



Pastor Lenard Tavernelli—United with Christ--Ephesians 4:11-16---Growing Up Into Christ

Main Idea: Jesus' goal for his church: that we grow up together into maturity through speaking the truth in love and serving as Jesus has gifted each of us.

Sermon Summary: "I don't want to grow up"—stay a Toys R Us kid forever. Avoid "adulting." But God's goal is for us to grow to Christian maturity—both individually and as a church. God intends for individuals to "be fruitful and multiply." And His intent for the church is the same. So Jesus has given His church the gifts of His word, spiritual gifts to each person to use in service to His body—all for the goal of united maturity in dependence on King Jesus.

1. Jesus' gift to his church: Word ministry (4:11-12)

- God explicitly gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers to equip His people to learn His words, obey them and offer service to build up His church (Deut. 32:47 "They are not just idle words for you—they are your very life").
- We do not think this way: to not have and understand God's word is a great judgment and an awful thing.
- God's word encourages, challenges, convicts, exhorts, saves...and more.
  - Amos 8:11-12; "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.
  - 1 Peter 2:2-3: like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

2) Jesus' goal for his church: united maturity (4:13-14)

- Unlike children, God wants us to be rock solid in accurate doctrinal understanding. This is getting harder and harder to find faithful Bible-preaching churches in American as people desire their ears to be tickled (2 Tim. 4:3).
  - Col.1:28; He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.
- Grow in maturity to discern and not fall prey to the human/satanic cunning and schemes.

3) Jesus' growth plan for his church: dependent service (4:15-16)

- Speak the truth in love (4:15)—We love each other by speaking God's word to each other in all situations. God's word may challenge and be painful at times. But it is life-giving when presented kindly, gently with great care and concern.
  - Christians are human—and can rub each other the wrong way. Some even leave to find another church. And when offended there, they leave again. Stay...and grow in maturity. Resolve conflict biblically.
  - Exodus 34:6: The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,
  - John 1:14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- Rely on Jesus (4:16)—Jesus said "Apart from Me you can do *nothing*" (John 15:5)

- John 15:4; Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.
- Colossians 2:19: and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.
- Serve one another (4:16)
  - 1 Peter 4:10-11; As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Questions (select some to discuss):

- Have others told you they see you growing/maturing in Christ? Do you sense you are maturing? How?
- What is the relationship between personal spiritual growth and collective spiritual growth (the whole church)? How does each type of growth (personal and collective) contribute to the other?
- 3 key ingredients for Christian maturity: consistent bible reading, prayer, and Christian fellowship. How are you doing here? What step can you take to personally take to grow this week?
- Pastor Lenard warned many American churches have departed from true doctrine. In what ways?
- What does Jesus mean “apart from Me you can do nothing”? Surely we can do some things. What can’t we do?
- God gives spiritual gifts to all his people. Are you regularly using your gift(s) in service to others at church?
- What is the difference between speaking the truth—and speaking the truth in love? Give some concrete examples.