

SLIDE ANGEL TREE

It's Angel Tree season again. Every Christmas we buy gifts for children of men and women who are incarcerated.

The Angel Tree will be up later in November, but for now...

- We need 10 to 15 volunteers for our CORE TEAM.
 - This team gets everything organized
 - before we can purchase and deliver gifts.
 - The duties of the team consist of:
 - contacting the families to OK sending a gift,
 - confirming address & contact information, etc.

We received more than 100 kids this year! So, we really need your help!

The CORE TEAM will have a meeting November 13 between services.

Sign up for the CORE TEAM at fathomchurch.org/angeltree

INTRODUCE **EPHESIANS SLIDE**

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Ephesians chapter 4.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Ephesians 4,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Ephesians 4 on page **977**.

INTRODUCTION: RECAP

So, back in chapter 3,

- Paul said that God saves individuals,
 - not just from their sin, death, and hell...
 - he doesn't ONLY save people FROM those things...
- but he saves us INTO something...
 - into a body...
 - into a church.

God reconciles people

- who are vastly different from one another...
- into one, new, church.

And the church is how God puts his great wisdom on display.

Now, last week we said that he does that by calling us to be UNITED.

- We must be eager to be united with one another.

And today is the outworking of that unity.

- If we are called to be united...
- what happens as a result of that?

Well, that's our text today. So, let's pick up where we left off.

Ephesians 4 verse 7:

EPHESIANS 4:7

[7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

EXPLAIN: GIFTS

So, I'm calling today's sermon **SLIDE GIFTED**

Paul said, on the heels of a call to unity, that *grace* was given to each one.

Now, the Greek word

- that is translated *grace* in that verse
- is the word *charis*.

That word is where we get words like charisma and charismatic.

- And it's probably better translated *a gift of grace*.

You ever hear someone say, "*Wow, they're graced with a gift!*"

- What do they mean by that?
 - They mean that someone has an ability, a gift, a grace.

Question: where do those graces come from?

- Well, they come from God!
- They are gifts!

But when a person gets saved,

God ransoms and redeems those intuitive graces.

- Each of us was born with a bent toward things we're good at,
 - personality markers and skills
 - that we just have out of the womb.
- And when you get saved, God takes some talents you have
 - and supercharges them
 - and anoints them for use in his kingdom.

So, I would ask this question: what are you good at?

That's likely a gift of grace.

ILLUSTRATION: HALLWAY

You see, when I was in school I was always getting busted in class for joking, and speaking out of turn. Anyone surprised?

- I was loud,
- and had a quick wit,
- and wanted to be at the center of attention,
- I was the class clown.

And so, my teachers would often kick me out of class into the hallway...

And I spent a LOT of time sitting in the hallway of my school.

- So much, in fact, they put a desk out there for me.
- My teachers would literally just roll their eyes and say,
 - “Chris, go to your desk...”
- And I’d slink out to the hall.

Now, never in my wildest dreams did I think that one day...

- the thing I was getting in trouble for in school...
- would be what you pay me for.

God took that loud, obnoxious, class-clown...

- saved him...and gave him a face mic.

It’s a gift. And those gifts of grace are given to each of us!

EXPLAIN: EACH ONE

The text reads: **to each one**... or to everyone.

- Now, who here is included in everyone?
- Yeah! Everyone!
- Everybody in the room!

- No matter background,
- color,
- socio-economic status,
- gender,
- talent level...

All of us have gifts to play a part in the display of the wisdom of God.

- Spiritual gifts are given to every believer!
 - Every believer has at least one spiritual gift.
 - No believer has them all.
- But every Christian has gifts from the Spirit.

So, be very careful not to think you're NOT gifted!

- Because the Bible just said that you are.
- Now, you might not know what your gifts are...
 - but that's different.

