



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

Mission & Discipleship Committee

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July 2019

Dear Ministers and Session Clerks

Once again we are proposing that October be the UPCSA Month of Mission. This has three facets:

1. A series of outlines for a preaching series that could be used in October, or at another time. These are below.
2. Alongside the preaching series, there is a set of daily readings (also below) that could be given to congregants so that they can read passages that relate to the church's mission in their daily devotional time. The hope is that a large part of the denomination will be moving in the same direction with a wonderful focus on Mission. Please share the readings with members of the congregation you serve.
3. A number of our ministers, CDE's and Lay Preachers will participate in writing daily email devotions based on these texts. People can subscribe to the devotions list at <https://bit.ly/2LcoAe2> . Please share this link with as many people in the congregation as possible.

Please have a look at the material below and consider using it in the congregations you serve in the month of October.

God bless you!

Theo Groeneveld

On behalf of the Mission and Discipleship Committee.

MONTH OF MISSION 2019 – HE GAVE GIFTS...

1. INTRODUCTION

The theme for the Month of Mission 2019 is “He gave gifts...” (Exploring the Mission of the Church in Eph 4:(7-11-16). In particular, we are exploring the idea that the Holy Spirit gives specific gifts for the planting, building, sustaining and nurturing of the Church. Some people call these the APEST or APEPT gifts i.e. Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor/Shepherd and Teacher. Some would argue that the Pastor/Shepherd and Teacher gifts are combined. All would agree that these gifts are not an end in themselves and but are about a bigger picture: The flourishing of a vibrant fellowship and body of believers we call the Church.

The sermon series will follow the Ephesians 4 passage looking at the One who formed the Church, the Gifts He gave, the purpose of the Church and what Healthy Church looks like.

2. SERMON OUTLINES

SUNDAY 6TH: THE ONE WHO DESCENDED AND ASCENDED...

Texts: Eph4:7-10(-16) & Phil.2:5-11

- In this passage, Paul is quoting from Ps.68:18, but instead of receiving gifts *from* people, Paul emphasizes that Christ gave gifts *to* people. This is an unexpected turn of events. Normally a conquering king *receives* gifts – he doesn't usually *give* them.
- But Paul makes another unexpected point: If Christ “ascended” then it must mean that He “descended” too. What Paul is saying is: “There could not have been an ascension without an incarnation (a descending).” Christ could not return to heaven if He had not left heaven to come to earth.
- When we speak of earthly rulers, they don't *give* gifts, they *receive* them. When we speak of earthly rulers, they *ascend* to power, they don't *descend* from power. But this is what the passage in Philippians describes. Some have called this *kenosis* – self-emptying love. (This is from the Greek ἐκένωσεν in Phil.2:7) Look at the steps downward: He didn't grasp for equality, made Himself nothing, took the form of a human servant and humbled Himself even to death.
- This is what God's Grace is : God gives us what we don't deserve (gifts) and God doing more than we could expect Him to (descending and ascending) and He does this to redeem us!
- He gives us gifts in His ascension – to prepare His bride the Church. That we become like Him. Eph 4:15 - “we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

SUNDAY 13TH: APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, PASTOR-TEACHERS

Texts: Eph4:11-12 (1Cor12:4-11)

- (Start off with this analogy.) There's a work party at the church. At the door there is a tool box with tools and on each tool is a list of jobs that need to be done with this tool. People walk in and are given a tool by the toolmaster and head off to do the job. Some people come and ask for specific tool – sometimes the toolmaster says: “Yes you can have that one and here's where I want you to work.” At other times the toolmaster says: “I don't have a job for the tool you want, so here's another tool” or he says “I have a better idea, I think this tool will serve you better.” There are a variety of jobs that are needing to be done. Some jobs need a saw, a measuring tape and some glue. Other jobs need hammer, nails and pliers. Others need screwdrivers and duct tape. Imagine if the tool box had only hammers. Imagine if all the people of the work party only had pliers. Imagine having a bunch of nails and loose boards and no hammer in sight....
- Unpack the key teachings of 1Cor12:
 - Maybe the Gifts of the Spirit are the tools in God's toolbox.
 - They are not our gifts but His and He gives the gifts as *He* sees fit.
 - Ultimately the gifts are given as the Body has need.
 - It is therefore feasible that
 - I may be given a different gift when I move from one congregation to another
 - I may be given a different gift if the season in the congregation changes.

