

LIVE IN A MANNER WORTHY OF PEOPLE WHOM THE LORD HAS CALLED

Sermon for the 11th Sunday after Pentecost, 2018

Ephesians 4:1-16

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Second Reading from before, Ephesians 4:1-16: ¹ **As a prisoner in the Lord, I urge you to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called.** ² **Be humble and gentle in every way, be patient and bear with one another in a loving way!** ³ **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace!** ⁴ **There is one body and one Spirit — just as God has called you to one hope —** ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism,** ⁶ **one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all.** ⁷ **However, grace has been given to each one of us as Christ, who has given it, has measured it out.** ⁸ **That is why the Scripture says, “When He went up on high, He led many captives and gave gifts to people.”** ⁹ **Now what can “He went up” mean except that He also had gone down to the lower, earthly regions?** ¹⁰ **He who went down also “went up” above all the heavens, to fill everything.** ¹¹ **He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.** ¹² **His purpose was to prepare God’s holy people, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ,** ¹³ **until we all become one in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become mature, until we reach the full height of Christ.** ¹⁴ **His purpose was that we might not be babies any longer, tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and by their clever and deceitful scheming to lead us astray.** ¹⁵ **Instead, His purpose is that, as we speak the truth with love, we may grow up into Him who is the Head, namely, Christ.** ¹⁶ **He makes the whole body fit together and unites it by every ligament that supports it; and to the extent that each and every part is doing its work, He makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Apostle Paul says, **“I urge you to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called.”** What does he mean?

The Ephesians didn’t bring themselves to faith. They didn’t by themselves find access to the Christian church. No, they were “called” by God’s grace. In His love God sent them His Holy Spirit through the Gospel Paul preached. The Holy Spirit, who calls, gathers, and enlightens people, brought them in. When they were *“dead in transgressions and sins,”* (2:1), the Spirit gave them life - a new life with grand possibilities. Because the Ephesians have this new life in Christ, Paul can expect a proper response from them when he says, **“I urge you to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called.”**

Because the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, has brought us to faith, we too, must **live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called.** God has done absolutely everything necessary for our salvation and we recognise ourselves as being among those chosen by God to represent Him in this world; we are to reflect holiness in all of our activities; we are to rejoice in the fact that we are His special people.

Our “calling” as God’s children includes everything that we are and do in this life. It certainly involves all of our spiritual activities as His disciples, but it is not confined solely to spiritual activities. If you are married, part of your “calling” is as a husband or a wife. If you have children, part of your “calling” is as a parent. If you are a child, part of your “calling” is as the son or daughter of your specific parents. If you are employed, part of your “calling” is the field of your chosen endeavour. If you are a member of a particular community, part of your “calling” is as a neighbour and citizen. All of life is involved when we speak of our “calling.”

Paul continues by encouraging us to now consider our attitude! As children of God living **in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called,** Paul now asks us to **be humble and gentle in every way, be patient and bear with one another in a loving way!** ³ **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace!”**

Sometimes we will hear people say, “Attitude is everything!” I’m not sure that we would want to defend that statement theologically, however, one’s attitude is so very important, for it determines how we approach any given task and will in large part determine our success or lack thereof in any given area. Paul suggests that if we are going to

