



Leader Guide
Sunday, January 27, 2019

Growing in Community

Sermon Text: Ephesians 4:1-16

Study Texts: Philippians 3:12-16

Sermon Recap: Having developed the idea that the salvation of sinners is God's work, and that through the gospel, men and women are eternally joined together in the people of God, Paul now turns his attention to our lives inside the community of God. In Ephesians 4:1-16, Paul expounds this idea: The entire Body of Christ functions together for the growth of the body. We see that, through the gospel, each member of God's Church is gifted in such a way as to build up the body itself. And, we come away with the realization that it takes each of us functioning together to carry out the work of the Church. There are no spectator seats in the gospel community of God; we have each been called to a vocation in the gospel community of God.

Sermon Connection: In Philippians 3:12-16, Paul is calling each member of the gospel community to take up their role and work within the community because of the work accomplished for us in Jesus. Paul begins by reminding us that our present standing and future hope all rest on Jesus. Indeed, Paul says quite clearly that his motivation for faithfulness is Jesus' work on his behalf. *"...but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His Own."* So then, as we consider the necessity of our role in the gospel community, it must always be within the context of being *in Christ together*.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see that our understanding of and our attitude within gospel community come from Jesus Himself

Lesson Points:

Point 1: The Foundation of Our Community Membership (vv. 12-14)

Point 2: Our Conduct within Gospel Community (vv.14-16)

The Context: In this section of the letter, Paul has been reflecting on how the gospel has reoriented his life. No longer is he focused on his religious achievement and standing. On the contrary, he sees all these things as loss because they have distracted him from true

holiness. By God's grace, Paul is entirely cross-centered, and he is calling the Christian community to be of the same mind.

Point 1 - The Foundation of Our Community Membership (vv. 12-14)

- To what is Paul referring in v. 12 when he says, "*Not that I have already obtained this...*"?
- How does this give him hope and confidence to live a life of bold faith?
- Where does Paul say our membership in the community of God comes from? Why is this important as continue to think about being *in Christ together*?
- In v. 13, Paul writes, "*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own...*" What does such an attitude and mindset teach us about how to think about our salvation and the salvation of our brothers and sisters?
- What does Paul say is the right response to a correct understanding of our membership in God's community?

Because God has saved us, and because He has saved and called us together, we see that a right response to this salvation is a vigorous life of faith. Paul says, "*...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead...*" These are action statements. Paul knows that nothing in his past will keep him from a life of faith, and he knows that now and forever is the right time for strong, vigorous faith. He goes on, "*...I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" What a promise! What a goal! Paul says that we press on together because of the goal of the resurrection...the upward call of God in Christ.

Transition Statement: Knowing that our membership in gospel community rests fully on what Christ has done, it follows that a certain lifestyle is expected...

Point 2 - Our Conduct within Gospel Community (vv. 14-16)

What does v. 14 teach us about the conduct and activity of a gospel community?

God's community has a distinct nature and practice. It is to be filled with men and women, boys and girls who know and cherish Jesus Christ. Such an attitude is the only proper attitude of the redeemed. Paul says that for those who love and cherish Jesus, there should be a distinct pattern of living, a distinct way of life. We should be a people who live on mission with God and for God. Because we know that we hold the power of the resurrection through Jesus, we are to live bold lives of faith for the sake of God's glory in the world.

How is this distinct way of living related to/rooted in vv. 12-14?

For us to believe in the mission of God and for us to embrace the call to live missionally in the world, we have to truly believe and hold to the truths of vv. 12-14. Paul's words, "*...because Christ Jesus has made me His Own...*" cannot merely be something we agree with in our minds. Such truths must infuse our hearts and lives if we are to live missionally for the sake of God's glory in the world. Do we believe that Christ has made us His Own? Are we truly

forsaking the world and radically living unto God alone? Are we *straining* toward God and holiness? Are we being bold for God?

What does v. 15 teach us about Christian maturity and what Paul is saying?

Quite plainly, Paul says that mature Christians think the way he does. This is not a prideful statement as much as it is a statement of grace. God intends for us to live a certain way, and through Paul, He is telling us what Christian maturity looks like. In the world, people define maturity differently but not so in the Church. God shows us what it means to be a mature Christian: It means to hold God as the center of all things, to believe and cherish that gospel in our lives, to live our life as an act of worship before God, and it means to go with the gospel and to honor and love God with our whole heart and life. This is mature Christian thinking.

How should mature Christians interact with immature Christians within gospel community?

Graciously and with much kindness and long-suffering. Immaturity is often a source of conflict within any community. And it is when we allow human conflict to rise up and take hold of us that gospel community is disrupted. Is immaturity worth conflict and fighting? Often it is not. Paul is calling each us to mature Christian thinking and living, which is cross-centered in every way. Those who are mature in Christ forget what lies behind and strain forward toward the call of God in Christ.

Group Reflection Activity

- Have someone from the group read Acts 2:42-47 again, and pray over the text for your group.
- Discuss the nature and purpose of the following activities in the life of growth group.
 - Bible Study
 - Confession and Repentance
 - Worship
 - Prayer
 - Hospitality and Meals
 - Spiritual Gifts
 - Mission

Application Questions

- What would it be like for you to live in such a community?
- What must change in your heart and mind for such community to take place?
- What daily activities must change or be altered?
- What must change in how you view your life?
- Are these changes worth it to you? Why or why not?

