

Title: This is your mission
Text: Ephesians 4.11-16
Theme: The mission of every member
Occasion: Celebration Sunday, January 12, 2020
Prop Stmtnt: Every member has a mission from Christ.

Read Text:

For 18 years, our country has been fighting a war in Afghanistan. This is the longest war that we have been engaged with in the history of our country. The question is: why? Why are we there? What is the objective? How do we know what success is? What difference does it make? There are not clear and obvious answers to those questions. Our military is impressive in many ways, but an impressive military does not make up for a foggy and confusing mission. In the end, what good is all of the efficiency, discipline and really powerful equipment? Without a clear, compelling, and convictional overriding mission, then other missions are substituted, some better than others. It can be the mission of, let's get everyone home safe. It can be, I just want to make the next rank, or say I did a deployment.

For our church, we face a similar danger. We are always in danger of losing sight of our mission. But, here is the difference and it is a big one. We know the mission. We know the objective. We know the goal and we know what we are called to do in order to pursue and accomplish that mission. Not only is that true, but we also know that the mission will succeed. The mission of the church is the greatest mission ever because it is the mission of the King, the Death-Killer, Jesus.

The mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ all over the world so that people from every tribe, language and nation trust in Jesus Christ as their King and Savior and become his people, part of his kingdom, where they will enjoy him and each other forever and ever. We exist to make disciples who make disciples. The gospel is the good news that even though we rebelled against God and are deserving of his just and righteous punishment for our rebellion, God sent his own Son, Jesus to live the life that we could not live and die the death that we could not die and in so doing, he paid in full for all of the sins that I have committed and will ever commit. And by trusting in only Jesus, I am forgiven of my sin, declared righteous in the eyes of God, adopted and placed into his family and am guaranteed eternal life with him.

Each local church is not just a proclamation point. Each local church is a community of believers who have believed the gospel and who are helping one another look more and more like Jesus as we anticipate his return and our lives together with him forever and ever. Each member of the local church has a mission to fulfill in order that that church will fulfill its mission. This morning, I want to remind you, of what your mission is. I am preaching from Ephesians 4. This chapter begins with a transition from doctrine to application. Verses 11-16 are one long sentence in the original letter. The church is the gospel displayed. The gospel (chapters 1-3) is displayed in our lives when we carry out our mission.

Your mission is:

- I. **To be trained for ministry.** (12a)

Look at v.11. What do you see? Christ gave all of these leaders. The leaders are the gifts that Christ gives and Christ gives them to what? To whom? He gives them to the church. And why does he give them to the church? Why do we have pastors and teachers, elders and preachers? They are given by Christ to the church to (v.12) equip you (the saints) for the work of the ministry.

My job as a leader is to train you so that you will serve others in this church well and so that you will share the gospel with others outside of the church. Every member of this church is to be involved at some level in the lives of others in this church. What does that look for you? In order to train you for ministry, I have to convince you first that you are called to be engaged in ministry to one another. Serving others is going to look like caring for the needs of one another, praying with one another, discipling one another, reading the bible with one another, listening to one another, counseling one another, encouraging one another, warning, if need be, one another, it may be for some serving in the nursery, children's ministry, funeral dinner team, music, café, greeters, ushers, (some of these are a bit more organized and specific), but even the organized and specific ministries work best when the people involved in them see and pursue the heart of ministry. When you are greeting, you are participating in the discipling ministry of this church by encouraging, embracing, praying for and sometimes with people who are coming in. When you are ushering, you are loving others, you are serving others, you are assisting others, you are valuing others, you giving attention to others, you are welcoming others. Ministry in the church is not slots to fill, it is representing our King as we love his people. My mission as one of the leaders is to equip you for ministry. Your mission is to be equipped. Your mission is pursue that equipping and take advantage of the many ways that we provide for you to be trained so that you can serve.

How are you being equipped for ministry? Do you think of yourself as one involved in the ministry of your church? Jesus does. How are you intentionally, actively, faithfully pursuing training so that you can serve your family in this church? This is your mission.

If only 40% of the members of the church are actively caring for one another, then, I have/we have a long way to go. The mission to be equipped has a purpose. That purpose is...

II. **To build up the church.** (12b-13)

Your mission to be equipped is tied into and supports THE mission. The church is to grow in looking more like Jesus. The building of the church is not referring to the building, it is not referring to the size of the organization. It is referring to the spiritual health of the members.