live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called, then we must proceed in life with a **humble** and **gentle** attitude. That is the exact opposite of what the world would suggest. The world would suggest that you must have a bold and brash attitude if we are to succeed. It associates a **humble** attitude with poor self-esteem and suggests that gentleness is the attitude of losers, especially when applied to men. This, however, is not the case. Think about Paul's encouragement to the Christians in Philippi. He said, "⁵ *Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had!* ⁶ *Although He was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit.* ⁷ *Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave, and became like other human beings; and when He was found in the appearance of a human being,* ⁸ *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross,*" (Phil. 2:5-8). We are disciples of Christ - children of God! We are not to follow the example of the show-offs of professional sports or the king-pins of world's cartels or political communities. No, we are to reflect the love of our heavenly Father and the self-sacrificing service of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We are to **be patient and bear with one another in a loving way**, that is, we are to be patient even in the midst of difficult situations and troublesome people. We are to bear with one another in love. Notice Paul's words with care. He does not say bear with "the world" in love, but rather with "**one another**." We are to put up with our fellow Christians in love - with our husbands or wives, our children or parents, those sitting down from us in the pew. We are to endeavour to "**keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace!**" This is pretty much the exact opposite of what we see all around us in the world and, quite frankly, it is the exact opposite of our natural tendencies. So often, we tend to be critical of each other, upset and angered by people's words and actions, rather than to seek to deal with them in love and with patient understanding. The "Golden Rule" says, "Do unto others, as you would have them do to you." Jesus upped the ante a bit when He commanded, "*Love one another, as I have loved you,*" (John 13:34). Jesus has loved us with a deep and abiding love even though we have not deserved it. Therefore, we are to love others - even those we deem do not deserve it. We are **to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called**.

Consider also your understanding! Paul writes: "⁴ **There is one body and one Spirit — just as God has called you to one hope —** ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism,** ⁶ **one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all.** ⁷ **However, grace has been given to each one of us as Christ, who has given it, has measured it out.**"

Both our attitude and our understanding are important if we are truly to walk worthy of our calling as God's children. Our attitude will determine in large part how we go about doing the things we do in life. Our understanding, however, determines *what* we do in life. Paul's words here are intended to shape our understanding of what is true and of most importance in life. This information is vital for us as God's children, because the world all around us is trying to shape our understanding in ways completely contrary to the revealed truth of God.

As an illustration, tell me if this is not true: for most teenage girls, there are three things that are important: boys, boys... and boys. For teenage boys, in contrast there are three things that are most important: girls, girls, and girls! For adult men the world would suggest that success in business is the most important. Is this not true? Is this not where people's thoughts, time, and money are often directed? But such a lack of genuine understanding will not help us walk worthy of our callings. What, therefore, is a proper attitude and understanding of our calling as God's children?

Paul proclaims there is "**one body**" - the body of Christ made up of all believers throughout this world, transcending all ethnic or national barriers, rooted in Christ Himself, into whom we are baptised.¹ There is "**one Spirit**" - The same indivisible Spirit who unites us all, the Spirit of God whose sole purpose is to sanctify us by bringing us into a relationship with Jesus Christ through repentance and the forgiveness of sins. He then keeps us in that relationship by giving us new hearts which desire to do that which is good and pleasing in our Father's sight. There is "**one hope**" of our calling - the solid hope of enjoying the gift of everlasting life in heaven. There is "**one Lord**" - our Lord Jesus Christ to whom we are to give our allegiance above and beyond any other person or thing. There is "**one faith**" - the faith revealed in the Scripture, which is based upon divinely revealed truths and conveyed to us in the Bible. There is "**one baptism**" which saves us², even as it unites us with Christ both in His death and in His resurrection.³ There is **one God and Father of all** - the LORD God of the Bible who created all.⁴ He is not the nameless God of a hundred

¹ Romans 12:5

² 1 Peter 3:21

³ Romans 6:1

⁴ 1 Corinthians 8:6

names, as some suggest. He is not every god called different names by different people, as others suggest. No, He is the one true God, who has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is above all - ruling over us; He is through all - sustaining us; He is in all - enabling us to live as He would have us live. He is the one who has created you and me to be our unique selves. He has given each of us our gifts and abilities, our likes and dislikes, so that we might fulfil our individual purpose to His glory! Yes, **live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called.** Consider your understanding!

