

THE CHURCH: ITS PEOPLE AND ITS COMMUNITY – Christ’s Church

The Christian Faith is not something lived out in isolation but in the context of the Church. Redeemer is both an organization of people and a living organism or community called the body of Christ. For this reason, we value the People or the Church- her men, women and children. Each of God’s people are uniquely blessed and called to exercise their gifts for the common good of the Church. Our service to others is not based on a guilt-motivation, but comes from the ‘overflow’ of knowing Christ and his ministry to us. We seek to help our membership identify and utilize their gifts so that all believers are ‘equipped’ to do the work of ministry.

Ephesians 4.4-5 – ‘There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in all.

Read Ephesians 4.1-16

Context & Meaning

The Church is the body of Christ, the people for whom Christ gave his life. From this seemingly simple statement we see the value, importance, and even necessity of Jesus’ Church. And yet, in our day it has become commonplace to believe that the Church isn’t a vital aspect to the Christian life. In other words, many who claim Christ don’t believe they need the Church in order to live fully or to grow in Godly maturity. And yet, according to this passage, nothing could be further from the truth. The vision that is held out before us in Ephesians 4.1-16 is a vision of life where the Church is fundamental to every Christian’s growth in Christ-likeness. It’s a vision of life where each and every Christian needs the Church and is to be a part of the Church. Without her, spiritual development in the Christian life will be stilted, out of proportion, and defective.

The Church of Jesus Christ is necessary because the Church is the place where God’s amazing grace is active and reigning. It’s the place where God meets our deepest need for connection, for relationship – ultimately concerning our relationship with him but also and certainly, concerning our relationship with other followers of Jesus. As Paul makes clear in verse 3, the Church is the place where Spirit-given unity is present – unity and peace with God, but also unity with other believers. This is what Paul refers to when he writes, ‘There is one body and one Spirit...one hope, one Lord etc’...

The Church is also the place where Christ through his Spirit has lavished or poured out his gracious Spiritual gifts. Put simply, the Church is the place where the grace of God is spread as individual members of the Church exercise their Spiritual gifts for the sake of others in the body of Christ. Paul envisions the Church growing up in Jesus, the Head of the Church, as each individual member of Christ’s body exercises their gifts properly, that is, when they exercise their gifts according to the truth of the gospel and in love for the other. Conversely, however, Paul warns his hearers that when Christians misuse their Spiritual gifts selfishly or even neglect them entirely, then the Church will not grow properly, but will rather remain in a state of immaturity.

Apply To say that you don't need the Church is as crazy as saying that a child doesn't need his or her parents, or that a baby doesn't need his mother's milk. Why? Because the Church is the place where the gracious benefits of Christ and his work flow into us, his people. It's impossible to progress in the Christian life apart from Christ's community. For within her you are strengthened and nurtured in the life-giving context provided by the One who defeated death.

For Reflection and Discussion – Christ's Church (Ephesians 4.1-16)

1. Do you think Christians need the community of believers? Why or why not? Answer this question in light of Ephesians 4.16 and the following quote:

There can be no maturity in the spiritual life, no obedience in following Jesus, no wholeness in the Christian life apart from an immersion and embrace of community. I am not myself by myself. Community, not the highly vaunted individualism of our culture, is the setting in which Christ is at play – Eugene Peterson

2. What hinders you from embracing and immersing yourself in the community of Christ?
3. How much of our culture's emphasis on individualism has affected/infected your involvement in community?
4. How have you been matured in Christ-likeness through Redeemer Church and through this community group?
5. What does it look like to 'speak the truth in love' to others in Christ's community? Have you ever had to do this? What was the result?
6. Are you using the gifts Christ has given you for the build up of his body? If not, why not?

Prayer *Lord Jesus, thank You that You have given Your church gifts so that we might be built up in love. Forgive me for not using the gift you given me to this end and may I, through your grace, begin to use my gifting for the benefit of Your Church. Amen.*