

The Victorious Jesus and His Gifts for a Victorious Church Part 2

2/12/22

Message 14

Ephesians 4:7–16 (CSB)

⁷Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸For it says:

**When he ascended on high,
he took the captives captive;
he gave gifts to people.**

⁹But what does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things. ¹¹And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. ¹⁴Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.

[Introduction. The Victorious Jesus gives gifts to His people.](#)

A. At Jesus' ascension, Jesus sits on the throne of Heaven at the right hand of the Father.

1. In celebration or commemoration, Jesus gives gifts.
2. The gifts Paul mention are different than what I would expect.

a. What Paul mentions are five gifts to the Church to ensure the Church will not falter or fail in her ministry

b. These are not the only gifts Jesus gives.

c. Paul mentions gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

3. But Paul thought these were the gifts the believers in Ephesus needed to know about.

B. Paul, however, does not describe them in detail.

1. He assumes the congregation will be familiar with them because they have seen them in action.

2. The best way to understand the gifts of Ephesians 4 are to see them for yourself.

1. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Oh, MY.

A. The order of these gifts is not necessarily in the order of importance, but they do seem to be in the order of scarcity.

1. There are many more teachers than there are people serving as pastors.

2. There are more pastors than those serving as evangelists.

3. There are fewer true prophets than evangelists.

4. And fewer still true apostles.

5. Just because a gifting is rare, or abused, does not mean that we may conclude they do not exist.

B. **Apostles:** The word "apostle" means one sent as a messenger.

1. The role of apostle is unique in the New Testament.

a. The first apostles saw and knew Jesus personally.

b. They also had an important function of starting new works in dark places.

c. Wherever the Apostle Paul went, he planted churches leading people to Jesus, casting out demons, and healing the sick.

d. Apostles also suffered greatly for their work.

1. Paul, in the letter of 2 Corinthians, defends his Apostleship by appealing to both his success and his suffering.

2. Apostles went to the hardest and darkest places, telling them about Jesus.

e. But are apostles still for today?

2. I'm going to disagree with most of my commentaries and bible studies by saying that I do believe there are modern- day apostles.

a. Modern day apostles look different than what we see in the NT but the function is still there, and I don't believe God has rescinded this gift to the church.

b. I do not see evidence that there are a lot of apostles today, because there were not many in Paul's day either.

c. But isn't God still calling people to go into the darkest, hardest places and make Jesus known with signs and wonders following?

3. Beware of people who demand to be called "apostle."

a. A general rule of thumb: Beware of people who demand to be called by titles.

b. Let their calling be confirmed by the saints and by the presence of God upon their lives.

c. Watch them and weigh their work.

d. And if someone insists on being called "apostle" or "prophet," be careful.

e. And read 2 Corinthians.

C. **Prophets:** Revealers and Keepers of Covenant.

A. The role of the prophet in the OT was to declare God's word to the people and to enact the covenant.

1. When Israel acted sinfully, a prophet would call out their sin, give them a chance for repentance, and then tell of the upcoming consequences.
2. Prophets were messengers of God's will to the nations and leaders.

B. In the New Testament, the role of the prophet is a little different.

1. Prophets "stand out clearly from the New Testament as people of inspired utterance, whose ministry of the word was of the utmost importance for the young church. On occasion they might foretell the future, as in Acts 11:28 and 21:9, 11, but like the Old Testament prophets their great work was to 'forth-tell' the word of God. This might be in bringing to light with convicting power people's sins (1 Cor. 14:24–25), or in bringing new strength to the church by the word of exhortation."¹

2. New Testament prophets primarily function to reveal God, His Word, and His will to the people.

- a. A prophet might confront a spiritual leader over secret sin.
- b. A prophet could confirm God's will for your life.
- c. A prophet may also help interpret a situation by revealing the spiritual environment.

3. There is a lot of crazy stuff happening that people label "prophetic."

- a. But don't dismiss this gift to the Church just because some people are weird or wrong.

¹ Foulkes, Francis. 1989. [*Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#). Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

b. God does still call people to the ministry of revealing.

D. **Evangelist:** Ministers to the lost, outside the church.

A. The real heart of an evangelist is to minister to people who are apart from Jesus and the Church.

1. It is not someone who travels from church to church.

2. That's an important ministry, but the gifting of evangelist is to tell others about Jesus.

3. Someone like a Billy Graham, Luis Palau, or Reinhard Bonnke were great evangelists who spoke to millions and saw them come to Jesus.

a. Their pulpits were rarely ever in a comfortable church.

b. Instead, they preached in coliseums, stadiums, large tents or open fields.

c. The greatest evangelist America never talked about was Reinhard Bonnke. His last crusade in Africa in 2017 saw 1.7 million people attend in 5 days.² **PICTURE**

B. Evangelists are gifted at introducing those outside the body of Christ to Christ and then connecting them to a local church.

1. Pastors and teachers are ministers inside the church.

2. If you think in terms of Emergency Medical Services, Evangelists are the paramedics and EMTs that stabilize and transport, doing what needs to be done where the people are.

3. Pastors are the personnel in the hospital.

a. BOTH roles are necessary.

² <https://renewaljournal.wordpress.com/2017/03/30/reinhard-bonnkes-final-crusade-in-africa/>

b. BOTH roles overlap.

c. The arena evangelists work in looks different than the pastor.

C. Some in this room are evangelists.

1. I know this, because you always have new people with you.

2. You are constantly having conversations with lost people, sharing love and hope, answering questions and inviting to journey with you.

