

INTRODUCTION

What would say if someone asked you on the street or in the coffee shop: “Who is your minister there at **Lynden First CRC**?”

- what would you tell them?
- now most of us, of course, would probably say: “Pastor Woodyard.”

But, you know, that's not really true.

- for, though it may be surprising & startling & even revolutionary to our ears & thinking, it is surely & undeniably true & biblical the way 1 church bulletin puts it.
 - it states on 1 line its preachers & pastors & staff are Rev. & Mr. So-&-Sos.
 - but then on next line it says its ministers are all the members, the entire Congregation.
- & that's right on, because that is exactly what Ep.4 is teaching.
 - that every member is the minister of the church to build it up.
 - to make it mature in unity, in truth, in love & life.

Now that's a good truth to be reminded of now & then.

- so we consider what Eph. 4, especially vs.11-13, teach about WHO IS OUR MINISTER.
- 1st, we will see the source is God, 2nd, the gifts are various.
- & 3rd, the purpose is service.

I. THE SOURCE IS GOD

Now in **Ephesians** God is teaching us what the Church of Jesus Christ really is & how it must function.

- th'fore ch.1-3 tell us the magnificent, miraculous truth that in eternity He laid out His plan & purpose to create a redeemed, renewed community, the Church.
- & now in time & history He is sovereignly working through Christ's saving death & resurrection & the power & presence of HSpirit to make this new humanity a reality in the world.

But then **ch.4** goes from the **doctrine** of what Lord is doing to what must be our **duty** as members of His new society

- to what we, as the Church, must be & do in our down-to-earth, everyday living.
- & it is in this connection Ep.4 explains & emphasizes the unity of the Church.

So then the **1st 6 vs.** tell us there is unity in the body of Christ because we have 1 God & Father, 1 Savior, 1 HSpirit, & we are 1 in faith & truth & love & life.

- &, because we are, we must, vs.3 says: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”
- that is to say, that unity must be experienced & enjoyed, exercised & expressed through humility & gentleness, through patience & mutual burden-bearing & love.

But then Eph.4 continues in vs.7-16 that Christian unity isn't a drab, dull, monotonous, colorless uniformity.

- our oneness & unity don't mean we are all absorbed into 1, solid, undifferentiated blob.
- or that we lose our individual identity so that all Christians look alike & are & do the same.

No, for vs.7 says that “to each 1 of us grace is given as Christ has apportioned it.”

- that means, though we all are 1 & the same in Christ as those redeemed by His saving grace & are children of God, yet we are also different.
- that's because Lord also gives each of us a serving grace or what we call “spiritual gifts” in different degrees to equip us for service in the Church & the world.

Th'fore Christ's 1 body, the Church, is characterized by twin elements of diversity & unity in which there is differences & variety & variation in that 1 unity.

- yet that diversity in no way destroys the unity of believers or the Church.
- for there is also unity in diversity by which that unity is enriched & experienced & enjoyed & exercised.
 - that's because, when each member has different spiritual gifts, they need each other.
 - I need you & you need me to faithfully use our spiritual gifts in service to one another for the benefit of the whole body of Christ.
- only in that way can we be & behave as 1, united, living, loving body of Christ.

Well, Eph.4 says then, for the unity of the Church, Christ has given each of us different spiritual gifts.

- & it says in vs.11 that He gave “some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, & some to be pastors & teachers.”
- we see then the 1st truth of our passage is THE SOURCE of the variety of spiritual skills & services in the Church is Christ or GOD.
 - for the “He” of vs.11 refers to the One who, vs.7-10 say, died on the cross, arose from dead, & ascended to heaven.
 - & He is there now reigning over all with all authority & ability to bring us back from sin into God's family—His Church--again.

That means, as the victorious, risen, reigning Savior, Jesus Christ, is the Head & Lord of the Church.

- &, as its Head & Lord, He gives HSpirit to live in the Church through whom He is present with us.
- & it is through HSpirit that Christ gives different spiritual gifts & work to each of us members for the good & growth of His Church to be unified in faith & truth, love & life.

And so we must never think our skills & services, our programs & projections, our pastors & leaders, our church school staff & ministry teams are what they themselves have produced.

- or that, as leaders, we become proud & look down on & despise others.
- for we must always remember Jesus Christ is the King of the Church, who gives us our gifts & ministries, our leaders & workers in the Church.

II. THE GIFTS ARE VARIOUS

Now the 2nd truth of our text is that **THE GIFTS ARE VARIOUS** which Christ gives to the Church & distributes to each & every member.

