

## ***Called to Serve Together***

Called to Community – I

April 23, 2017

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism;<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

*<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.<sup>8</sup> This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?<sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)*

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up<sup>13</sup> 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 fullness of Christ.*

Ephesians 4:1-13 (NIV)

Last Sunday we celebrated Easter and the title of my message was “Baptized into Christ Jesus.” Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, for all those who repent of their sinfulness, agree to try and turn from their sinfulness and put their faith in Jesus as the only source of their salvation, they are “baptized into Christ.”

Being “baptized into Christ” involves three things:

1. We are “baptized into Jesus’ death” in several different ways:

- a. We die to ourselves
- b. We die to sin
- c. We die to the law
- d. We die to death

2. We are “baptized into Jesus resurrection.”

*“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Romans 6:5 (NIV)*

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (NIV)*

That is our ultimate hope and God’s ultimate promise for those who have been “baptized into Christ Jesus.”

But there is a third element of being “baptized into Christ Jesus.” Not only are we “baptized into Jesus’ death.” Not only are we “baptized into Jesus’ resurrection” in the life to come. We are baptized into a new life right here and now and we are baptized into the “body of Christ,” otherwise known as the church. Yes, as Christians, God’s people today, God does save us as

individuals, but he doesn't save us for our individual selves. He saves us for the good of the church and for others. The church didn't really become the church until the first day of Pentecost when God sent the promised Holy Spirit and through that Holy Spirit He has empowered us with certain gifts, to be used for building up the church and for serving others.

There are several passages in the New Testament which point to the spiritual gifts that God gives the church – particularly Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. We have looked at these lists before, usually around this time of year as we once again begin the gifts discernment process. But this morning I want to focus on what some today believe to be the primary giftedness, or calling of believers, or “the five-fold ministry” of the church that we find in our passage this morning from Ephesians 4.

The Bible tells us that not only are believers baptized with the Holy Spirit, they are also baptized with fire” (Matthew 3:11). In the Bible, fire often symbolizes the holy presence of God. In his book, Primal Fire, on the Five Fold Ministry of the church, Neil Cole uses the word primal because it means, “original” or “first in importance.” He says that God applies this primal fire to vessels [people] that are both set apart and willing to be used to fulfill His purpose(s) here on earth.

Actually this five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4 has been re-discovered today by many who have been focusing on trying to re-discover the church's mission, and what they have discovered is that the church, particularly in the west, including the United States, has focused mostly on only two of the callings from that list – pastoring or shepherding and teaching. Some have focused on evangelism, but certainly not the majority and certainly not the traditional Mennonite church. Almost none the calling of an apostle or a prophet. Hence, what we have is a very unbalanced church. And it's even worse than that because the two that we have focused on – shepherd and teacher - are mostly for those inside the church, while the other three involve us going outside the church. And then we wonder why we lack unity and maturity and overall there hasn't been much growth, both numerically and spiritually in the church in the United States over recent years. In fact numerically speaking the church in America is shrinking.

You see, many believe that Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus was not just directed to the church at Ephesus but it serves as a manifesto or perhaps even as a constitution for what the church was supposed to be like for all time. If you look back at the very beginning of it, it is addressed not to just leaders, but to all God's people. Some versions say “God's holy people,” while others say, “the saints that faithful in Christ Jesus.” Some of the original manuscripts refer to those in Ephesus, some leave Ephesus out completely. Most believe that this letter of Paul's, otherwise known as Ephesians, was written for all believers in Jesus Christ, for all time.

With that in mind let's go back to the beginning of chapter 4:

*As a “prisoner for the Lord,”* – I said last week that for those who have been “baptized into Christ,” baptized with him into his death on the cross and baptized with him into his resurrection of new life, we are no longer slaves of sin, but slaves of God. Sin is no longer lord, Jesus is Lord! Being a “prisoner of the Lord” is the same idea.

