

GLORIFY GOD ALSO BY BUILDING HIS KINGDOM

Text: Ephesians 4:12,13

Read: Ephesians 1:3-14

Recap from 1 Co 10:31: Our purpose in everything is to bring God glory

By praising him / acknowledging his glory

In our eating, drinking, everything

God is bringing glory to himself by redeeming a people for himself – to the praise of his glory

1: Our purpose: the body of Christ may be built up

2: Our goal: we all reach unity

Unity in the faith.

And in the knowledge of the Son of God

3: And become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ

And so: *Glorify God also by building his kingdom!*

Ephesians 4:12,13

Dear Congregation

What should be the purpose behind everything we do as a church? That's the question we began to answer a couple of weeks ago from 1 Corinthians 10:31. And you'll remember that the purpose behind everything we do, as a church and as individuals, is to bring glory to God.

And as we thought that through we saw that that means praising him for the God that he is – acknowledging his attributes, like perfect holiness and righteousness, justice and mercy; and praising him for the things he has done.

Australians in general wonder what the meaning of life is – is to have fun, is to succeed, is to help others, or to earn and own as much as you can – why are we here? But God has given us the answer – it's to bring glory to him.

And you'll remember that ***that even includes eating and drinking to God's glory*** and we asked how you do that – how do you possibly eat and drink to God's glory?

And 1st Corinthians gives us an example of eating and drinking that ***wasn't*** to God's glory - doing things that bring dishonor to God, or that support idolatry; and eating and drinking in a way that undermines the faith and Christian walk of others, or discourages unbelievers from coming to faith.

Which means that *living to bring God glory* is turning that approach around - living in a way that acknowledges and praises God for the great God that he is; and in a way that doesn't even appear to support idolatry; and living in a way that builds up and encourages other believers in their faith and life; and in a way that encourages non-Christians to come to faith; and in a way that doesn't lead us back into sin. This is living to glorify God.

But you might have noticed in all of that, that even though we started with the spotlight focused directly on God, *we end with it focused on building believers up and encouraging unbelievers to come to faith.*

Bringing glory to God very much includes how we interact with others – interacting with them in a way that encourages them in the gospel. And so at the bottom of our Mission Diagram as a church we have included that aspect of things. We do what we do as a church to God's glory and the growth of his kingdom.

You find the same balance in the song of the angels as they came to the shepherds at the time of Jesus' birth, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.'

You find it as Paul begins this letter to the Ephesians. In verse 3 he begins with praise to the God and Father or our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 6 speaks again of the praise of his glorious grace. It's there again in verse 12. And that passage finishes in verse 14, again to the praise of his glory. But what does the rest of the passage speak about – how does this work out in practice? And it involves God blessing and choosing and predestining and adopting and redeeming and glorifying a people for himself.

You simply can't separate the two. God brings glory to himself through a redeemed people. And we as his church also bring glory to God by serving that same purpose – by playing our part in leading people to Christ and growing them to spiritual maturity in him.

And so that's also what you find here in Ephesians 4:12&13. The verses that lead up to these talk about how Jesus Christ, ascended into heaven, has given grace to everyone in the church. Some have been set aside as office bearers. Their role is to prepare all God's people for works of service. And then these verses talk

about the purpose that we all serve with the gifts God has given, and the goal that we're aiming for.

Point 1

And so you see that *the purpose that we serve is the building up of God's people.*

It's the picture of building a house. A lot of us have seen a building go up from beginning to end – those of us who are tradespeople, and others of us who have gone through the process of having a house built from scratch – some of our recently married couples even in the last year or so. Many of us have seen the process of laying foundations, building walls, putting on a roof, fitting out the building, doing the finishing touches, until there it is – a new house ready to live in.

And that's the picture Paul has in mind here too. In chapter 2:20 he speaks of the Ephesians as members of God's household, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord." God is building himself a temple to live in. In the past he laid the foundation, made up of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself is the chief cornerstone – the most important block in the building, that governs the whole construction. And in him the building continues to rise, as God brings it nearer and nearer to completion.

And we've seen over the past months as we've worked through our mission diagram step by step that *a part of that process is gathering the saints through evangelism.* The building blocks for this temple need to be gathered and brought onto site. And to do that, God uses the building blocks that are already a part of the building – us and all believers. He sends us out to make disciples and bring those who respond to the gospel into the fold of the church.

We've also seen over the past months that *another part of that process is the perfecting of the saints through ministry.* The building blocks that are gathered need to be shaped and honed to fit the building and

fulfill their purpose. And again God uses us - the building blocks - to also be the builders. He calls us to use the gifts and abilities he has given us to minister to each other – to serve each other, to encourage each other, and challenge each other, to nurture each other.

And so it's good to ask ourselves from time to time how we are involved in serving others?

How do we serve non-Christians in our street, and in the community, so that God's grace is reflected through us? Do we have them around for a meal now and then? Do we help them out when we know there's a need? Do they know that we are Christians and that we're happy to talk about the gospel if they'd like? Do we share the gospel with them? Do we invite them to Christian functions?

And how do we serve other Christians in our church, or the wider Christian community?

Do we serve *in the things we do*? By helping in ways that we can, offering hospitality, meals where needed, a lift, money, support, prayer – and doing it all in the name of Jesus?