- & these gifts are special abilities & ministries HSpirit gives to all believers so that we can render effective service to each other in the Church & to the world.
- you see, the reception & exercise of spiritual gifts aren't limited to just a few select, elite individuals in the Church, but are the possession & practice of every believer as part of Christ's body.

Well then, **Eph.4**, & also **ICor.12**, indicate that these Spirit-given gifts are extremely varied & many.

- & we may not then try to limit them to just 9.
 - or be pre-occupied & obsessed with just 2 or more sensational, spectacular gifts such as tongue-speaking & healing.
- for N.T. gives at least 20 different, distinct spiritual gifts & indicates there are a lot more.

Now **Eph.4** selects only 4 of the spiritual gifts & services so that it says in **vs.11** Christ gave some in the Church to be apostles & prophets, pastors & teachers.

- these are the basic ones necessary for the Church to increase in number & to grow in unity & maturity & strength.
- for these 4 emphasize the Church's task of bringing the gospel to the world so that people will be gathered in & added as members of Christ's community.
 - & they will also teach & carry out the pastoral care among its members so that there will be a real, active life of faith & love, obedience & service in the Church.

And so **Bible** says Lord gives certain spiritual gifts to some individuals to serve in various ways in the Church.

- He calls certain people to various offices & functions & gives them the abilities to do the task of bringing g people into the Church.
 - to also care for them & keep God's people in fellowship with Him.
 - & to help each & every member find & use their spiritual gifts for service to promote the good of the whole Church.

Now, according to **Eph.4**, the 1st 2 skills & services Christ gives to His Church are **apostles & prophets**.

- to be sure, in the strict sense this refers to those who 1st spoke God's good word of salvation & worked to establish the Church & directed it with the authority of Christ.
- that is to say, this refers to the 12 disciples & Paul & few others who were eye-witnesses to Jesus Christ.
 - & to the O & N.T. prophets who, Jer.23 says, stood uniquely in God's counsel so that they heard & even saw His Word & then spoke it to the people.

And yet we can these 2 Christ-given gifts & functions of apostles & prophets remain in the Church today.

- for they are those called & ordained & officially sent to proclaim the gospel & extend & establish & guide Lord's Church & Kingdom everywhere.
- these apostolic & prophetic gifts & work are then carried on by preachers & elders.
 - for they are enabled by the Spirit to clearly proclaim the truths of God's Word & lead the Church.
 - they are to relevantly apply Bible for the correction & edification & encouragement & comfort of believers.
 - & to convince non-believers of the truth so they are converted & brought into Christ's Church.
- & yet all Christians are God's prophets to witness for Christ so people are saved.

Now the 3rd spiritual skill & services Lord gives to His Church according to **Eph.4** are evangelists.

- & again all Christians are commanded to evangelize the earth by communicating the good news of salvation to everybody everywhere.
- yet Christ gives His Church certain members who possess the special abilities to be evangelists.
 - they have the Spirit-given knowledge & knack to make the gospel plain & meaningful & relevant to unbelievers so that they respond in faith & obedience to Lord.
- & that may be a preacher or a missionary or any other person in the Church for its growth.

Finally our **text** says the 4th Christ-given gift & function in the Church are **pastors & teachers**.

- no doubt this refers to the work of shepherding & teaching.
- & that is the work of pastors & elders & deacons, of Church School teachers. Cadet & Gem & youth leaders, & also Bible study leaders.
 - it is their work to lead & teach, to shepherd & guard & guide, to encourage, & correct & care for the Church of Jesus Christ.
- as someone points out: “Evangelists are basically obstetricians dealing with the birth—the beginning of the Christian life; while pastors-teachers are basically pediatricians” dealing with the growth of the Christian life.
- but we can also say that in a sense all Christians are pastor-teachers for we all must show concern & care for one another.

Th'fore pastors & elders & deacons, teachers & leaders are given to the Church by God for its life & growth.

- they must faithfully exercise their divinely-given skills & services.
- & we must recognize & respect them as coming from Lord with His authority & power.
 - & we must constantly assist & encourage & pray for them.

III. THE PURPOSE IS SERVICE

But now the 3rd truth of our **text** is that Christ gives these spiritual gifts & gifted people to the Church for a specific purpose: **SERVICE**.

- you see, vs.12,13 say He gives us these persons with special abilities to do certain things best so that “God's people will be equipped to do better work for Him, to build up the Church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength & maturity; until finally we all believe alike about salvation & about our Savior, God's Son, & we all become full-grown in Lord--yes, to the point of being filled full with Christ.” (L.B.)

Now note well: **Bible** isn't saying here that there are 3 distinct duties & purpose for God giving us apostles & prophets, evangelists & pastor-teachers.