Don't look at yourself and go,

- *"Well, I can't preach like that guy..."*
- *Or I can't sing like her...*
- *Or I'm not as strategic as those people are.*
- *Therefore, I must not be gifted."*

Because if that's the case then the Bible just lied to us.

- Actually, it says this same thing in multiple texts.
 - So, either the Bible is lying,
 - and you really are ungifted.
 - OR you just don't know what your gifts are.
 - And that can be rectified.

TRANSITION

So, gifts are given to everyone.

Now, we're gonna skip verses 8-10,

- not because they aren't important,
 - but because we need to spend
 - the bulk of our time in verse 11.
- But 8-10 says that Christ gave us these gifts...
 - through his death...
 - he descended...
 - and then through his resurrection...
 - he ascended...
 - and he brought the gifts.

Now, look at verse 11:

EPHESIANS 4:11

[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

PROVISION: GIFTS

So, here's my first point. God makes **SLIDE PROVISION** in this text.

- It says, **he gave**...
 - He provided...
- And what's that provision?

Well, it comes in the form of **SLIDE GIFTS**

The PROVISION God makes for the UNITY of the church is GIFTS.

So, there are six places in the New Testament that list “spiritual gifts”

This is one of those lists.

Now, there are really two ways to look at THIS list of gifts.

- One way is that they are roles or offices...
 - given to specific members of a church.
- Another way is that they are
 - categories of gifting
 - that other gifts function within.

And I think it’s a bit of both.

- I think some can function as roles or offices to hold.

But I also think we can see many of the other gifts,

- If not all of the other gifts,
- in these five categories.

So, let’s break these five categories down a bit, cause I think it’ll be helpful.

APOSTLES

First, he gave the **SLIDE APOSTLES**

Now, we don’t use that word a lot,

but there are some churches where they do.

- Some Christians think that the POSITION of apostle
 - is still an active OFFICE in the church.
- I would disagree.

We don’t believe that there are apostles today in the same way as there were in Paul’s day.

- So, pastors today are NOT like the New Testament Apostles.
 - See, I preach the word.
 - Paul and Peter and James WROTE the word.
 - That's different!

BUT there are apostolic GIFTINGS.

- And the apostolic gift is the ability
- to envision and create
- environments and systems
- that allow for discipleship and ministry.

So, this gifting can live out in the abilities of...

- entrepreneurs
- and pioneers
- and strategists
- and innovators
- and visionaries.

APPLICATION

Now, this gift can show up in the church...

- in church planters,
- and those with a passion for missions.

But it also comes in the form

- of people who like to create,
- and organize,
- and even strategize for the future of ministries.

I mean, this one does have an administrative side to it.

- Do you have a mind for systems?
- Do you have a mind for details?
- Do you have a mind for strategy?
- Do you want to build and create structures?

You might have an apostolic gift.

- Some of you are wired like this,
 - and there are lots of sub-gifts in this category,
- but the apostolic gift set is essential for the life of the church.

PROPHETS

Second, the **SLIDE** PROPHETS

Now, this term can be misunderstood and misinterpreted and even abused.

ILLUSTRATION: PROPHECY GARMENT

So, I've been to conferences and services at very charismatic churches

- and, y'all, it's weird if you're not used to it.
 - Like, there's people dancing around,
 - and waving flags,
 - and speaking in tongues,
 - and getting knocked down in the Spirit.

But one of the most bizarre things I've seen...

- was at a conference,
- where, in the back of the room
- they were selling what they called "prophecy garments",

I took a picture of one **SLIDE**

So, apparently,

- you can wear this weird looking leotard thing.
- and that will somehow enhance your spiritual gift of prophecy.

So, if anyone wants to make me one of these...

I'll respectfully ask you to attend another church.

EXPLAIN: ROLE

So, the **SLIDE** **PROPHETS**

Now, this is also not a POSITION as much as a GIFTING.