You are to be equipped so that you can help others to grow in the faith (13a). Look around you. Do you see people who are discouraged? Do you see people who are struggling with loneliness, depression, anxiety, addictions, and insecurity? Do you love them? Do you want to see them learn how to address these issues? YES! Those things that I mentioned, isolate people and make them think that they are all alone, they don't matter, they will never change, no one cares, and God has forgotten about them. I don't want you to be intimidated by this or over complicate this.

Your mission to be equipped in order to build up the church has way more to do with loving others than it does having some technical expertise, or certification.

You know that as people around you address those issues, as they allow others to help them address those issues they will be more and more connected to the body and therefore, realize just how much they are connected to Jesus. Your love for them will help them see the love of God for them. As you use God's Word to help others, the Word will help them attain unity in the faith (13a) and as we attain unity, not only in our mutual understanding, but in our mutual following of God's Word, then together we will look more and more like Jesus (13b). This is your mission. You are to help build up the church by helping one another attain to, pursue the unity of the faith and the unity of the knowing and experiencing life with Jesus.

This week, a lady in our church who does not drive, needed transportation to a doctor's appointment. Now, hold that for a second. You are very good at voicing your opposition to the evils of abortion. When there are petitions to sign, you are faithful to do that because you value the life of the unborn. We do value the life of the unborn AND we value the life of the born. The unborn cannot defend or care for themselves and some who are born are also in a vulnerable situation. When this need (transportation to the doctor's appointment) was made known, a couple in our church took care of it. Their decision to love, enlarged their heart. Their act of love, enlarged her heart. Their loving of her and her receiving of that love and loving in return, helps them love more and look more like Jesus. Our mission is to learn about Jesus and to follow him and as we do that, we will have a grown-up faith. This is our mission:

III. **To have a grown-up faith that cannot be shaken.** (14)

Being childish means to care only about yourself. Being childish means to think primarily, even exclusively about yourself. When you are a child and your family goes on vacation, you are basically along for the ride and you want everything to be done for you. But, when you are the parent and your family goes on vacation, you have to think about everyone else. You have to make sure there is food for everyone, transportation, money, accommodations and clothing. For kids, all of those things just happen. A childish believer, a childish church is marked by a lot of complaining, a lot of pouting, a lack of spiritual depth, and a vulnerability to false doctrine because it tells me what I want to hear. But, your mission is to grow up! Your mission is to not think that life is all about you. As you love others and challenge others to love others even as I am challenging you this morning, then we will have a faith that is growing up. How grown-up is your faith? What are you doing to help others have a grown-up faith? One of the evidences of a grown-up faith is your involvement in helping others have a grown-up faith. A grown-up faith cannot be shaken and we need an unshakeable grown-up faith in order to carry out our mission because our mission is:

IV. **To help one another in every way.** (15)

In order for our church to be mature and to fulfill her mission, you need to be mature because you are needed to speak the truth in love. In order to speak the truth, you need to know the truth and in order to speak the truth in love, you need to love. You know how this works. When someone is close to you and cares for you and has invested themselves in your life, you tend to

trust that person, right? Well the truth is, you need people in your life whom you can trust because you need people who will tell you the truth because you don't know your own heart and you can't see your blind spots. If you need to speak the truth in love (and that is for all of us), then that means all of us need to listen to the truth in humility.

This is what a mature believer does and this is what a grown-up church does. We are willing to have meaningful conversations even about difficult issues because we need to help one another love Jesus better and look more like him. It is hard to hear about my own weaknesses and needs, but I need to hear them so that I will rely more deeply on Christ. Relying on Jesus more is what growing up in every way into him, looks like. He is the head. It is from him that the entire body is joined together and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part (that is you, that is me) when each part makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

We won't grow as we should without you doing your part. You won't grow as you should without others doing their part. Church like that is not natural. Church like that is supernatural. Beloved, every congregation has a choice. We can be a bag of marbles who simply bounce off one another when we happen to collide, leaving the other completely unchanged. Or we can be a bag of grapes. After time, the skins wear off, and each part slowly becomes part of the whole, until you can't tell where one grape begins or ends, where everyone is part of the stuff, where we all affect one another because we love one another and are committed to helping each other get home before its dark, meaning get home to heaven safely.

This is your mission. Will you renew your commitment to it?