

Ephesians 4:11-13

Today's text builds on the truth that Christ has given various graces (or gifts) to the church by highlighting the function of the gifts of those who teach. This section is important as it reminds us of two things, one of those is implied and the other is explicit.

1. The explicit teaching of the text

- a. The goal of this entire section is to understand how the church is to enjoy unity while enjoying the diversity of gifts
- b. We have seen that we are unified in our confession of Christ (v. 1-6) and now we are going to see how God has provided for the church a group that is intended to further emphasize and bear out this truth
- c. A few words on the gifts listed...
 - i. Much has been made about the titles of those listed (apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds)
 1. Some have noted that there is some potential overlap (for instance, Paul commands Timothy, who is a pastor, to do the work of an evangelist)
 2. I'm not sure the point is to single out these offices as distinct as much as it is to group their calling together in the sense that all of them are tasked with preaching/teaching/administering the Word of God
 3. Apostles were called of God to proclaim the Gospel to the world and they were inspired by God to author the vast majority of the New Testament
 4. Prophets are men who boldly proclaim the truth of the Word
 5. Evangelists take the Gospel (about the Word become flesh) to the world
 6. Shepherds is another term for "pastor" whose job is to preach the Word and minister the Word to the church
 - ii. The point of the passage is that this work of the Word is intended to "equip the saints for the work of ministry..." how?
 1. The answer isn't that the Word of God equips the saints with a technical knowledge of their ministry
 - a. The preached Word doesn't help Brad play a song on the guitar or a deacon know how to accomplish a task in service to a member

2. Instead, the answer is that the preached/taught Word of God provides the very foundation upon which each member is to fulfill his calling
 - a. The preached Word won't help Brad play the guitar but it will guide him in his song selection
 - b. The preached Word won't help a deacon know how many chainsaws he needs for a tree but it will provide the foundation and motivation for his service as he reflects upon the God-given call to help our brothers and sisters in need

iii. The result of this kind of ministry is "unity"

1. Why? Because unity flows from a shared understanding of truth and a united purpose which is articulated and understood through the Word
2. We are unified in our conviction and confession, not in our specific gifts
 - a. You have gifts I don't have but we must be working towards one purpose in the body and that purpose must be informed by the Word

2. The implicit teaching of the text

- a. Notice here that the pastors, evangelists, etc. are not tasked with doing ALL the work, they are tasked with equipping the saints so that, collectively, all the work gets done
- b. There is a huge chasm between the kind of church that sees every issue or need as the pastor's job and the kind of church that understands that a pastor has gifts that are to be utilized so that every member can do the work of ministry together
- c. Paul's vision was that those who teach the Word would labor in the truth so that all of us could labor with a shared conviction and understanding of the Kingdom of God and how to care for its members and expand its borders