

Mystery of Spiritual Gifts

Ephesians 4: 1-16

Chapters 1-3 are the theological portion of Ephesians. We saw how the church is a privileged community chosen by God, created to share with others they're chosen too. We noticed we live out that privilege in merciful and inclusive ways, fueled by Christ's indwelling power. Chapter 4 shifts gears, from theology to practice, showing the church how to get there. Verse 1 is the bridge: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." Since God has chosen us, we are urged to live like we have been chosen.

The Reichstag, Germany's capitol building, is a good parable for the church, as we include others in all spiritual gifts in the church. After the Parliament house was destroyed in WWII, the Berlin Wall was built where it stood. In 1989, the wall fell, and Germany was reunified. A new parliament house was rebuilt, which included spectacular glass cupola above the main chamber, allowing light to shine in from all directions. It was designed to remind citizens of the illusory promises of Fascist and Communist regimes that claim to be a people's movement. The cupola is an architectural tool, symbolically ready to shine light on any cabal of privileged members who try to dictate to the people autocratic policies in the dark. Those who govern the new democratic Germany do so in the light.

The Protestant Reformation was birthed in Germany. Martin Luther loosened the grip church rulers held over people's souls; thus, no longer dependent on the priests of the church. The priesthood of the believer was rediscovered, as people learned they have access to God through Christ, the new high priest. The full promises of the Reformation remain unfulfilled, we're still being reformed. The church did well with personal salvation aspects of the Reformation, but not so well with the corporate ministry of the church. We are good at the priesthood of a believer but fall short with the priesthood of all believers. We have put the Word of God into the hands of the people, but we have not put the ministry of the church in your hands.

There remains a wall separating clergy and laity. The notion clergy and staff do the ministry of the people, to the people, and for the people is flawed. Clergy know they aren't the church; we behave like it sometimes; and honestly, we like it that way. We can't do it alone; yet, we try. Exhaustion eventually overtakes us, even if we are called by God and buoyed by your prayers. Laypersons are equally complicit when you're happy to pay your tithe, so you can get good service from the pastor and staff.

There is proof laity and clergy are starting to get an old idea, while calling it a new idea. We have some hurdles to leap, as fear gives way to faith, anxiety to adventure. Us, slow-learning, Pulpit huggers are beginning to celebrate the ministry of the unpaid, nurturing their ministry, instead of doing it themselves. Pew jockeys are learning to stop defaulting the work of the church to professionals. I see us more frequently side by side in the trenches of ministry. Clergy's calling is help laity fulfill their calling. Clergy must not substitute our calling for laity, and laity cannot allow clergy to do their work.

Keiko, a killer whale, whose disorientation caused him to be lost in Bay in Oregon was the subject of the movie Free Willy. He was taken into captivity and had a 15-year career as a show animal, always near humans. A campaign arose to return Keiko back to Icelandic waters where he would have the freedom to interact with other Orcas. When they released Keiko into the ocean, he kept returning to his human companions. Even, when they led him to a school of whales, instead of joining the class, he followed the boat back to his ocean pen where he would eventually die in 2003.

Clergy and laity need to break our dependency on old church systems of ministry. We are in ministry together; each person called to a unique ministry by God. Clergy are called to ministry **in** the church, laity are called to the ministry **of** the church. Each person needs to discover our unique calling that is in sync with the gifts Christ bestowed on us.

It's an honor to work with persons examining their call. Some wonder if the gifts they have to offer is enough. Some worry the calling will not be what they want. Some weigh if their call means being on the church payroll. I applaud anyone who wonders, worries, and weighs their unique calling. If they wonder long enough, they'll discover gifts within them are needed in the world of their daily work. Buechner was correct, "Our calling is *the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need*". Quakers say, '*Our lives speak our truth*'. Not allowing our lives to speak their truth is a slow march towards the death of a soul. Our calling is made alive by speak our truth in the listening ears of our world.

We baptized Colton last week. I asked you if you would do your part in helping raise him and the other children of the church in the Christian faith. You exclaimed your usual, *We will!* I was wondering if that meant you will volunteer in the nursery and children's programs and offer to teach their moms and dads, or at least watch their children, so they can attend to their developing soul in parenting class or elsewhere. I am just wondering?

We are having new members join each week. Last week you said to Shelly and Jade: "We renew our covenant faithfully to participate in the ministries of the church". I was wondering if that meant you would offer your techiness to our website team? Did that mean you might help Denise change the sign and make sure there are paper products in the bathroom for Sunday and the rest of the week. Did you mean you would help me share these consecrated elements with our shut-in members? I am just wondering or meddling?

In our house, there is football season and relationship season. Relationship season is coming to an end as we ready to live the up and downs of another football season. We will hear coach's clichés over the next few months after a team suffers an onset of injuries. They will say "We play with those we have". Or, "Next man up". Coaches will tailor games plans to the personnel.

Every church has different personnel. God has given us just who we need when he gave us you. We are bound together in Christ, abounding in gifts to be offered in service to Christ and one another. So, as sung in High School Musical: "Gotta Get it, Gotta Get it, Gotta Get your head in the game." We are depending on each other to do their part in the game of being Christ's hands and feet in Pflugerville.