- that equipping people & doing the work of ministry or service & building up Christ's body are all & only the task of officers & leaders in the Church.
- you see, when we think that way, then we get the sad results we see today.
 - unbiblical division in the Church between the superior class of clergy & of the other offices & the lower masses of ordinary lay-men & women.
 - & ordained pastors & council members are seen as special people called to do all work of ministry to grow & strengthen the Church.

But, God forbid, for that's not what **Bible** teaches here in **Eph.4**.

- it doesn't picture the Church as a pyramid with the pastor, along with its officers & staff & committees perched precariously on its pinnacle or at top like little popes.
- nor do Scriptures ever teach that the Church is like a bus.
 - the pastor & leaders & teachers do all driving while the congregation sits in back going along for the ride, & peacefully sleeping securely.

Instead **Bible's** model of the Church is the **BODY** in which each & every member has been divinely gifted to actively work for good & growth of the whole Church.

- for our text teaches Lord doesn't give some to be the boss & do all the work in the Church.
- but it says He gives certain spiritual gifts for some to be leaders & pastor-teachers for the immediate purpose to equip all Christians to be the ministers in the Church.
 - to be equipped so we can & must do work of various kinds of ministries & service in the Church & world.
 - & that for the ultimate purpose that the Church's body will continue to grow & be built up healthy & strong in the unity of faith & truth, of love & life.

Now **Greek** word used here in **Eph.4** for “equip” refers to setting dislocated bones back into the body so that they fit right & can develop & perform perfectly.

- the word is also from where our English word “artist or artisan” comes from.
- these are the people who work with their hands to make & build something.

Now it is interesting to note that this word, “equip”, 1st appears in **N.T.** when Jesus calls His 1st disciples while **Peter & Andrew, James & John** were “mending” their nets.

- it means those men were getting their nets ready to catch fish.
- & that is the very same word used in Eph. 4.

All this suggests then that Lord puts Spirit-gifted leaders & pastors & teachers, & others, in His Church to shape up His body.

- to mend its members, to fit each & every one of them into the right place.
- to prepare & get them ready for action, & equip & fit them out to make them what they ought to be so that they can do their work of ministry or service.
 - all for the well-being & development of the Church & for the salvation of the world.

Now do you see what a revolutionary, far-reaching significance this has for a true understanding of what the Church is & how it must function & who are its real ministers.

- for that means we must never think & act that it is the professional clergy or the council members, other leaders & teachers along with a few other select lay-people who are the ministers of the Church.
 - & then they can & must only do work of service in the body of Christ while its members sit back in the pews or on the sidelines looking on.
- no, for Eph.4 makes it very plain & positive that every Christian is really the minister in the Church, gifted by HSpirit to work in the Church & do work of the Church in the world.

We see then **Bible** teaches the Church is an **EVERY-MEMBER MINISTRY.**

- for it views pastors & other leaders, not as persons, “who jealously guard all ministry in their own hands & successfully squashes all lay-initiatives.”
- but they are pastors & leaders in the Church as the ones “who help & encourages all of God's people to discover & develop & exercise their gifts to be a servant to people, ministering actively but humbly in a world of pain & alienation. Thus, instead of monopolizing all the ministries themselves, [pastors & leaders & teachers] multiply ministries.”

And so this means the Church with its leaders must do all can to help its members discover & develop & deploy their spiritual gifts.

- by preaching & teaching & with support groups they must instruct & challenge & encourage & affirm one another to use their gifts in various ministries.

- they must make the members of the Church be conscious of the needs of their homes & congregation & community so we all can & will use our gifts to fill those needs.
 - they must so structure the Church & assign people to work along the lines of their gifts so that they are able to effectively do the work of ministry.
- you see, all of that will help members develop self-esteem & confidence in their skills & services as we see how each & everyone is needed for the health & growth & strength & maturity of the Church.

CONCLUSION

Well then, who is the minister here at **First Lynden CRC**?

- no, not me, Pastor Barry nor Pastor Robert, or Elder Robert Smit or Deacon Dave Korthius.
 - not our staff or our Young People Leaders, or our Cadet & Gems Leaders, or just our ministry team members.
- but our minister here is YOU: every 1 single one of you who are God's people.

Everyone of us have a certain, spiritual gift or 2 from Lord that we all must faithfully use, not for our own selfish gain & glory.

- but to use to serve others so that our congregation & God's Church here will grow & be strong.
- each 1 of us then are equipped by Lord so that we must be actively involved in the life & work of His family here & in the world.
- don't ever let just a few do all the work in the Church.
 - all of us must do the work of ministry.
- that's the only way we will ever be a real, active, alive, loving community for the well-being of every member, & for the salvation of sinners, & for the glory of God.

AMEN