

Sermon Title: **A Conversation with the Church**

Written: December 31, 2016

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Scripture Reference: **Ephesians 4:11-13**

Thesis: **In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he tells of God's purpose and direction for the church;**

Purpose: **As we begin this new year let us commit ourselves to the work that the Body of Christ has been given to do here in this place.**

Key Word: "Joy"

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Ephesians 4:11-13**

A) The Setting:

1) **What is the purpose of the church?**

- (a) What does God desire for His church living in today's culture?
- (b) More importantly, what does God desire for our church?
- (c) Why is it important that we gather here each week?

2) **If you are like most people in church you may have trouble with answering these questions.**

- (a) In fact, our culture today tells us that it is not important.
- (b) That the church has outlived its purpose.
- (c) But I believe that God does have a purpose and direction to which He is calling His church.
- (d) And He has a purpose and direction for our church if we want to seek it.

3) **In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he is writing to explain God's eternal purpose to establish and complete the Body of Christ, His church.**

- (a) Chapter 4 begins the section that is specific to the practices which are important for Christ's believers.
- (b) In verse 1 Paul writes, "**I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, . . .**"

4) **You see each believer is here this morning because we have answered a call from the Lord Jesus to be a follower and disciple.**

- (a) This is not our right to which we are entitled;
- (b) but indeed a privilege which has been granted to us.

5) **When a sports team wins a National Championship and gets invited to the White-house they may feel like they earned it.**

- (a) But it is not an entitlement;
- (b) it is a privileged to be a guest of the President.

6) **Even more so in the case of believers; for we are undeserving.**

- (a) We haven't won a trip to heaven; we were sentenced to death row and now undeservingly, we have been granted a pardon.
- (b) Not only a pardon, but we have been invited to be a guest of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

7) **This king offers gifts for us to use to help build His kingdom.**

- (a) In order to be worthy of this calling; we are expected to use these gifts.
- (b) How do you think God sees it when we say, I don't want your gifts?

8) **So let's take a closer look at the importance of these gifts in our scripture reading for today in Ephesians 4:11-13.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

1) **Paul explains that as believers we have all been given gifts by the Spirit of God.**

- (a) These gifts are not for our own benefit; but for very specific reasons.
- (b) **Some are Apostles** – Those who met and were personally called by Jesus.

- (i) Prophets – Those who are gifted to foretell God's plan.
 - (ii) Evangelists – Those who are gifted to bring others to Christ.
 - (iii) Pastors – Those who are gifted to care for God's people.
 - (iv) Teachers – Those who are gifted to teach and disciple others.
- 2) **This is not intended to be an exhaustive list as in other passages like Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 Paul lists other gifts.**
- (a) Some of the other gift's Paul references is Serving, encouraging, giving, administration, wisdom, and healing.
 - (b) Paul is saying it is a privilege to serve the Body of Christ.
 - (c) I can tell you I feel it is a privilege for me to serve as your pastor.
- 3) **In the passage we read for today we see the purpose for these gifts of the Spirit.**
- (a) We are to use them to equip the saints for the work of ministry;
 - (b) and for building up the Body of Christ.
- 4) **When I was a Fire Instructor I had to learn how to write measurable objectives so we could tell when someone had achieved a certain level of skill.**
- (a) It wasn't enough to say what someone had to do;
 - (b) but how well they had to do it.
- 5) **For example; putting on a air-pack is a task to enter a fire.**
- (a) But being able to put it on correctly with all the straps secured and turned on in 60 seconds set the standard by which they were measured.
 - (b) This told us how well they had to be able to do the task.
 - (c) They didn't have 20 minutes to complete the task; they had 60 seconds as established by national standards.
- 6) **Paul also gives us a standard so that we can tell how well we are using our gifts.**
- (a) Paul says that we are to use our gifts to equip the saints, build up the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.
 - (b) Also, until we reach maturity to the measure of the FULL statue of Christ; meaning that we have reached our full potential in Christ.
- 7) **Who are the saints?**
- (a) The saints Paul is referring to here is not a football team from New Orleans;
 - (b) The saints are those who have become believers and disciples of Jesus.
- 8) **So with this being the beginning of a New Year, I felt it was good to be reminded of our gifts and how we are using them.**
- (a) I also felt that this might be a good time for us to have a conversation about where we are going.
 - (b) But I don't want it to be a negative thing.
 - (c) It is easy to find fault with what we don't like and more of a challenge to see the good.
- 9) **So, the body of this message is going to come from our conversation.**
- (a) I am coming down out of the pulpit for a few minutes to ask a few questions.
 - (b) And it is my hope that I can encourage some of you to voluntarily answer publicly.
 - (c) I think we need to hear some of this to help us in our purpose.
 - (d) I am not going to judge your answers or correct them as there is no right or wrong answer since I am asking for your opinions.
 - (e) I think you will find there is a benefit to hearing some of the answers.

TS: **So, the first question is . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Why do you attend church?**

- 1) *Take stock of the answers without judgment and note some answers.*

TS: . . .

- B) **Key Point #2: If you were talking to a friend or neighbor, what is one good thing you could tell them about the First Baptist Church?**

1) *Take stock of the answers without judgment and note some answers.*

TS: . . .

- C) **Key Point #3: What would you like to see at First Baptist Church in 10 Years?**

1) *Take stock of the answers without judgment and note some answers.*

TS: . . .

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

- A) **So what we have heard is:**

- 1) Some of our reasons for attending church
- 2) Some of the positives of this church
- 3) Some of the hopes for our future as a church

- B) **As we enter this new year our challenge is to work towards spreading this message to others.**

1) It is a privilege to have this church.

- 2) **One where we need to use our gifts to:**

- (a) Equip the saints – help other believers in their spiritual growth.
- (b) Build up the Body of Christ here in this place by sharing some of our reasons for attending church and this church in particular.

- 3) **We need to do this until we have reach our full potential.**

- (a) Until the Lord Jesus returns for His Bride the Church we can never fully reach this goal.
- (b) But that is the purpose of a Goal; to give us something for which to strive.
- (c) In this way we will always be improving.

- C) **In closing consider these beautiful verses written by Frances Ridley Havergal, the nineteenth-century British poet and hymn writer—as contemplation on the coming year:**

Another year is dawning, Dear Father, let it be,
In working or in waiting, another year with Thee;
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving Thy presence all the days.

Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face;
Another year of leaning upon Thy loving breast;
Another year of trusting, of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of service, of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning, Dear Father, let it be,
On earth or else in heaven, another year for Thee.

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**