16

How is the grace distributed and received? We’ve noticed in this passage that the risen King has purchased and delivered salvation and gifts to each of us. We’ve seen that He gave the church leaders who equip the saints with the Word for ministry. We are gifted to serve. Grace is not given for privatistic consumption. A non-committed and uninvolved person in the church (at best) is dangerously immature. The enjoyment of Christ never drives us into isolation. Rather, the pleasure of Christ leads us into full participation in community. So what does this look like?

Speaking properly

15

Verse 15 says it well. The opposite of v14 (that is, being tricked and tossed by false doctrine) is seen in verse 15. We are to speak to each other the Truth in love. Jesus is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). We maturing into his stature are to be the same. Graciously and lovingly we are to speak to each other with clarity the gospel and the coverage of the Bible. This is our ministry to one another.

Working properly

16

Verse 16 completes the description of mature ministry. We being supplied by Christ are to work properly within the community. We are to receive much grace. We are to receive steady help by the Elders. We are to involve ourselves in ministry – by speaking the word and doing the work.

By this grace-enabled, Christ-centered, gospel-maturing, all church-ministry Clearcreek Chapel is seen as a New Covenant church. CC is supernatural.

To finish the message here are 3 things for you to take home.

1. **The Church is supernatural.**
(talk on grace to all, gifted leaders for all and Christ as all in all. Exposing the danger of “natural Christianity”)
2. **You need the church.**
(talk on humility, trust, benefiting from being served. Exposing the danger of “independent Christianity”)
3. **The church needs you.**
(talk on trust, courage, boldness to participate in someone’s life. Exposing the danger of “consumer Christianity”)