(Sometimes our spiritual gifts are extensions of our natural talents and abilities, but even so, I should never be dogmatic or too fixated on what is “my” gift, because it may change!)
- There are at least 24 distinct gifts/outworkings of the Spirit mentioned in Scripture. They range from the dramatic (healing, miracles, tongues and interpretation) to the pragmatic (leadership, administration, generosity and even hospitality)
- There are five gifts listed in Ephesians 4.

(Some combine the last two because the Greek Text has a clear “some to be” prefix to four of the gifts and an “and” before “Teachers” connecting it to the fourth “some to be”)

Many people don't understand the nuances of these gifts, the following definitions may be helpful (Advert: The daily devotions in the coming week will focus on these...)

 - **Apostle**: Entrepreneur/ChurchPlanter/Pioneer (Starts new work)
 - **Prophet**: Questioner – Disrupter/Disturber of the Status Quo. (Brings God's comment on current affairs) (This can sometimes have a future aspect, but needs to be grounded in the present.)
 - **Evangelist**: Recruiter – The person who easily has spiritual conversations with others and they respond – either in big groups (e.g. Billy Graham) or individuals won one by one.

Shepherd/Pastor: Listener, Carer, Nurturer, Team builder, the Builder of Community, the “Curator of Souls” (Nurtures healthy caring communities – can't do this without being a Teacher too.)

Teacher: Articulator / Explainer / Interpreter / Coach. People who are really good at

helping understand, be excited about and apply Biblical Truth to our lives. (Good Teachers are Shepherds too – If you think back to your schooling – who were your favourite teachers? - The ones who cared!)

(These are often abbreviated APEST or APEPT)

- We should treasure those who have these gifts.
We should not neglect these gifts in ourselves
The church needs all of them.
- We should remember the purpose: “to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”
(Not for ourselves but to build the body...)

SUNDAY 20TH: SO WHAT IS THE CHURCH FOR?

Text: Eph 4:12-13

- Paul gives a clear idea of what the Church needs to be doing:
 1. Prepare God's people for works of service,
 2. so that the body of Christ may be built up
 3. until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God
 4. and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.Let's see these in more detail:
- Preparing God's people for service:
This means that if the ministers and paid staff are doing everything, something is wrong. It means people should be growing in confidence, faith, knowledge and love. They need to be participating in meaningful ways
We need to be empowering people, but also allowing them to fail.
- That the Body of Christ is built up:
Some people build their own kingdoms, this is always dangerous
Our service and the service of others should bring about growth in people.
People's involvement should equip them.
Christ should remain the focus.
- The goals are Unity in Faith and the Knowledge of God's Son.
Unity can be based on tradition, culture or loyalty, but it should be our faith that unites us
Sometimes churches have good fellowship, or even serve very well, but are not growing in knowing Christ.
How do we meet these two goals?
 - No real recipe, but maybe two priorities:
 - Vibrant Faithful Preaching of the Word
 - A deep commitment to becoming a caring community (both inward and outward)

SUNDAY 27TH: WHAT DOES A HEALTHY CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

Text: Eph 4:14-16 & Rev.2:1-7

- We've heard about unhealthy churches
 - The “frozen chosen” - the exclusive club that doesn't like outsiders

- The “frothy trend followers” - they just copy whatever is “cool”
- The “good old days gang” - they just want everything to stay the same
- The “grass-eaters” - the ones who will follow persuasive leaders unquestioningly
- The “legalists” - it’s all about the rules – written and unwritten
- (Can you add others?)
- What do healthy churches look like?
 - They’re not infantile (in terms of teaching and in terms of people’s schemes). Explore the image of being blown and tossed.
 - They use words well. Gossip and arguments are the opposite of Truth in Love. When we learn to speak kindly and truthfully to and about one another, we are healthy.
 - They’re growing toward Christ: He is our Head and task is to imitate Him.
 - They’re growing together: The picture Paul paints is of a body building itself up. We need each other, help each other and build each other up.
- How do we get there? The church in Ephesus (Rev.2:1-7) was unhealthy. (Their love had become cold legalism and empty effort)
Jesus urged them to do three things:
 - Remember the height from which you have fallen
 - Repent – come to the Lord with a broken and contrite heart
 - Re-do the things you did at first (when you were a new and devoted believer)

3. THE DAILY READINGS

Each weekly theme will culminate in the Sunday Sermon that pulls it together.

TUES 1ST TO SUNDAY 6TH: THE ONE WHO DESCENDED AND ASCENDED...

In this week we consider the incredible implications of Christ’s incarnation and remind ourselves, that we should also be willing to incarnate His love in our world...

