

The Ongoing Word Becoming Flesh  
4/3/2016

Since January,  
we have been exploring the message of the gospel,  
the “good news proclamation” about Jesus.

This morning, in light of our theme-  
to be “becoming a family after God’s own heart,”  
and in light of the goals and objectives  
that the elders shared with us  
at the beginning of the year,  
we begin a new series that hopefully will culminate in June  
with an “elder and deacon” selection process.

We just finished celebrating Easter Sunday,  
when the whole world honors -or at least looks back on-  
Jesus being resurrected from the dead.

If it’s all about Jesus and what he did for us...  
(...and it is, by the way...)  
What’s the connection of that with leadership in the church?

In light of the resurrection, why does it matter?  
Let me see if I can Biblically  
“connect the dots” for us this morning.

In Jesus, God became flesh.  
John 1:14 says that the Word, the logos of God,  
became flesh (sarx),  
and we have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,  
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus showed us the way of God here,  
where we could see and understand it.

He entered our world and lived as we live,  
to show us God's way to live, in fellowship with the Father,  
as Spiritual beings in a physical body,  
not physical being who just happened to have a Spirit...  
(...how inconvenient...)

And now Jesus has been raised from the dead,  
and in 40 days after Easter,  
will ascend back to the Heavenly Father.

In US, those of us who believe in His name,  
that message, the lived out, practical Word of God-  
needs to become flesh as well.

Jesus knew that  
people would need to see the gospel with skin on it.  
And so Jesus trained the twelve,  
and then they made disciples.

And they came to be known as "little Christs,"  
Christians, because they reflected or embodied  
the characteristics of their Savior Jesus, the Christ.

And so one of Paul's favorite names for  
the body of believers that we come to call the church  
is "the body of Christ"... (are you following this?)

"Little Christs" joining to form the local community of Christ  
that reflects the message and lifestyle of Christ.

Christ continues as the head of that body, and as disciples,  
Christians, we are all members of the body.

We become part of the body, according to I Cor. 12:12-13,  
by “being baptized by the one Spirit into the one body,  
and we are all given the one Spirit to drink.”

(Now the image coming up is amazing, so don't miss it.)

First we are called God's house, where God's spirit lives,  
in a body of people, and then we are also the body of Christ.

Read along, first in Eph. 2:19-20-

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens,  
but fellow citizens with God's people  
and members of God's household,  
<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,  
with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Foundation- apostles and prophets. Cornerstone? Christ!

<sup>21</sup> In him- the whole building is joined together  
and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> And in him you too (you all) are being built together  
to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

So that's the Temple part.

What about the “incarnated Body of Christ” part?

Eph. 4:1-7, 11-16

As a prisoner for the Lord, then,  
I urge you to live a life worthy  
of the calling you have received.

<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle;  
be patient, bearing with one another in love.

<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit  
through the bond of peace.

<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—  
-just as you were called to one hope when you were called-

<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism;  
<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all,  
who is over all and through all and in all.

That is what ties us all together,  
ways in which we are to be all alike-  
in unity, humility, gentleness... good stuff, right?

ONE Body... (there it is)...  
one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
one all encompassing Heavenly Father.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us  
grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

But- a very important “but” here.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us  
grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

Who apportions out grace differently to different folks?  
My Bible reads to me like Jesus does.  
(How does yours read to you?)

What does that mean? (Drop down to v. 11.)

It was he (Jesus, the Christ) who gave some to be apostles,  
 some to be prophets, some to be evangelists,  
 and some to be pastors and teachers,  
 (And why would he do that?)

<sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service,  
 so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach

1. Unity in the faith
2. and in the knowledge of the Son of God
3. and become mature,  
 attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants,  
 tossed back and forth by the waves,  
 and blown here and there by every wind of teaching  
 and by the cunning and craftiness of men  
 in their deceitful scheming.

<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love,  
 we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head,  
 that is, Christ.

<sup>16</sup> From him the whole body,  
 joined and held together by every supporting ligament,  
 grows and builds itself up in love,  
 as each part does its work.

The job of the apostles and prophets?

According to 2:19, to fulfill a foundational role  
 in the development of the church.

So Jesus apportioned some for THAT role... cool.

How about as the church develops? Then what?

(v. 11) some to be evangelists,  
 and some to be pastors/teachers...

Who are evangelists?

Well, Titus is someone sent to serve  
the local congregation in Crete in the book of Titus.  
Timothy has been sent to serve the folks in Ephesus  
in I and II Timothy,  
as well as being sent to different churches  
for different reasons all through the book of Acts.