3. Healthy churches HAVE TO HAVE evangelists.

E. **Pastor/Teacher:** If you have ever been in a church, you have witnessed the gifts of pastors and teachers.

1. I believe these gifts are distinct.

a. Yes, pastors do teach, and teachers do shepherd/pastor people.

b. But just because someone teaches, it does not mean they have the heart of a pastor.

2. A big difference between pastoring and teaching is the weight burden/anointing. Let me describe this a bit:

a. 3:40 am Monday morning found me awake. Upon my heart was the same thing that was on my heart when I went to sleep: YOU!

1. By name.

2. On Purpose.

b. What keeps me up at night, what keeps me going and striving, are not buildings or projects or missions.

c. For all my education and my love for teaching, I am not captivated by subjects, ideas, theory, or information.

- d. The Lord has given me a heart for you.
- e. When I go on vacation, I take you with me.
- f. The moment my car turns back towards Licking, I feel the weight of this community and her lostness and potential.
- g. The Lord reminded me early Monday morning that these feelings are not problems to overcome but a sign of the gifting as a pastor, and that is what it means to be a gift to the Church.
- h. Julie shares calling and weight with me.
 - 1. The majority of our conversations in our home are not about our own families but yours.
 - 2. What saddens Julie and I most about this season we are in is that we look over this congregation and we DON'T know everyone here.
 - 3. Our Sunday afternoon conversation involves her and I going over who wasn't at church and wondering if they are ok.

G. "What does the exalted Christ give to the Church? He gives people, these particular people who proclaim the word and lead."³

- 1. Of all the distinctions between these gifts, they all are involved with proclaiming the word and leading.
- 2. According to Ephesians 4, they all assist in fulfilling God's plan and purpose.
- 3. It seems from Scripture that the Church needs all the gifts in the right proportions.

³ Lincoln, Andrew T. 1990. *Ephesians*. Vol. 42. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

2. What kind of gifts are these?

Ephesians 4:11–16 (CSB)

¹¹And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into **maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness**. ¹⁴Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.

A. Gifts of edification.

1. I almost didn't use that word because we don't use it much.
2. But it's an appropriate word, so let me define it.
 - a. To edify is "To instruct or improve someone."
 - b. These gifts are to equip the saints for ministry.
 - c. Even though these gifts interact with the world and the lost, they are gifts to the church "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry."
3. Jesus gave the command: Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Matt 28:18-10
 - a. Jesus told His followers to lay hands upon the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead.
 - b. Jesus gave the saints the gifts of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to equip the Church to do what He has asked.
4. The ministry isn't for a select few but for all the saints.

B. Gifts of Growth.

Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)

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,

1. Christ gives these “gifts” to build up the body, “growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”
 - a. The ESV says “to mature manhood.”
 - b. This is in contrast to verse 14, “no longer be children.”
2. You do not begin this Christian life as a fully mature believer.
 - a. Maturity takes time and intentionality.
 - b. As we intentionally sit under the ministry of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, we embrace a process that results in Christian maturity.
3. We ALL need help in our maturity.
 - a. Because the goal is not to be bigger or better than each other but to measure up to Christ’s fullness.
 - b. That’s why we need people gifted in drawing our eyes to Jesus.
 - c. Our standard is Jesus, no one else.

C. Gifts of protection. Vs. 14

1. When the gifts are in proper order, they will protect believers from false doctrine and deceit.
2. Just as children are prone to believe in fairytales, monsters under their beds, and other wrong ideas, maturing believers need others to guide them through the confusion caused by “every wind of teaching.”
3. Just because something is convincing, it doesn’t mean it is true.

4. True Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers bring clarity, not confusion.

D. Gifts of Unity.

1. Paul uses a verb here: "reach unity in the faith."
 - a. The Greek is a word used to describe arriving at a destination.
 - b. Unity in the faith and knowledge of God's Son is the destination.
 - c. Unity is not peace at any cost: unity is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to bring disparate pieces into a beautiful whole.
 - d. **The Holy Spirit is making us into the Bride of Christ, not the Bride of Frankenstein.**
2. This is where many of us fail.
 - a. Unity is a supernatural work, not a natural one.
 - b. The first thing out of Adam's mouth after giving in to sin was division: It was THIS woman YOU GAVE ME.
 - c. If left to ourselves, we trend toward chaos and disfunction and not unity.
 - d. But with the Gifts that Jesus has given and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, unity is possible.

Closing: Growing into the Likeness of Christ.

A. Growing up involves the work of the Holy Spirit forming our born-again spirits into the likeness of Christ.⁴

1. This morning, I want to lead this congregation in a time of prayer.

⁴ Eugene H. Peterson. Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ (Kindle Location 65). Kindle Edition.

2. It's always appropriate to pray for healing, for your family, for provision and all those things.

B. Today, I want to lead us in a time of prayer that declares, "I want to be like Jesus!"

1. Many of us in this room are ready to draw closer to Jesus.
2. We are ready to be free from the sin that so easily entangles and want to walk in the Freedom of the Spirit.
3. We want our lives to reflect Jesus!

C. The Good News is that Jesus has already done the impossible part.

1. He has already provided forgiveness.
2. He has already conquered the very powers that hold you captive.
3. He has already sent His Spirit to dwell in you.
4. Our part is to place our will and desires under the headship of Jesus.

Today, we pray: Jesus, I want to be like you!