- Tue 1st : Joh 1:14-18 The Word became flesh and pitched His tent in our neighbourhood...
- Wed 2nd : Joh 3:13-17 God’s Gift: One who came from heaven...
- Thu 3rd : Mar 10:43-45 Unexpected advice... and an unexpected example.
- Fri 4th : Joh 14:8-9 How can we see the Father?
- Sat 6th : Phil 2:5-11 Kenotic love (kenosis) is self-emptying love. Jesus did it...
- Sun 7th : Eph 4:7-10(-16) An unexpected descent.

MONDAY 7TH - SUNDAY 13TH: APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, PASTOR-TEACHERS

- Mon 7th : 1Cor 3:6 Before we start on the gifts, remember we are just co-workers with God.
- Tue 8th : Act 11:22-24 An Apostle or Pioneer often joins up with what God is already doing and just helps to give it shape. Look at the qualities of Barnabas the Encourager.

- Wed 9th : Act 13:1-3 Look at how the Prophets discern the need for Pioneers. Note the importance of Prayer and Fasting and how they operate as a group and not loners.
- Thu 10th : Act 8:26-40 Look at Philip the Evangelist. He listens to God's prompting, acts, speaks and it leads to action.
- Fri 11th : 2Cor 11:28-29 Look at how Paul cares for the church as a Pastor/Shepherd.
- Sat 12th : Act 11:25-26 While Barnabas was a good Apostle/Pioneer, he knew that the church needed a good Teacher...
- Sun 13th : Eph 4:11-12 A special bouquet of flowers (gifts) to build the church.

MONDAY 14TH - SUNDAY 20TH: SO WHAT IS THE CHURCH FOR?

- Mon 14th : Col 4:10-15 Paul listed names and the things they did. He was interested in people and how they served the Lord.
- Tue 15th : 2Tim 2:1-2 Paul didn't see himself as a loner runner, but a relay runner. The baton of faith needed to be passed on to the next runners.
- Wed 16th : 2Cor 13:9-10 After boasting in his weaknesses, Paul emphasises his role as one who builds up the Body of Christ.
- Thu 17th : 1Thes 3:6-8 Paul is relieved to hear that the Thessalonians are standing firm in Faith and Love.
- Fri 18th : Phil 3:12-15 None of us have "arrived" on the journey of faith. We have to forget what is behind, strain toward what is ahead and persevere. This is Christian Maturity.
- Sat 19th : Col 4:12 Prayer plays a vital part in maturity – both for the ones being prayed for and the one who prays.
- Sun 20th : Eph 4:12-13 The Church is about people growing to serve, building the body of Christ, finding unity in love and becoming mature.

MONDAY 21ST TO SUNDAY 27TH: WHAT DOES A HEALTHY CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

- Mon 21st : Acts 20:28-31 Paul urges the Ephesian elders to take care of the flock because there are those who would destroy it through false teaching.
- Tue 22nd : 2Cor 12:19-21 Paul's greatest nightmare was a church where there was no unity, where people argued and gossiped and where people didn't care about sin.
- Wed 23rd : Heb 5:11-14 The author of Hebrews is worried that their faith has stagnated – that they are stuck at the basics.
- Thu 24th : Jam 1:2-8 The road to maturity often goes through the valley of trials and suffering.
- Fri 25th : 1Cor 13:1-8 Sandwiched in between ch.12 (on spiritual gifts) and ch.14 (on how tongues and prophecy work in the church) is Paul's famous chapter on love. Love truly is the "bottom line." A church may be many things, but without love, it is nothing.
- Sat 26th : Rev 2:1-7 The Church in Ephesus looked good on the surface, but it had become legalistic and cold in its love for the Lord. They needed to Remember the height from which they had fallen, Repent and Re-do the things they did at first (when they were a new and devoted believers)

- Sun 27th : Eph 4:14-16 Concentrate on Building itself up in Love. Picture a church where we build each other up as we build the Lord's work together.

MONDAY 28TH TO THU 31ST – CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Mon 28th : Mat 16:18-20 It is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah that is the rock on which the church is built. The church is God's plan for the world. The keys of the Kingdom are the proclamation of the Gospel. The "secret" that the disciples had to keep can now be proclaimed to the world.
- Tue 29th : 1Cor 12:14-20 We are all part of the body and we are all valued and needed. In Healthy Churches members value each other very highly.
- Wed 30th : 1Cor 4:17 Timothy embodies the journey of the church: Faith being passed on from one generation to the next through nurture, example, love and care.
- Thu 31st : 1Thes 1:4-10 The Thessalonian church is a picture of a healthy and vibrant church. Faithful, loving, welcoming, hard-working and broadcasting a message. May we be the same!

Soli Deo Gloria