

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4

“7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.” 9 (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;...”

“The Gift of Evangelists”

Last week we began to work our way through the list of what has been given to equip and edify us as Saints in Christ’s Church.

- Each is important but they are all united in bringing Glory to Christ through His Bride the Church.

“11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry,...”

I could not squeeze them all into one message, so after studying the Apostles and Prophets we will now consider the evangelist, and Lord willing next week turn to pastors and teachers...

As we continue to study them we must not forget the rest of the text which clearly tells us what those gifts are to be used for [*and also part of Paul’s long sentence!*]:

“12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

- There are some big challenges there and that is why the Spirit has given such gifts to the Church.

We must also remember that this is not an exhaustive list but rather an illustrative one. As I mentioned last week, the office of deacon is not mentioned and yet we know that this is another gift to the Church given to us by God.

So the Apostle Paul says next that the Spirit gives some to be evangelists: Now as we consider what this means are we to look at an evangelist like we did the Apostles and Prophets as a part of the foundation of the Church and not something we find today?

- Well that would take a lot of pressure off of us, but I think that would be a hard argument to make from the Scriptures as I trust we will see this morning.
- We have several examples to consider from the Scriptures and it would appear that we now have a gift or callings that continues down to our day.

Perhaps the most famous evangelist is Phillip who was one of the Deacons selected to assist the Apostles in the Jerusalem Church.

We know this from the reference made of him in Acts 21:8 “Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.”

Earlier in Acts we find Phillip being a busy evangelist after the Church was scattered because of the persecutions that followed the death of Stephen.

Acts 8: “At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea & Samaria, except the apostles... 4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. *[that should give us a BIG hint about the work of evangelism AND a reminder that God often uses what we think are troubled times to accomplish His glorious purposes]* 5 Then Philip went down to [the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did... 8 And there was great joy in that city.”

As we saw in our study of this important book, the Disciples are following the command of Jesus to be His witnesses in Jerusalem & Judea, in Samaria & then to the ends of the earth. We see clearly in the life and ministry of Phillip that we are to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the Lord’s work!

Continuing in Acts 8 we read:

26 “Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

There Phillip sees the Ethiopian Eunuch and 29 Then the Spirit said to Phillip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.” 30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” 31 And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?”

Phillip rides along as this man continues reading from Isaiah which leads to another question for Phillip: 34 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. *[another reminder of the importance of the Old Testament because Phillip could share the Gospel from there including the importance of being baptized!]* 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” 37 Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

After this man is baptized, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”

- **So now we face the tough question: Is the Spirit still giving us the gift of the evangelist today, and if so what does that mean?**

In Phillip we saw an evangelist who was also a deacon, and when we come to the Apostle’s instructions to young Timothy, we find that pastors are to be evangelists!

2 Timothy 4:5 “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

- **Now next week we come to pastors and teachers, so do we think that is where the gift of evangelism should reside?**

Sadly, there are many who would like that to be the case so all we have to do is invite folks to church and let the Pastor & Teachers get them saved!

When we consider what is taught in Romans 10 and how the heart of Jesus is related to us in the Gospels, I think this is not how things should be!

We are living in the time where the Gospel message goes to the ends of the earth as Jesus commanded and so we should hear what Paul shares...

Romans 10: ““The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!””

Now this concept of God’s people being witnesses would have been familiar to those who knew their OT:

Isaiah 43: “But now, thus says Jehovah, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.”

And we find this at verse 10: “You are My witnesses,” says Jehovah, “And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me. 11 I, even I, am Jehovah [the Great I AM], And besides Me there is no savior. 12 I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, And there was no foreign god among you; Therefore you are My witnesses,” Says Jehovah, “that I am God. 13 Indeed before the day was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?””

We see this carried on in the New Testament as Jesus sends out His disciples to be His witnesses, but also a broader group of men...

Luke 10: “10 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. 2 Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.””

➤ So are these laborers we are to pray for to be only Pastor & teachers? I think not!

We see even a bit more of the heart of Jesus in another similar account and it sure appears that His desire for laborers is pretty broad...

Matthew 9: “35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.””

There are two very important lessons to learn from those accounts along with the Apostle Paul’s admonition in Romans 10:

- Jesus wants us to be His witnesses which is the work of an evangelist!
- AND as we move through this world we must have the heart of Jesus who was moved with compassion for those who were lost.

Not just for those who are obviously sick, but for the multitudes, even if they put on a good show!

We can each do our part, and it does not mean that we will all be gifted evangelists like Phillip or a Franklin Graham today. *[relate the story of Don Blythe]*

We are to be thankful for such men and pray for such men!

- **Our children should know the story of men like Hudson Taylor!**

And we should be careful not to put any of these men on a pedestal that we think is too high for any mere mortal to reach. Just as Phillip was a mere man used by the Spirit of God we must remember that even the great missionaries had feet of clay:

Consider this from one of his histories:

“Taylor himself was wracked with doubt: he worried about sending men and women unprotected into the interior; at the same time, he despaired for the millions of Chinese who were dying without the hope of the gospel. *[He obviously had a heart for the lost there in China but also knew the task could not be done in his own strength]*”

In 1865 he wrote in his diary, "For two or three months, intense conflict ... Thought I should lose my mind." A friend invited him to the south coast of England, to Brighton, for a break. And it was there, while walking along the beach, that Taylor's gloom lifted: "There the Lord conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself to God for this service. I told him that all responsibility as to the issues and consequences must rest with him; that as his servant it was mine to obey and to follow him."

And yes, God Almighty was up to the task because thanks in large part to the work of the China Inland Mission that Hudson Taylor established, today there are tens of millions of Christians in China despite massive persecutions.

So how can we be a part of the gift of evangelism? Discipling is an important part of that, especially the training of our children. As we saw in understanding how the Apostles and prophets are with us today, God has given His word to assist as the Great Evangelist! If someone like that Ethiopian eunuch should come to us asking about Jesus we can share with them and perhaps point them to the Gospel of John where John tells us exactly why it was written:

John 20:30 “The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.”

Shortly in our hymn of response we will sing in part, “Christ for the world we sing, the world to Christ we bring, with fervent prayer, the wayward and the lost, by restless passions tossed, Redeemed at countless cost. From dark despair...

With joyful song, the newborn souls whose days reclaimed from error’s ways, inspired with hope and praise to Christ belong.”

- **May we all be the answer to those prayers lifted up that laborers would be sent forth into the harvest that God has prepared!**

Communion Meditation: Genesis 14

“18 And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. 19 Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

**“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**20 And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies for you.”**