

Ephesians 4:1-16**“The Already/Not Yet Community”**

Imago Dei Church | 1/5/20 | 2 Services | Sunday AM

INTRODUCTION

This is the 2nd of 3 weeks in which we’re focusing on these 3 core values we have as a church: GOSPEL—COMMUNITY—MISSION.

So this week, we’re looking at COMMUNITY, and we’ll do so from the passage that was just read.

But I’d like us to understand this text in light of what Paul has been doing in this little letter to the Ephesian Christians.

Ephesians 1-2:10 — articulating the gospel that has saved the Ephesian believers.

2nd half of ch. 2 — shows how that gospel brings both Jews and Gentiles into right relationship with God and therefore into the same family:

Ephesians 2:14:

[14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...

Ch. 3 — it was actually God's purpose in forming this new combined people to declare to the "rulers and authorities" (3:10) God's own wisdom:

Ephesians 3:10:

[10] ... through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

So part of the glory of God in the gospel is how it creates a single, united people that declares God's wisdom and grace.

AND YET...

As we get into chapter 4 we see that the divine reality—that the gospel creates this unified people—does not automatically produce a lived reality in the life of God's people.

In other words, like so much of the Christian life, the Christian community exists in a tension of "already & not yet." We are already fully accepted by God as individuals and fully unified together in Christ. But as we live here and now, we still struggle with sin, and that means we don't fully look like what we have been declared to be and called to be.

That’s why Paul open’s up chapter 4 by saying, “**I...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.**”

The Ephesians had received the gospel. And that gospel HAD formed a new community. But they had NOT YET actually been fully transformed so that their community reflected the gospel that made them.

Now, before we get farther into the text I want to go ahead and show how this text speaks to each of us (3 groups).

1. **Unbeliever** —

- a. Created for community.
- b. Promise of the gospel (new life & new community)
- c. The church — imperfect foretaste of a future perfect community of people, all rescued by God’s amazing grace.
- d. As we look at this text, let it point not just to the imperfect community that is held out to you, but to the perfect Savior who forms it—Jesus Christ.

2. Christian (regular attender) —

- a. Local church — imperfect, but indispensable
- b. There are some things that the gospel is doing in us that can ONLY be done in the context of the local church.
- c. Church membership — not to be exclusive or to be controlling. It's to take seriously the reality that the gospel is a community forming force.
- d. To receive the grace of Christ in the gospel but reject the grace of Christ in his church is both inconsistent and dangerous.
- e. So as we study this text, ask yourself how you could possibly follow the Lord and still keep his people at arm's length. Ask, What keeps you from giving yourself to the imperfect but gospel-formed community we call the local church?

3. IDC members (and members of other churches)

- a. The gospel has formed a community. That's a fact. It's the "already." But we have "not yet" fully been transformed. We don't look like we ought to or one day will.
- b. Don't get discouraged / give up
- c. Don't hold back

4 Commitments of the Already/Not Yet Community

1. WE WILL CULTIVATE GOSPEL COMMUNITY THROUGH OUR ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER. (1-3)

[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The first few verses of this chapter show us that growing into the community Christ has called us to be will not happen primarily through the extraordinary and exceptional moments but in the mundane and everyday posture and ethic we maintain towards our brothers and sisters.

These virtues are not difficult to understand. But they are terribly hard to possess.

(ILL: Talking with a professional athlete about how to do their sport)

Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with, love.

“Maintain” — this is our default, ongoing posture;

Community is not formed primarily in the extraordinary moments but in maintaining Christ-like character towards one another.

2. WE WILL GROUND GOSPEL COMMUNITY IN OUR COMMON CONFESSION. (4-6)

[4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over **all** and through **all** and in **all**.

“ground” = source, foundation

ONE = focused on the one true God and his one true gospel

ALL = we don’t get to pick and choose our preferred unifiers

3. WE WILL MAXIMIZE GOSPEL COMMUNITY AS WE RECEIVE AND USE CHRIST'S DIVERSE GIFTS. (7-12)

[7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. [8] Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

[9] (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [10] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) [11] 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,

Refers to Ps. 68:18 (a victory Psalm), in which the conquering King distributes gifts to his subjects. Christ is the conquering king—who descended from his throne to the earth, completed his victory, and ascended back to his throne. As he does so, he distributes gifts to his people.

What can we say about these gifts:

Grace (7)

Each (7)

Varied (7) — Unity is adorned by diversity; Diversity finds its source in the one true Lord

Meant to build the body up (12; 16?)

Some have leadership gifts (11)

All have ministry responsibility (12)

4. WE WILL REALIZE GOSPEL COMMUNITY AS WE PURSUE MATURITY TOGETHER. (13-16)

[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.

Intentional/purposeful!

All gifts (16)

All members (13, 16)

All maturity

Unity (13) | Knowledge of Christ (13) | Character of Christ (13) | Right doctrine (14) | Growth (16) | Love (16)

CONCLUSION

The Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation. It can't be. The gospel is *inherently* and *necessarily* a community-forming force. That's what God has done.

We do not yet reflect that reality—either the church as a whole or in this local body.

But consider this: Christ knew we would be an imperfect people when he died for us, called us, formed us.

The grace that works in us to form us into his image is not a different grace. It's the continuation of his same saving work.

May we, by grace, learn to walk together in a manner worthy of the grace we have received.

[PRAY]