Consider finally your purpose! Paul says, ¹¹ **He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.** ¹² **His purpose was to prepare God's holy people, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ,** ¹³ **until we all become one in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become mature, until we reach the full height of Christ.** ¹⁴ **His purpose was that we might not be babies any longer, tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and by their clever and deceitful scheming to lead us astray.** ¹⁵ **Instead, His purpose is that, as we speak the truth with love, we may grow up into Him who is the Head, namely, Christ.**

This section is both meaningful and beautiful. Paul says that the Lord **gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.** ¹² **His purpose was to prepare God's holy people, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.**

God has given us different people throughout this world's history to reveal and explain His truths. He has revealed them through the apostles, prophets, and evangelists. He explains them through pastors and teachers whom He calls today to serve His Church through the public ministry of the Word of God and Sacraments, and it is the Lord's will that Christians should regularly gather around the Gospel and sacraments. The Office of the Ministry and the men who hold it are Christ's gifts to the Church.

People who don't grow spiritually through the regular and diligent use of Word and sacrament remain **babies**, despite their chronological age. With no doctrinal base, they're helpless because they have nothing firm to hang on to. That's why Paul can liken them to people in a rowboat out on the high seas during a fierce gale. They're **tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and by their clever and deceitful scheming to lead us astray.** God does not want us easily misled by evil men intent on turning us away from Christ.

Finally, even though our Lord has given to His Church the Office of the Ministry, in which men are called publicly to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, nevertheless, Paul also makes it clear that every Christian also has a role in Christ's church. We need to keep that in mind because often, too many are inclined to think that they're too small or too unimportant to make much of a difference. But nothing could be further from the truth! Paul helps us understand how wrong that kind of thinking is. He says the Lord **makes the whole body fit together and unites it by every ligament that supports it; and to the extent that each and every part is doing its work, He makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.**"

"Every ligament" is important to the body. The whole body grows and builds itself up **"to the extent that each and every part is doing its work."** Every Christian is an important part of the church, because growth and improvement in the church come from Christ, and not from us. We all have mouths that can speak God's Word to others. The apostle Peter tells us that we are God's own special people, individuals who are able to *extol the wonderful deeds of Him who has called us out of darkness into His wonderful light* (1 Peter 2:9). That same Saviour calls us in our everyday lives to tell others of His love. Through our words and actions, we proclaim the life and salvation that is ours in Jesus.

While we are all different individuals, yet we are at the same time all members of Christ's body. Just as a regular human body has many different organs, all of which function together to make our bodies work, so we are all tied together - each and every one of us - in the Church.

Working together we build each other up, so that together we grow strong, and so that together we glorify God! In other words - you are vital to me and I to you!

Dear friends, we live in a world that can so easily distract us from our ultimate and most important purposes as defined by the God who has created us, redeemed us, and even now sanctifies us through the Spirit indwelling and our use of the Word. It is so easy and tempting for us to turn our backs on the Lord and walk in the ways of the world. May we with joy both recognise and embrace our calling, so that we may reject the empty promises of the world, choosing instead to **live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called.** Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Heavenly Father, we come before You in prayer and praise, confident that You will hear our cries; because You are full of compassion and pity, not easily angered, and show great love and faithfulness to every generation.

Bless the work of Your Holy Spirit among us through Your Word and Sacraments. Turn us away from sin in true repentance, and help us to look to Jesus for forgiveness and for daily grace to do what pleases You. Provide faithful preachers and teachers of Your truth in Your Church, and make Your people eager to hear and learn it. Fill us with love and trust in You. Save us in all the battles we must wage, and uphold us in all our needs.

Strengthen Christians throughout the world constantly to confess that Jesus is Lord, to Your glory. Empower them to proclaim that it is Jesus who rescues them from the punishment that they deserve for their sin. Give to each one of us all those gifts of the Spirit that are necessary for our witness to Christ. Fill us all with wisdom and joy to use those gifts for the good of all. Enable the light of the Gospel to penetrate the darkness of this world, so that people everywhere may rejoice in Your salvation.

May this Your house always be a house of prayer. Cleanse it of all unrighteousness, that it may be a place where Your glory dwells, Your name is hallowed, and Your Word is taught faithfully.