- In the Old Testament the OFFICE of Prophet
 - came with the authority to speak
 - and write words that had absolute divine authority.
 - They could say *"Thus sayeth the Lord"*
 - and their words were written down as God's words.
- Now, in the New Testament
 - the Apostles are the counterpart
 - to the Old Testament Prophets.
 - What they wrote and said was authoritative,
 - and canonized as scripture.

No one gets to say

- ***"thus sayeth the Lord"* anymore,**
- **unless they're pointing to the Bible!**

So, in the New Testament,

- most commonly,
- the words *prophet* or *prophecy*
- were used of ORDINARY Christians
 - who spoke NOT with absolute divine authority,
- but simply reported something
 - that God had laid on their hearts
 - or brought to their minds.

So, there is a difference between a Prophet and the gift of prophecy.

APPLICATION

Now, just as with the apostolic gift...

the prophetic gift can manifest itself in many, many different ways.

- See, if you are an encourager...
 - like, you just can get a sense
 - when someone needs to be encouraged
 - or built up or cared for...
 - you're probably working in this gift.

You ever say,

- *"Hey man, how you doing?"*
- *"God put you on my heart this week..."*

What if that's actually the Holy Spirit of God whispering to you?

- What if the dozens and dozens of times each week
- somebody flashes across your mind...

- or you get some impulse...
 - to say this
 - or to encourage that person
 - or to reach out...
- there's actually something divine there going on,
- and we chalk it up to just stuff flowing through our head?

So, there's discernment and listening and an ability to communicate.

And, this must be said...

- those feelings...
- will always be subservient...
- to the revealed Word of God...
- in the Bible.

EVANGELISTS

Alright. The apostles, the prophets.

Third: the **SLIDE** EVANGELISTS

- Now, I have heard an argument...
 - from those who don't want to talk...
 - to anyone else about Jesus Christ...
- that they don't have to...
- because they don't have the gift of evangelism.

But this is the first gift that I DO think functions

- as an OFFICE
- and a GIFTING.

So, I do believe in the GIFT of evangelism.

- Man, there are some of you,
- and you're gifted with an extra ability to recruit,
- and you're unafraid to talk about your faith,
- and you just have an extra burden
 - on your heart for lost people.

And so, there's this GIFT or office of evangelist!

But you wanna know something fascinating?

This is the only spiritual gift that Paul tells us to do, even if we don't have it!

ILLUSTRATION: TIMOTHY

So, in Paul's letters to Timothy...

- he first charges Timothy
 - not to neglect the gift which he was given,
 - which was apparently teaching and preaching.
- But Timothy wasn't gifted in evangelism,
 - cause Paul later tells him to do the work of an evangelist.

So, Timothy was to work in his gifting AND do the work of an evangelist.

APPLICATION

And I think that's true for us, too.

- Some of you are gifted in evangelism...
 - so do it, man!
- You're going to likely have much better results...
 - and be better at it than most of us...

- So, go for it!
 - Invite,
 - invest,
 - recruit,
 - talk,
 - share,
 - reach out!
- Get after it!

BUT...

- even if you don't feel gifted here...
- do the work of an evangelist.

“Well, Pastor...

- *is this where you try to convince us*
 - *to do things that are totally awkward?*
- *Like, should we be weird with our neighbors...*
 - *by start handing out tracks?”*

ILLUSTRATION: TRACKS

Tracks are these little pamphlets about Jesus...

And I've only been track-bombed once, back before I was a Christian...

- I was at my high school...
- in the boy's restroom...or bathroom...
 - I'm never sure what to call it in a public place,
 - because I was there to neither rest nor bathe...
- but I'm in there.

And this other guy walks into the restroom...

- and I don't know about his evangelistic-thought-process...
 - maybe it was,
 - "Well, he's in there..."
 - just sitting down...
 - can't go anywhere...
 - maybe he could use some reading material!?!"

So, I'm just minding my business...

- and under the stall slides a track,
- and I hear the guy say, "Jesus loves you."
- And then he bolted out of the bathroom.

