

You are equipped to serve

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 24th July 2011

Intro-

- Anyone like experimenting at cooking? As a child I remember experimenting with cooking and trying to mix different flavours to find something that works. Found some Schwartz spices in kitchen. Used to try celery salt with everything, sweet and savoury and ended up with some horrific combinations.
- If the Church was likened to food, it could be seen as the most ambitious cookery experiment known to mankind. There are so many different flavours in it, and each flavour has been put there by God Himself. You might think you add nothing to the recipe, but in reality you are that essential piece of celery salt which 'sets it off'!
- In a similar way, the Apostle Paul wrote to various Churches and highlighted the great diversity of gifts God has given to the Church, and the implications this should have on our lives. This morning we will look at some of these from his letter to the Ephesians.

Read Eph 4:1-16

The gifts mean unity is not uniformity- (v4 'one', v7 'but')

- Unity does not mean uniformity. There are seven 'One's in this passage- one body, spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God & Father v7 '-BUT'- i.e. We are all one but not the same- not like Mormons, J.W's, Hare Krishnas etc.
- Gifts mean variety- Heinz 101. Multifaceted wisdom of God- like a peacock
- **Application:**
- Don't try to become a clone- e.g. talking like your favourite preacher! Be you.
- Don't try to make clones. Parents not living their lives through their children.
- Appreciate differences. Paul has just said to 'walk worthy of your calling'- he says we do this by bearing with one another in love. Miranda's friend 'bear with, bear with, bear with'. Dealing with our personal preferences in styles of worship, teaching, parenting. Harmony comes when we recognise and learn to appreciate one another's different gifts, passions and way of operating.
- Learn from others. Learning from other Churches with different traditions. Acknowledging we don't have 'all the gifts'- we need the greater body of Christ. Joining Newfrontiers will help us to become more outward looking and broaden our experience. We need this. Prophetic direction from Andy to not limit ourselves to purely 'Brynmawr' but also to see further afield. Our name change to reflect this.

The gifts mean grace has come to us- (v7 'to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift')

- Our gifts are all by God's grace. Charis=grace. Charisma=gift- literally 'a thing of grace'. A present is not like a wage- it is not earned, but rather given in love.
- 'Charismatic'- a Christian who believes in the gifts
- **Application:**
 1. Grace motivated Christians rather than being performance-driven in a constant battle for acceptance. Are we happy to be in our own skin? Are we secure in God's lavish grace? One of the hallmarks of Apostolic doctrine in the New Testament- to be established by grace rather than works. Grace has been a particular emphasis of Terry Virgo, so that Churches are established correctly. It needs to be the same here.

2. Humility. Grace means we don't take the glory to ourselves, but give it back to God- it keeps us humble. Paul asks the Corinthians:

'- For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?' (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Paul was only just too aware of his need for grace- he had persecuted the Church, and called himself the 'chief of sinners'. As a result he had said in Eph 3:7 that he became a minister 'according to the gift of the grace of God given to him..' In fact we are all ministers through grace- Eph 4:12- God is equipping us all for ministry (ministry means service- being a servant). We don't want to be part of the 'my ministry' brigade, only interested in our own personal development, but rather we should look instead to the interests of others:

'Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others'. (Phil 2:4)

We are saved to serve. We serve God whom we have not seen by serving others whom we have seen.

- Paul in Eph 4:9-10 make the same point he also makes in Philippians 2- namely that Christ was prepared to descend in order to ascend in due time. In Philippians Christ descended from Heaven, God became a man, God became a servant of men, God the Son was willing to serve the needs of mankind in obedience to the Father even to the point of death. He was even willing to become obedient to the point of being tortured and dieing the most humiliating death, naked on the cruelest object of execution- a cross. Because Jesus was willing to go so low God raised Him to the highest of places.
- We walk worthy of our calling when we, like Jesus, walk with 'all lowliness and gentleness' (Eph 4:2)

The gifts mean Christ is victorious- (v8 'led captivity captive')

- The gifts demonstrate Christ's victory. You have been saved for a purpose.
- What does it mean to 'lead captivity captive'? Israel were captives to the Egyptians and served as slaves. God led their captors captive through the 10 plagues, resulting in the Exodus from Egypt. Not only did the Jews escape, but their captors paid them lavishly to leave.
- In Biblical times Kings would invade other kingdoms and subdue them. As a result of their conquering other nations they would exact tribute from their enemies. The Assyrians were particularly noted for this, as seen in the Bible and in their own historical records.
- Paul quotes from Psalm 68. Psalm 68 starts with the echo of what Moses said when they took the Ark from Sinai towards the promised land 'Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered' (Num 10:35). It speaks about the rebellious giving gifts to God, about God plundering His enemies. Paul takes this up and speaks about the conquering Christ dividing up the spoils of war to His people.
- People held captive by their fear of death, but in book of Revelation Death and Hades are captivated by God and punished.
- The victory of the cross not only conquers death on our behalf, but we end up coming out from the deal as MORE THAN CONQUERERS through Christ! Christ plunders the enemy's camp and then distributes the plunder as gifts to His body, the Church. Not only does He rescue us but He gives us gifts, and we than become a beautiful gift to His body!
- You have been saved to serve in His body. True victory is seen when the thief does more than 'no longer steal', but instead does something useful with his hands and gives without expecting something in return- that is true victory!

'He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.' (Ephesians 4:28)

- When we truly serve with a servant heart using our gifts we display the beauty of

the victory of the cross to the world around us and it becomes an attractive message.