Keep the nations of the earth in peace. Turn people's hearts everywhere away from war, terrorism, and other wickedness. We pray, in particular, for those who are our country's leaders. Grant that our liberties may be kept safe, our laws upheld, injustice suppressed, and lawlessness punished. Bless all honest and useful work in industry, agriculture, education, science, the professions, and the arts. If you give us prosperity, let us never forget You. Please look with mercy upon the parched land and send rain to revive the countryside.

May the words of our Lord Jesus be treasured daily in our homes, so that both young and old may grow in grace, and follow Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

If you cause us to pass through difficult times, grant that we may cling to Your mercy, and seek your gracious purposes in them. Look in mercy on the sick, the suffering, the poor, the bereaved, the handicapped, and the unemployed, and hear their cry. Bless them with Your powerful love, that they may turn to You, to praise Your holy name.

Hear and grant these and all other prayers, O Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and rules, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 16:2-15

² The whole congregation of the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them: "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt! Then we sat around the pots of meat and ate all the food that we wanted! However, You have brought us into this wilderness to starve this whole assembly to death!"

⁴ Then the LORD told Moses: "Look! I shall rain bread down from heaven for you. Then each day the people shall go out and gather a daily quantity for that day, that I may test them, to see whether they will live according to My Instructions or not!" ⁵ However, on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it shall be twice as much as they gather on every other day!"

⁶ So, Moses and Aaron spoke to all the Israelites: "In the evening, you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt ⁷ and in the morning, you will see the glory of the LORD. For He has heard your grumbling against the LORD. Who are we, that you are grumbling against us?" ⁸ Moses also said: "You will know this when He gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you need to satisfy yourselves in the morning. For the LORD has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD."

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron: "Tell the whole congregation of the Israelites: 'Come near before the LORD! For He has heard your grumbling.'"

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they turned toward the wilderness, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. ¹¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the grumbling

of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight, you will eat meat, and, in the morning, you will have all the bread you need to satisfy you! Then you will know that I am the LORD, your God.’”

¹³ That evening quails came up and settled over the camp, and the next morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the layer of dew evaporated, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was something fine and scale-like, as fine as frost, on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is that?”

For they did not know what it was. Moses told them: “That is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

Ephesians 4:1-16

¹ As a prisoner in the Lord, I urge you to live in a manner worthy of people whom the Lord has called. ² Be humble and gentle in every way, be patient and bear with one another in a loving way! ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace! ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit — just as God has called you to one hope — ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all. ⁷ However, grace has been given to each one of us as Christ, who has given it, has measured it out. ⁸ That is why the Scripture says, “When He went up on high, He led many captives and gave gifts to people.” ⁹ Now what can “He went up” mean except that He also had gone down to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who went down also “went up” above all the heavens, to fill everything. ¹¹ He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. ¹² His purpose was to prepare God’s holy people, to do the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all become one in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become mature, until we reach the full height of Christ. ¹⁴ His purpose was that we might not be babies any longer, tossed and driven by every doctrinal wind, by the trickery of people and by their clever and deceitful scheming to lead us astray. ¹⁵ Instead, His purpose is that, as we speak the truth with love, we may grow up into Him who is the Head, namely, Christ. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together and unites it by every ligament that supports it; and to the extent that each and every part is doing its work, He makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.

John 6:22-35

²² The following day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been no other boat there except one and that Jesus had not gone into the boat with His disciples but that His disciples had gone away alone. ²³ Other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. ²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you have seen miraculous signs but because you have eaten the loaves of bread and had your fill. ²⁷ Stop working for the food that spoils but work for the food that remains for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you! For God, the Father, has set His seal on Him.”

²⁸ Therefore, they asked Him, “What are we to do, that we may do the works of God?”

²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.”

³⁰ Therefore, they asked Him, “So, what miraculous sign are You going to perform? Let us see it, that we may believe You! What work are You going to do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as Scripture has said: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

³² Then Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven. ³³ For the Bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ Therefore, they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread!”

³⁵ Jesus told them, “I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.”