

St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne

Bible Study: Ephesians 3.14-4.16

PREPARATION:

1. **Recall:** In **2.11 – 3.13** what is Paul's main theme? What images has he used so far? (**1.22-3; 2.12; 2.16; 2.19; 2.21; 3.6;**
2. Now read today's passage, asking your own questions of it.
3. What is your definition of the Church?

SUNDAY:

4. Read passage together. NRSV, then *The Message*. Share your questions.

NRSV

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. **16** I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, **17** and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. **18** I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may ' be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one

hope of your calling, **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."

9 (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? **10** He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) **11**The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. **14**We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. **15** But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

THE MESSAGE

14-19 My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit -not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength - that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

20-21 God can do anything, you know - far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennial Oh, yes!

To Be Mature

4 1-3 In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk - better yet, run! - on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline - not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

4-6 You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

7-13 But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. The text for this is,

He climbed the high mountain,

He captured the enemy and seized the booty,

He handed it all out in gifts to the people.

Is it not true that the One who climbed up also climbed down, down to the valley of earth? And the One who climbed down is the One who climbed back up, up to highest heaven. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven

with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

14-16 No prolonged infancies among us, please. Well not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are easy mark for impostors. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love – like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

Verses 3.14-21:

5. What is the 'power to name' in the Bible?
6. 'Riches' – what else has Paul said of these?
7. Where do we need 'strength', 'power'?
8. What should Christians *know*? How do we know? How important is knowledge? How does our Christian knowledge compare with our 'secular' knowledge?
9. What can we expect from God? Do we?

Verses 4. 1-6

10. What are the ingredients of Christian unity? Compare Verse 15.

Verses 4. 7-10

11. **Personal**: make a list of the gifts God has given you. Talk to him about them.

12. **Verses 11- 12**: What gifts did God give the Church? Which are foundational? (**2.20; 3.5**) How can we access the apostles and prophets?

13. Which gifts are still with us today? What are they for? What is 'the work of ministry'?

14. **Verses 14-16**: Sum up the outcome of all this in your own words. How does today's Church fit the template?

Verses 14-16