Paul will say in II Timothy 4:1-5

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,  
who will judge the living and the dead,  
and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,  
I give you this charge:

- <sup>2</sup> Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season;  
correct, rebuke and encourage—  
with great patience and careful instruction.
- <sup>3</sup> For the time will come  
when men will not put up with sound doctrine.  
Instead, to suit their own desires,  
they will gather around them a great number of teachers  
to say what their itching ears want to hear.
- <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth  
and turn aside to myths.
- <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations,  
endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist,  
discharge all the duties of your ministry.  
(“bring to fullness all your servinq”- deaconing”)

So what are evangelists supposed to do?

More on that in upcoming sermons in the series,  
but we know they are at least to

1. Preach the Word, in season and out of season...
2. Correct, (What does THAT mean?)
3. Rebuke,

4. Encourage- (lit. walk by the side of people)... comfort.

How are they supposed to do what they do?

With GREAT patience and CAREFUL instruction (NIV),  
(lit. with “strengthening long-suffering and teaching.)

They live with their people and serve them  
by preaching and teaching the logos of God.

But there is another group of folks here,  
that both Timothy and Titus are supposed to  
deal with in their respective congregations,  
(if you’ll back up to Eph. 4:11 with me...)

It was he (Jesus, the Christ) who gave some to be apostles,  
some to be prophets, some to be evangelists,  
and some to be pastors and teachers...

It’s not two more groups of folks after evangelists,  
but one group of folks  
with two parts to their job descriptions.

The Greek points us to “shepherd/teachers.”

The terms shepherd, elder and bishop, in Scripture,  
seem to be synonymous, each giving  
a different facet of the ministry that that function entails.

And before we refocus on elders,  
(which we have done in the not-too-distant past,  
but is important for us to review),

We need to catch the bigger picture,  
that all of these “leadership roles” listed in Eph. 4  
are for the same purpose-

- to equip or prepare God's people  
for works of ministry or service,

**SO THAT the Body of Christ may be built up (edified)  
until we ALL reach unity in the faith (remember 4:1-6?)  
and in the knowledge of the Son of God,  
and become mature... we grow up...**

(and what does THAT mean?)  
attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Jesus doesn't want us to stay babies in our faith.  
He gives us people to equip us,  
to help us grow up, to help us grow each other up.

It's not the elders' or the evangelists' job  
(Sure, call them ministers if you like,  
as long as you recognize that the Scriptures  
call us ALL ministers, not just Chris and me),

1. It's not OUR job to do the work of the church.
  2. It's not the elders' job to do the work of the church.
  3. It's ALL of our jobs to do the work of the church.
1. The apostles equip you through  
their eyewitness testimony in the Word of God.
  2. The prophets carried on that tradition  
until it could be recorded for us in written form.
  3. Now evangelists and shepherd/teachers  
carry on that equipping process by preaching,  
teaching, correcting, rebuking, exhorting  
and encouraging,  
...with great patience and careful instruction.

Why? If you don't get the WHY, it's all for nothing.

Because the Body of Christ needs to grow up  
into the fullness that is Christ-

1. so the world can see us living, as a community,  
the fullness that is Jesus,
  2. and they can see and hear the gospel lived out  
by the church , the body of Christ,
  3. And so just like when God sent his Son into the world,  
and "the Word became flesh and lived among us,"  
Jesus sends us into the world  
so that that Word can continue to become flesh,  
and people can behold the glory of the Father,  
full of grace and truth."
- "Little Christs" putting skin on the gospel,  
Showing how it's done, that it CAN be done,  
in community, the local BODY of Christ.

And we need training and equipping to learn how to do that.

And so- yes, you need biblical information on elders,  
so you can choose godly, humble men,  
full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, like in Acts 6.

Godly leadership is absolutely essential.  
God's people have always thrived  
where there was godly, sacrificial leadership.

**God's people have always suffered  
where there is sinful, selfish, proud,  
self-serving or divisive leadership.  
But brothers and sisters,  
it is their job to train and equip YOU.**

**We live in a spectator culture.  
In some areas of our lives that doesn't matter.**

**In the area of living out the gospel in flesh and blood,  
so people can SEE it and believe it,  
and have hope for something better,  
we dare not delegate our faith out to the evangelists  
or elders or anyone else.**

**As we embark on this part of  
our journey together as a congregation,  
striving to become a family after God's own heart,  
let's truly make it "a together thing,"  
a full participation thing... amen?**