

INI Hymns:

Sermon 25-24

Easter 4

Ephesians 4:7-16

05/11/25

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high,

He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men."

9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The Easter Season is a season of victory! And that victory is described wonderfully in this text. "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." Jesus conquered all His enemies. Satan, Sin, death and Hell itself were conquered and taken captive by Jesus Christ. They didn't go down without a fight. As Paul goes on, "(Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)" This refers to Jesus' state of humiliation when He descended from Heaven and became a man to be our substitute. He fought our battle for us and kept God's law for us and suffered God's punishment for our sins.

Now, with our enemies defeated, Christ "Gave gifts to men." This text emphasizes that

Christ Gives Gifts for Building His Church!

-I- Christ Gives Grace to enter His Church!

What a wonderful statement, "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." Christ has given you His Grace—His undeserved Love! There is no greater gift than that. Grace is the gift that brought us into the Body of Christ and made us Children of God. It was purely by His grace that Jesus descended from heaven to deliver us from the great enemies: Satan, sin, death and hell.

Jesus didn't do this because we deserved it or were even worth saving. Far from it. He did it by His grace. He loved us in spite of our rebellion against Him and gave Himself for us to save us. Then He gave us the gift of Grace by sending the Holy Spirit to create faith in our hearts and make us children of God. We ought to praise Him for His grace every day of our lives.

The Grace that saved us also gives other Gifts. Paul explains in the next verses.

-II- Christ gives Spiritual Leaders to Establish and Strengthen His Church.

Verse 11 "He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." This is a two fold gift. Notice He gave some TO BE apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. That is His gift to those individuals. There is no greater privilege than to serve God in these capacities. To be God's messengers, to bring His word that has the power to create and sustain faith, and to give comfort, peace and joy, that is the greatest honour that can be given to any human being.

Those Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastors and Teachers are also Christ's gift to His Church. Jesus has given us His Word through the Apostles and Prophets. Without them we would not know God or understand the meaning of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Back in chapter 2 of Ephesians God tells us that we are "members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." 2:20 That was pictured for us in our reading from Revelation 21:14 where the New Jerusalem "had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Christ continues to give us evangelists, pastors and teachers to proclaim the word given through the Apostles and Prophets, and teach us that word.

For what purpose did Christ give us these gifts? They are "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Do you think of the ministry as the work of the pastors and teachers? That is one type of ministry. The word ministry simply means "service." A minister is one who serves. Pastors and Teachers serve with the Word to equip you, the saints, for your own works of ministry or service. And the purpose of that is "for the edifying of the body of Christ." That is to build up the body of Christ. So finally,

-III- Christ Gives Gifts to Build Up His Church.

That is not just building the Church in numbers, but building it up in strength of faith. Look at how Paul continues in verse 13: We are building up the body of Christ "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." When Paul speaks of becoming "a perfect man," he's not talking about becoming perfect, without sin. He is describing a complete person, someone who is mature in the faith.

That maturity is described in the other phrases in this verse. "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." Christian maturity grows as we gain a more complete knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ. That builds our unity of faith for the true knowledge of God comes only from the Word given through the Apostles and Prophets. That is the one and only truth.

Growing in that faith and knowledge has two wonderful benefits. First of all, Paul says in verse 14, "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting." Jesus said the world will be full of false teachers who corrupt God's word and lead people astray and it will grow more corrupt as the end draws near. If we don't know the Scriptures well, we will be easily "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." As mature Christians who know God's word, we learn to discern between truth and error, so that we are not misled.

Becoming mature in the faith and knowledge will also give us a trust and confidence so we are not frightened or swayed by what is going on in the world. We will have a sense of peace and calm trust in the Lord for all things. So let us always desire to be built up in our faith and knowledge of the Son of God.

The second great benefit of growing in our unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God is described in verses 15-16. "But, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." This is why Christ wants us to become mature Christians, so that together we all can build up the body of Christ. Notice how "the whole body, [is] joined and knit together by what EVERY JOINT supplies, according to the effective working by which EVERY PART does its share."

Paul described this in our Epistle reading, (1 Cor. 12:4-26). Every part of our body has its

own purpose and function. If any part of the body doesn't work, the whole body suffers because of it. So also Christ has designed His church so that "every part does its share" to cause "growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Every one of us has been give gifts to use to help build up the body of Christ.

In our Epistle lesson Paul draws a rather humorous picture. "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?" That wouldn't be very practical if the whole body was an eye. So Christ has given each of you different gifts to serve in different ways.

It does no good to have a false sense of humility and say, well no, I don't really have any gifts, or I'm not good at that. Christ has given every individual Gifts to use for the building up of His Church. Some gifts need to be developed. Look for areas of need, some way in which you can step up and help out for the building up of the body.

Today is Mother's day, where we honour our mothers and thank God for them. Talk about special gifts. Mothers have so many gifts that they use for the benefit of their families. Caring for, nurturing and training their families. That is a tremendous way to build up the church. For it is the families that makes up the church. And the primary training of the next generation of Christians happens in the home with the mother and Father teaching their children by their words and actions.

Those same gifts that are used in the home can be invaluable in the church as well. Some have gifts of encouraging and comforting one another. I know some of you call one another from time to time to check on each other and encourage each other. That is a wonderful way to help to build each other up. We remind each other of the glorious truths of Scripture. We can comfort one another in times of sorrow. We can encourage one another to carry out God's will. We may even need to give a word of rebuke at times, but remember we are always to be "Speaking the truth in love."

We do this so that "we may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ." We need to keep a strong connection with Christ our head. If your spinal cord is broken or damaged, your body no longer receives messages from the head and you become paralyzed. So it is for us, if our connection to Christ, our head, is broken we become paralyzed spiritually. We cease to function in Christ's church. We can all encourage every member of Christ's body by speaking the truth IN LOVE!

With all humility and gentleness. Our goal of speaking the truth to anyone is always so that they may be saved and grow in the faith. If we do not speak the truth in love, then we will not build anyone up in Christ's body. Remember what Paul says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2 "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." 1 Cor. 8:1. Christ has given each of us these gifts to use in His church. Let us thank Him and use them for the building up of His body.

Amen.