And I'm like,

- "Dude, come on!?!"
- *I do not want a track right now!"*

And the track said something like:

"Things you won't have in Hell:

- *You want water in hell?*
 - THERE'S NO WATER IN HELL!
- *You want sleep in hell?*
 - THERE'S NO SLEEP IN HELL!
- *You want friends in hell?*
 - THERE'S NO FRIENDS IN HELL!"

And I'm like, "Well, there won't be tracks in hell, so it won't be too bad."

ILLUSTRATION: AWKWARD

So, no, I'm not telling you to do this...ok?

But listen...

- I much prefer the awkward ways we used to do SOMETHING...
- to the much cooler ways today we don't do ANYTHING...

And, real talk for a minute.

- I have been following Jesus for more than 20 years.
- I've worked in vocational ministry for almost as long.
 - And to this day,
 - I have never NOT felt awkward
 - in starting discussions about Jesus Christ
 - with people I was trying to evangelize.

Now, give me a face mic, and let me preach the word...no problem...

- but I get terrified by evangelism!

And sometimes people are shocked by that.

- *"He's the pastor!?! Can he say that?"*
 - But it's true.

I'm like on the airplane sitting next to someone,

- and internally I'm going,
 - *"Say it...come on say it...just say it..."*
 - *"Ummm.....hey!"*

It just has never gotten less awkward.

- But I try to do it.
- And sometimes I chicken out, and I fail to do it.

ILLUSTRATION: IF YOU DIED...

Now, sometimes we're taught that we should ask people

- *"if you were to die tonight,*
- *and you were standing before God,*
- *and he asked you, 'why should I let you into heaven',*
- *what would you say?"*

And I would just encourage you,

- that if you're talking with a complete stranger...
 - maybe don't lead with their death...
- Especially on an airplane...
 - like you just lean over,
 - "If you were to die today..."

Maybe try a different opening line...

APPLICATION

So, I've learned some tricks to help me do the work of an evangelist,

- even though I don't see the fruit
- that those who do have the gift of evangelism see.

Whether it's bringing

- a Christian book or the bible
- on a plane to strike up a conversation.

Or having a Fathom sicker on my truck,

- which generates more questions that you'd think,
 - *"What's that?"*
 - *What's Phantom Church?"*

Or even just asking my neighbors

- if there's anything I can pray for them.
 - I've NEVER had,
 - even the strongest atheist,
 - be offended when I offered to pray
 - for their marriage
 - or kids
 - or job situation.

Do the work of an evangelist.

SHEPHERDS

Fourth: the **SLIDE SHEPHERDS**

Or sometimes this is translated, pastors.

Now, this is an OFFICE, right?

- I am a pastor.
- We have shepherding elders at Fathom.

So, this is an OFFICE. But not exclusively.

- It's a GIFTING that many of you have,
- even if you don't have my job.

Paul is talking about those who have been given the gift of shepherding.

- A shepherd guards,
 - leads,
 - and directs
- a flock of men and women,
- WHILE caring for them individually.

So, it's this combo of care for a GROUP and for an INDIVIDUAL.

- So, D-Group leaders,
- encouragers,
- mentors,
- counselors,
- those who work with kiddos,
- with youth.

You might have the gift of a shepherd.

- Shepherds are driven by people.
 - They nurture and love relationships.
 - They disciple and connect.
 - They pray for and confront.

These are shepherds.

TEACHERS

And finally, the **SLIDE TEACHERS**

Now, I don't think this can be distilled down

- to just someone who stands up
- in front of a group of people and talks.

It is that...but it's more than that.

- SO, I'm working in this gift right now.
- And Gary worked in this gift this summer
 - as he taught the Fathom Academy class
 - on the Holy Spirit.
- And bible study leaders work in this gift.

But some of the best teachers I've ever met

- have been one-on-one mentoring teachers.
- Walking with me one-on-one and discipling me.