And *do we serve in the way we bring the gospel*? Maybe by simply reading a Bible passage with someone who could use it, or by meeting weekly with one other person to encourage each other with God's word and prayer, or by leading a Bible study group, or a topic at youth group.

How are you playing your part in building up God's people through evangelism and ministry?

Point 2

These verses then also give *the goal* that we aim for as we go about this building up, and you see that *the first half of that is unity*.

We're like travelers headed for a destination. The church is on a journey. And the end of the journey is marked by unity – an increasing growing in one-ness.

It's *unity in the faith*. God wants us as his church to be striving for the unity that can only be found in a common faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

And so as we go about our evangelistic activity, as we share the gospel with others, we're encouraging

people to become one with us in a common faith in Jesus Christ.

And as we do the things we do in the life of our local church, we should be striving together toward a growing common unity in faith in Jesus.

In our involvement with other churches, as a Classis, a denomination, within PARCWA, in the wider Reformed world, and in the church scene generally – we should be constantly striving for growing unity in our faith in Jesus.

A part of our goal as the body of Christ is unity in the faith.

And another part of our goal is unity in *the knowledge of the Son of God*.

And so this is also a striving for a growing unity through a common understanding of who Jesus is.

And it's even more than that. The biblical understanding of knowing a person never involves just information about them, it involves a personal loving relationship with them – the way best friends know each other, or a husband and wife. This is striving for a common unity in a deepening relationship with Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. In Philippians 3 Paul writes of how he strived for that. And a part of our goal as believers is also striving for a greater unity together in a common deepening relationship with the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour.

Point 3

And then *the other thing mentioned here that marks the goal that we're aiming for is maturity* – 'until we all reach unity ... and become mature'.

Which just reminds us again, doesn't it, that our faith, and our life as a church, is a growing thing. We aren't there yet – we're growing toward maturity.

And we shouldn't be too surprised. So much of God's creation works the same way.

Those of us who are gardeners get concerned the moment the new plants we've just put in stop growing toward maturity – something must be wrong.

And those of us who are parents are looking for the same thing in our kids – we're expecting to see our

children mature into teenagers, and our teenagers mature into young adults, and our young adults continue to mature in experience and wisdom and begin to pass that on to the next generations again. If that process stops, something has gone very very wrong.

But *what does this Christian maturity look like?* And it says here that it's an attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. This maturity is growing to become like Christ to the full extent that we can. This growing in maturity is a growing in Christlikeness.

And so if you want to know what this maturity looks like, the thing to do is to discover the kind of person that Jesus is.

And you probably start off thinking of something like his perfect obedience to his heavenly father – his *righteousness*. And so righteousness is something that growing Christian maturity strives for.

And you might think of a passage like Philippians 2 where it talks about Jesus' basic attitude of *humility*. Paul writes, 'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who ... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.' Humility is something that Christian maturity strives for.

You start to realize that we're really talking here about *a people being remade in the image of God* – Paul in Ephesians and Colossians mentions qualities like righteousness, holiness and knowledge. And in Romans 14 Paul writes, 'For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.'

Some of us enjoy restoring furniture or cars or other things like that. You maybe find an old broken down bit of antique furniture that has been painted over, but you know what it looks like underneath – what it could look like again. And so you set about taking the paint off, and fixing the broken bits, sanding it back, and then protecting the timber again with a French polish, or a varnish. And the end result is a work of art.

And God is also in the business of restoration – and not furniture, but human beings, human lives, humanity in general.

And so God calls us to bring him glory as we eat, as we drink, as we do whatever it is that we do - to live our lives to his glory.

And as a part of that God calls us to do our bit in gathering, encouraging, challenging, nurturing, growing his kingdom toward perfect righteousness, holiness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, as we eat, drink, and live the lives that we live.

This should be the purpose of our lives. This is why we're here. This is why we exist.

And thinking back to Genesis chapter 1 and 2 for a minute, we see the original work of art. Think of how humanity was originally made in God's image, sharing his godly character. God's intention has always been that we grow from that state of innocence to maturity in character traits like righteousness, holiness, and godliness, and to do that in loving, intimate, personal relationship with him.

Of course, with the fall into sin, we became the broken down dilapidated humanity that we see today – but the goal has never changed. God will have a people for himself modeled after his own nature. He will have a kingdom for himself that reflects and shares his glory. The bridegroom will have a bride and there will be a wedding.

And so, as we bring glory to God in everything we do, including by growing his kingdom to maturity in his image, we are serving God's intention for humanity all along. This is human life as it was always intended.

And Christ is our perfect example of how that works. And he also models the end result, even in a sinful world. He is our goal. Jesus Christ, glorified, at the Father's right hand, is the model that we strive for, and that we encourage others to strive for. He presents the picture of what humanity was always intended to be.

Conc

So, what is the purpose that you serve? Do you just live to have fun? Do you just live to accumulate lots of stuff? What purpose do you serve and what is the goal that you are straining to achieve?

What would those who see your life from the inside out say it was? If someone asked them, would they say that you were trying to bring glory to God in everything you do?

And is that reflected in the way that your life is dedicated to witnessing the gospel to others – through the way you live and the way you share it when you can?

Is it reflected in the way you encourage others in their growth in Christ?

Let's together as a church increasingly glorify God also by gathering and growing his people!