

Beyond the Daily Grind

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Week 4: Right Work can Only Come from Christian Community

Ephesians 4:11-16

Review:

Before we read this text let me take you to the moment it represents in our Jewish/Christian history. God spoke and, as we learned from the original language last week, He created matter, gave energy, created systems and even the laws that all must exist within.

Gravity:

Imagine things at a macro-level beginning to interact with each other. Huge masses of material colliding together and forming into planets.

Electromagnetism:

Imagine things at a micro-level, smaller than what the eye can see, beginning to interact with each other. Atoms and electrons beginning to take form and engage with each other.

Life:

Imagine God drawing his hand through the depths of the ocean and all kinds of creatures spinning off behind in the wake of his movement. Imagine him calling out life from the air as birds begin to take flight. Imagine him drawing up the form of man from the dust and breathing life into him.

God created because that's who He is. He loves to make beauty. He loved making you.

It's in this state of glorious creation that he gives man the job of continuing to sub-create and make things more beautiful. He allows us to participate in His creative work.

Let that sink in – creation was called to create. There was glorious work in our primordial paradise and there will be glorious work in our heavenly paradise again. Moreover, we are called to take spiritual responsibility in light of our origin and destination, which is the love of God.

Over the last couple of weeks we have determined that:

- Work is not the curse, work was cursed.
- Authority and leadership are not a curse. They were affected by sin and used in sinful ways.
- With the fall came fear, shame, blame, self-protection and self-promotion. We combat this by looking to Christ and being obedient to His teachings.
- This week we will make the case that Christian work is supposed to be done in Community.

Ephesians 4:11–16 (ESV): 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.

- Let's go back to the meta idea from Paul's letter to the Church in Ephesians. Unity is not uniformity. God wants unity among his people, not uniformity. It's in this difference that we walk in the fullness of Christ. The main theme of the book is how all of history comes to climax in the person and work of Jesus. He is literally the binding agent for all of humanity to work as they should. How are we to do this if we are so different? Forgiveness and grace in love. God's plan was for all people to find a new way of being human through the work of Jesus, living in obedience to Him.

Illustration: Imagine I have someone come up on stage who is also a follower of Jesus but very different than I am. How are we supposed to work together and get along? Imagine I reach out and hold hands with that person. One hand represents forgiveness and the other represents grace. The decision not to let go is love. Unity is not uniformity.

- These roles are for advancing God's work in the world through the Church. What is the point of this section of scripture? Vs. 13-14, Spiritual maturity, spiritual stability and ultimately Spiritual efficacy. Notice it can only come by unity under Christ working from and through individual uniqueness.
- We must admit we are all different and different finds community in mutual voluntary submission under Jesus.
- Remember:
 - Work is not the curse, work was cursed.
 - Authority and leadership are not a curse, they were cursed.
 - With the fall came fear, shame, blame, self-protection and self-promotion. We combat this by looking to Christ and being obedient to His teachings.
- This leads to an interesting question. Why did God distribute gifts rather than give them all to every person?
 - It forces us to grow in relationship with each other. Beautiful relationships are a key attribute of the Trinity.
 - Remember: Don't resent God for what He has given another.

Final Thoughts:

What can we take away from this?

- Don't pursue prosperity to the detriment of another; pursue prosperity to the advancement of all. In other words, are you aware of who or what loses when you win?

- You are a unique and beautiful creation of God created to bless others and represent specific attributes of His. All people are of equal worth under Christ though not all people can do every job.
 - Illustration: My dad talked about my grandfather in His latter years on this planet. Dr. Colaw had been reduced by dementia to nearly a child cognitively. I was having a really hard time with this until my dad told me that His father was still teaching Him things in this state. My dad was learning commitment, grace, mercy and generosity from his father more now than ever before. Everyone has a role if you are mature enough to see it.

Application:

- Dream big! Just make sure your success helps others win too. Maybe even helps other people win more than you. Think of the example Jesus displayed. Not every gift from God is for your indulgence.
- Fight for unity not uniformity under Christ. Unity isn't the absence of conflict, it's the presence of a reconciling spirit.
- Admit you don't have all the answers or skills to fully represent God. With humility embrace Christian community.

Next Steps Cards:

Write our where you are weak.

Write out what you feel the Holy Spirit asking you to do about this awareness.

References:

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