

November 10, 2019

"...so that you may know him better..."

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ."

"...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and build itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:11-5:8



What does the term 'church' mean to you? Most of us use that term to refer to a place. For most of us the church is that building up on the hillside on the corner of Washoe and Evergreen. We talk about 'going to church' and stress the importance of doing so.

At the end of the first chapter of this letter to the believers at Ephesus the Apostle writes,

"God has placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything is every way." (1:22-23)

In God's plan the church is the body of Christ, and he is the Head. So, in our context for today, Paul builds on this basic principle when he talks about the structure and purpose of the church, the body of Christ. First he focuses on the structure of the church. The Apostle writes, ***"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers..."*** In practice the modern church views these roles as leadership positions, but that really was not and is not their function in the body of Christ.

An Apostle is literally an eye-witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 1:21-22 Peter leads the remaining Apostles to appoint a replacement for Judas to ***"...become a witness with us of his resurrection."*** A Prophet can be one who foretells the future, but it can also refer to one who speaks for God. An Evangelist is one who preaches and teaches those who are not yet believers. Timothy and Titus are examples of first century evangelists. And finally, Pastors and Teachers are shepherds who train and mature believers.

But those who have filled these roles and fill them today do not 'lead' the church. Jesus, and Jesus alone is the ***"Head"*** of the church which is his body. The Apostle will explain that the function of the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastors/Teachers is ***"...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the***

faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.

The body of Christ needs to function in the world today, just as Christ's physical body functioned in his day. He lived in the world, functioned in the world, taught and healed and raised from the dead in the world. Jesus functioned in the world and his church needs to be doing the same thing.

So, those who are assigned specific tasks in the church are given those tasks to ***"prepare"*** the church for works of service and to build our unity by helping us to mature so that we will be ***"...joined and held together by every supporting ligament..."*** and the proof of our growth will be when ***"...each part does its work."***

Ultimately church is not a place we go. It is who we are. It is the living, functioning body of Christ at work serving in this world. In the body of Christ, the church, each one of us has a function, a part to play, and our maturity as the body of Christ is demonstrated when each one of us ***"...does its work."***