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received....*

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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 fullness of Christ.*  
Ephesians 4:1-13 (NIV)

The five fold ministry found here in Ephesians 4:11 is the five primary callings that God has placed on the lives of believers. Many refer to it as APEST (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd and Teacher). Some prefer to use ASTEP because they don't like being referred to as Pests☺ And shepherd is more appropriate than Pastor because for us today "Pastor" has more meaning for us as a position versus a calling. Lots of people sitting in the pews have the primary calling of a shepherd.

So I invite you to review your hand-out giving a very brief over-view of the five specific ministry callings given to us in Ephesians 4:11. They are taken from a number of sources. They are certainly far from exclusive or even that everyone is in agreement with.

An apostle – one who is sent out by God. Apostles are more the missionaries. The Greek word for apostle and mission basically mean the same, either "sent one" or "to send." Apostles go out to live out God's mission in a particular place and often feel called to a particular people. Peter's calling was to be an apostle to the Jews and Paul an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-10). Apostles don't just go to far away places, they might also go out in their own communities. Many businessmen and entrepreneurs are apostles. Many church planters are apostles. Those who have been very active in the start up of *The Grove* have at least a leaning towards an apostle.

Impulse – Missional, Go!

Spirituality & Character Traits – Adventurous, risk taker

Primary Motivation – How is God working in our community and around the world?

Slogan – Onward & Outward.

Shortcomings – Driven, demanding, insensitive to others, dissatisfied easily,  
often needs to move on to new things.

A Prophet – is one who is driven by a passion for God and for God's will. Prophets hear and speak specific words from God to other people. They learn to equip others to hear God's voice and obey His leading. Prophets call God's people back to God's way and to go out and live out God's will for their lives. They are both guardians of God's covenant with His people and questioners of the status quo.

Impulse – Incarnational, God comes first.

Character Traits – Transcendent & Existential.

Primary Motivation – Is it God's will?

Slogan – Repent and believe.

Shortcomings – Ideological, demanding, short-sighted, simplistic, often see things in black & white.

An Evangelist – is one who is in love with the Good News about Jesus and cannot help but tell other people about it/Him and desires all people to make a commitment and come to Christ.

Impulse – Attractional, Jesus and the Good News comes first.

Spirituality & Character Traits – Relational and Communal.

Primary Motivation – Will this help bring someone to a commitment to Christ?

Slogan – Join the party, especially the heavenly party in the life to come.

Shortcomings – Sometimes very aggressive with salesperson approach, and often forget up what comes after the sale, discipleship.

A Shepherd (Pastor) – is one who cares about the sheep that have been entrusted to him or her. Shepherds are those followers of Jesus who have an overwhelming concern for the continuing care of a specific community. A true shepherd doesn't just point the way but also leads the way.

Impulse – Communal, others come first.

Spirituality & Character Traits – Nurturing & Communal.

Primary Motivation – How will this affect the people and the community?

Slogan – Love one another.

Shortcomings – Obsessive need for harmony, aversion to risk.

A Teacher – one who is concerned about understanding and the application of truth. Christian teachers have a passion for Scripture, understanding God's word, and communicating God's word to others.

Impulse – Instructional, Scriptural truth comes first.

Spirituality & Character Traits - Intellectual & Philosophical

Primary Motivation – How does this line up with Scripture?

Slogan – Take time to read the Bible and know God.

Shortcomings – Demand for ideology and conformity, aversion to risk, sometimes can put the written word over the living Word.

Quickly looking over the list, specifically that of shortcomings, and if it is true that the church in America or Western culture in general has focused almost exclusively on the role of Shepherd and Teacher, do you notice a problem? They both have as one of their shortcomings an "aversion to risk." They both are designed to function mostly for the people that are already in the church and maintaining what already exists.

Hence it becomes very difficult for the church as a whole to reach out, to change, and to adapt to the current culture. Not that the church is supposed to become like the culture, but we are called by God to be the church within the culture. In the world but not like the world. It's those other three roles – Apostle, Prophet and Evangelist that help us with that.

There was only one person who lived out every single one of the five roles perfectly during his life here on earth? Any guesses on who that might have been? Yes, Jesus. Jesus was the perfect or archetypal, meaning the original pattern or model, of all five of the roles.