Teachers are men and women

- who help clarify the revealed word of God,
- so that people gain wisdom and understanding.
 - Teachers discern
 - and guide
 - and help people
 - understand God and their faith.

TRANSITION

So, while I do think that some of these are offices or roles,

- I also think they are great categories
- for us to understand most
 - if not all of our gifts.

I don't think I am making too sweeping a comment to say

- that every one of us, in Christ
- falls into one, if not more, of those categories.

Whether it's the gift

- of hospitality,
- or singing,
- or administration,
- or serving.

They all fit in those categories.

So, these gifts are God's PROVISION.

Next: what's God's **SLIDE PROCESS** here?

Well, the text tells us...and I'm gonna have to pick up the pace.

Verse 12:

EPHESIANS 4:12

[12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

PROCESS: EQUIPPING

God's process is **SLIDE EQUIPPING**

- God's PROVISION was GIFTS.
- God's PROCESS is EQUIPPING.

So, we all work in our gifts **to equip the saints...**

- that's referring to all of us...
- So, we use the gifts God gives us...
- to equip one another...
- for more ministry.

This is how we build up the church!

The Proverbs call it iron sharpening iron.

- What this means is...
 - you need me...
 - and I need you...
 - and we need each other...
- for the body to be built up!

ILLUSTRATION: UNITY

And now, don't you see why unity is so important in these gifts?

- Cause if you're apostolic...
 - then you're concerned with the structures
 - and the systems of the movement.
- But a shepherd might respond,
 - *"But what about the people!?!"*
 - *"Don't you even care about people?"*
- And the teacher is like,
 - *"Well, you'd better teach them the truth."*
- But the prophet says,
 - *"But let's not neglect listening*
 - *to what God is saying now!"*
- And the evangelist...
 - is just making the rest feel uncomfortable..
 - out there on Main Street...
 - track bombing and
 - sharing Christ with EVERYONE!

Don't you see how these gifts are all needed to make the church work?

We equip one another.

Now, what's God's end **SLIDE PURPOSE** of all this? Verse 13:

EPHESIANS 4:13-16

[13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the

fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

PURPOSE: MATURITY

Now, I could preach an entire sermon just on those verses.

But let me tell you God's PURPOSE of all these gifts: **SLIDE MATURITY**

- We use our gifts
- to keep equipping one another
- and building up the body
- until we all reach maturity.
 - Adulthood.
 - No longer children.

You see, we often think Christian maturity is needing help less and less.

But this text would emphatically say that's wrong.

- Maturity is realizing how dependent we are
- on Jesus AND other believers,
- more and more.
- Self-reliance is actually self-sabotage.

CONCLUSION

So, this passage tells us that we are all **SLIDE WITH PADS** GIFTED

And let me challenge you with this as we close up...

- it's really simple,
- and Paul said it in verse 15:
 - speaking the truth in love,
 - we are to grow up in every way
 - into him who is the head, into Christ,
- GROW UP!
- It's time to GROW UP!

Some of you have been sitting on the sidelines in church for way too long.

- You don't know what area you fit in?
- You don't know what your gifts are?

Goodness, we're a small church...you've got access here!

- Let me know!
- We'll meet with you
- and work with you
- to try to figure that out!

You wanna know the best way to figure out your gifts?

- Join a group,
- walk with them for a season,
- and then ask them,
 - *"Hey guys, what do you think I'm gifted in?"*
- One of the best ways to find your gifting is in community.

Church, it's time to GROW UP.

- You have gifts that I will not EVER be able to operate in!
- You have abilities that,
 - no matter how much time I put in,
 - no matter how much energy I expend,
- I will never be able to accomplish.

And I'm looking around this room

- and I see all sorts of people
- with all sorts of personalities and gifts.

Let's grow up...together!

- You're gifted for a reason...
- so, let's get after it!
- We need you!

Pray with me.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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