- **Application:**
- Use what God has given you- Timothy needed reminding of this.
- What would be the opposite behaviour of the bad you used to do before you were a Christian? Be creative as you look to display the spoils of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension.

The gifts mean we are equipped to build up the body

- We all have a measure- v7 (see also Rom 12:3,6). This is how God's grace has reached each one of us in various ways, it is our measure of faith. Some have faith to prophesy, some have faith to speak in tongues, some for miracles etc.
- As we do our part and exercise our faith in the particular gift we have faith for every measure is added together, and if all are using their gifts there is a 'full measure'. This is what Paul says in Eph 4:16 'every part does it's share' and the result is 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' Eph 4:13, a sharing of our understanding of God by seeing the full jigsaw puzzle coming together so we can see the bigger picture, not just one aspect of who Christ is through a dominant gift.
- In this way we will become mature as His Church, not unbalanced and blown about, but stable because we have Word and Spirit, fellowship and evangelism, prophecy and pastoral care etc.
- We tend to reproduce after our own kind- that's why we need apostolic ministry and external ministries to come in and address areas we cannot see ourselves.
- Restorationism seeks to see Eph 4:11 ministries restored to the Church. This is one of the values of Newfrontiers. Some denominations believe that some of these roles are not for today, but they are sadly mistaken and misunderstand certain scriptures. We need God's Word to protect us from error, but, according to God's Word here in 4:17 we need the gifted ministries to keep us from drifting too. Weighing up of prophecy- we will shortly start having named oversight from our leadership team in meetings for extra support and checks.
- **Application:**
- Play your part. Choose not only to be cerebral but also active in spiritual gifts. Paul says we should eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially gifts that are a blessing to others such as prophecy.
- Be aware of your areas of need. What people can bring you on in your gifts and also what people complement you, by covering your areas of lack? Are there gifts that you struggle with? Why? Why not choose to find out more about these areas by further study?

Summary

- **The gifts mean unity is not uniformity**
- **The gifts mean grace has come to us**
- **The gifts mean Christ is victorious**
- **The gifts mean we are equipped to build up the body**

History of Newfrontiers (from their website)

It was nearly 40 years ago that God began a work in the south east of the UK which would eventually become the Newfrontiers family of churches. Terry Virgo began leading a church in Seaford in 1968, and his sphere of influence grew into the surrounding area as a result. Over the years Terry has drawn many alongside him and churches with a vision to be strong in both Word and spirit have consequently sprung up around the UK and the world.

Today, there are over 850 Newfrontiers churches in over 60 nations and we are on every continent. With a passionate commitment to build the church according to New Testament principles, we believe that the most effective form of evangelism is worked out from strong local churches. Churches where each member participates, the gifts of the Spirit

are outworked, where there is joy in caring one for the other, where there is a desire to make a difference in society and to reach those in need. We aim to achieve this by restoring the church, making disciples, training leaders, planting churches and reaching the nations.

Over the years, Newfrontiers has run Bible weeks, perhaps most famously the Stoneleigh Bible weeks during the nineties. These weeks were wonderful times of fellowshiping together and hearing from God- see below.

We believe that God speaks to us, and many of the things God has spoken over the years have shaped our development as a movement. Some of the most significant words have been transcribed and are available to read online.

We are also passionate about reaching the nations. Newfrontiers is a worldwide family of churches, and we are passionate about reaching the unreached and spreading the gospel around the world. For more details of our vision to reach the nations see the articles on the web.

Bible Weeks

With an increasing hunger amongst Christians in the UK, Bible Weeks had started to become an annual phenomenon. The first Downs Bible Week was started in 1979 with 2900 people.

1991 saw the first Stoneleigh Bible Week, which grew to around 26,000 people by 2001, the last of its kind in the UK. Stoneleigh's influence went way beyond the small village that gave it its name. It became a key fixture in the Christian calendar in the UK and drew well-known speakers from across the world.

Over the ten years hundreds had become Christians and were baptised in the Holy Spirit. There were also hundreds of people miraculously healed, not to mention the millions of pounds raised for new initiatives and the poor of the world. These events have helped expose churches in the Newfrontiers family and beyond to a big prophetic vision of God's purposes. The Stoneleigh Worship album regularly became the best selling album of its kind around the world.

Stoneleigh Bible week closed with the theme 'Let's Go'. Let's go to plant many more churches and impact local communities. A key encouragement for this came from Ecclesiastes 3v5: a time to scatter as well as gather stones. We had gathered, with the purpose of encouraging, teaching, and mobilising our churches. Now was the time to scatter in order to gather many more to the same vision. As a direct result of this other nations have started their own Bible Weeks in order to gather and then scatter as well.

2010

Over 700 leaders from across the UK gathered at each of our three Prayer and Fasting events.

Together on a Mission gathers leaders from the UK and around the world in Brighton, alongside students and twenties at the concurrent Mobilise event. Both events enjoy great times of worship and Bible teaching. 3,146 delegates attended this event in 2010, a slight decrease on 2009 numbers.

Our week-long youth event, Newday, saw 6,600 delegates camping in Norfolk. Alongside regular worship and teaching sessions, one of the main focuses of the camp is to impact the surrounding communities through practical help and support. Coach loads of delegates are sent to the surrounding communities each afternoon to participate in activities such as clearing rubbish, gardening or helping with community fun days. We are also pleased to report that 36 churches from outside of Newfrontiers attended the event.

Together at... Bible Weekends ran in six locations around the UK, gathering over 9,000 people in total. Once again most of these events were administered through local churches, apart from the gathering in the North and the London & Surrey event, which were accounted for through the charity.