Jesus was the archetypal apostle. In Hebrews 3:1 the author writes:

*Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, **the apostle** and high priest whom we confess.*

An apostle is a “sent one.” Jesus is the best example we have of an apostle. Jesus himself said, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21). In the midst of his ministry, Jesus was a busy man. He went out. He went from town to town, village to village and interacted with people from every walk of life. An apostle is one who has the drive to go out and interact with all kinds of people.

Jesus was the archetypal prophet. In Matthew 21:11 it says,

*The crowds replied, “This is Jesus, the **prophet**, from Nazareth in Galilee.”*

A prophet is one who proclaims the message of God to a person or a group of people. As a prophet, Jesus spoke the truth without regard for the consequences. His words could heal or they could judge, depending on who they were received by.

Jesus was the perfect and archetypal evangelism. Jesus’ first words as he began his ministry here on earth, recorded in the gospel of Luke:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-21 (NIV)*

An evangelist is one who has an overwhelming concern for those who are without salvation.

I don’t think there is any doubt that Jesus was also the archetypal shepherd:

*I am the good **shepherd**; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. John 10:11*

A true shepherd is one who really cares about the people that have been entrusted to him or her. He or she tries to meet their needs, goes after them when they stray, and prays regularly for them. Jesus was and still is the ultimate shepherd, the example for us all. During his time here on earth Jesus was the archetypal teacher:

*“You call me ‘**Teacher**’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and **Teacher**, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:13-15 (NIV)*

*The crowds were amazed at His **teaching**; for He was **teaching** them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:28-29*

Jesus was the ultimate teacher. Not just in what he said and taught but how he lived his life. He set the pattern of how His followers are to live our lives according to the principles and practices of the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of this world.

Jesus fulfilled all five of the roles listed in here in Ephesians 4:11 perfectly. Jesus could do that because Jesus was perfect and he was God. I don't know if you have noticed it but none of us are perfect and we certainly are not God. And we can thank God for that!

But Jesus did promise his original disciples that after he was gone, after his death and resurrection, and then his ascension back into heaven, he was going to send someone even more powerful than He. That promised one is the Holy Spirit and the only reason he/she is more powerful than Jesus is because we need that Holy Spirit working in us to do the things that God has called us to do. When Jesus said that after He was gone His followers would be able to do even greater things than He, I certainly don't think he meant that as individuals. I think He meant that as the church, collectively, as the body of Christ.

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that **the body of Christ** may be built up.*  
Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV)

It says in v. 7, *to **each one of us** grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.* Through Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection, his descending and then his ascending, he has given each of his believers the grace to live out of their primary calling during the rest of our time we have here on earth. And he doesn't want us to do it as individuals, but collectively as His church.

The apostle Paul, after his great conversion experience, and committing his life to Christ, when he was "baptized with Christ," saw his primary callings at that of an apostle, prophet and teacher. He even says so in this wonderful passage from his second letter to Timothy which seems to bring all this together:

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

2 Timothy 1:8-14 (ESV)

Paul did not see one of his primary callings being that of an Evangelist. And there are probably not too many that would have seen him as a shepherd, especially women. Paul was certainly not the warm & fuzzy, nurturing type. But God used the giftedness that He had placed within Him to further His kingdom here on earth in Paul's day. And that is what God wants from each of us.

So, can you list in order how God has blessed you with the five-fold ministry giftedness of APEST that he has given the church, to equip and build up Christ's body, that which leads to the unity of the Spirit and maturity in the church?

Use your bulletin insert, talk to the people who know you best, your Sunday school class, others and there is a wonderful and free survey you can access on line at [www.fivefoldsurvey.com](http://www.fivefoldsurvey.com) There is 80 very quick answer questions and at the end it gives you your score and a brief summary result. Since none of us our Jesus, none of us have all five. But some might have one, or two, or even three that rank pretty close. And God doesn't just call us to minister out of our strengths, He also calls us to minister out of our weaknesses at different times in our lives.