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Were drawing near to the end of this series where we have been going through of the different gifts outlined to us in Ephesians 4

In Ephesians 4 we see that God has given gifts to his body, to build it up. To help it grow.

Our hope as a branch is that when we're actually able to, on the first Sunday of every month (when Daniel Andrews permits!) we will meet in 3 groups instead of 1, were calling these smaller gatherings Bunches.

it gives us an opportunity for the church to recognize and encourage gifts in one another.

Today we will be talking about the Gift of evangelism, now I'm sure many of you would be well within your rights to think that we have done very little but focus on evangelism over the last few years, it has to be said that more then anything we have trained in this one gift as a community.

There's not a person within our fellowship that doesn't know what the 3 circles is, and many of you , especially many of our young people are well versed in using this resource as a means to share the Gospel. As a community we understand the need to DO evangelism.

So today I don't want to necessarily talk to you about the WHAT of evangelism or the outward DOING of evangelism, rather I want to talk to you about the WHO of evangelism and What characteristics might that person have.

but first lets pray:

So as I said before, today I want us to look into WHO is called to evangelism and what do they look like?

Who is gifted in evangelism and what do they look like?

First we must know what the function of an evangelist is and how it differs from the other gifts, it is this:

As Walter Liefeld puts it in his commentary:

it is "to help in the building of the church" he goes on to say "We might say that the other gifts are for the edification of the church, whereas evangelism is for the augmentation of the church."

Apart from Ephesians 4 The word Evangelism only appears 2 other times in the entire bible, It appears in Acts 21:8 where Phillip is characterized as an evangelist by Luke, remembering that this is years after his itinerant ministry and to that point he has spent at least 25 years as far as we understand living his life in Caesarea

And the other time is where Paul is writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 where he says to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:5 ESV

⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

here Paul is writing from prison in Rome and he is encouraging Timothy to continue the work that Paul started in the church of Ephesus and to dispel any false teachers that are corrupting the practices of the Ephesian church

That's it, it only appears those three times, certainly as the early church grew and the gospel writings and the letters to the early church were distributed within the first and second century, the writers of the Gospels and the letters came to be known as Evangelists.

but what we don't see is a definition anywhere of specifically what an evangelist looks like, what kind of character is an evangelist supposed to have

We would think typically of the type of person that is a bold proclaimer of the Gospel, or someone that is amazing at talking to anyone about the Gospel, for example our senior pastor Dave is absolutely this type of person. Its important to point out that those types of people are definitely aided in their evangelism by their boldness.

But something that is important when thinking about evangelism is that we need to remember we live in an upside down world. What seems proper to this world is in fact improper to the kingdom, the social rules and expectations of this world are at times the exact opposite of the kingdom of God.

What has this got to do with evangelism? well we tell ourselves that the one who is bold in character, standing on the corner preaching the gospel, or the one willing to have a conversation about the gospel with anyone, they are the ones that are the evangelists.

The reality is that we are all, as believers truly given an immense gift of evangelism. The word evangelism comes from the root word euangelion εὐαγγέλιον which is also where we get the word Gospel or good news from, So an evangelist is one who proclaims the good news.

As believers we all are given the gift of the Gospel and we are called to be proclaimer's of his excellencies as Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9. But you see to us we hear that and we think its an action, we think we need to DO evangelism, rather than BE an evangelist

Evangelism isn't just street preaching or something for the pastor, its not just for those who are bold or able to speak confidently. Yes those types of people are definitely Evangelists and they are aided in their evangelism by their boldness, but evangelism is something that every christian is called to declare, but you can't declare it with your words unless you are declaring it with your heart first.

A true disciple is one that's heart displays the characteristics of the kingdom, its useless to pour all your efforts into the "doing" of evangelism, its useless to pour your efforts into public speaking or to being bold, or to knowing methods like the 3 circles, or to knowing every argument that might come your way. Its useless to try and obtain the

"doing" of evangelism if ones first priority isn't in the "being" a bringer of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Now some of you might say well hang on the Disciples were bold, We forget so easily that we live in an upside down kingdom, and in so forgetting this we look at bible characters through rose colored glasses!

was Peter really bold in his faith when he denied the Lord 3 times? or when he gave into peer pressure and fear from the circumcision party and distanced himself from the Gentiles?

what about Paul, he was clearly a bold evangelist,

Lets look at Paul for instance, you would be remised to consider that the man that wrote most of the new testament and preached the gospel despite intense persecution was bold. If we dig deeper into Paul's nature we actually see that in person he was probably the opposite. In 1 Corinthians 2: Paul says:

1 Corinthians 2:3-5 ESV

³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

So Paul openly tells the church of Corinth that he was with them in "**fear and trembling**" and that it was not his words but his demonstration that exampled the Power of God.

Paul also writes to the Corinthians with regards to what others say of him in:

2 Corinthians 10:10

2 Corinthians 10:10 ESV

¹⁰ For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."

Paul, the great and bold evangelist, by his own admission wasn't so great and bold after all.

So if Paul was weak in presence, was gripped with much fear and trembling and his words were of no account, where did his boldness come from?

it came from the Lord and from His Word

Were told in Acts 13 when Paul is confronting Elymas the magician that he was "filled" with the holy spirit and that because of this he was able to rebuke him

We also read in Acts 20:32 that Paul challenged the elders of Ephesus to follow his example of ministering in the face of opposition by relying upon God and "the word of his grace, which is able to build you up."

Paul wasn't a hypocrite, the fact that Paul encouraged the elders to shepherd the flock, by relying upon God and His grace means that this is exactly what he relied upon as well.

He didn't rely upon great boldness, though he never shied away from being bold when called to be bold, he didn't rely on his ability to write well or his ability to have good apologetic arguments, he relied first and foremost on the grace of God and the power of the holy spirit.

time and time again God uses the least, he used Moses who lacked eloquence, he used Isaiah who had unclean lips and he used Jeremiah who didn't know how to speak, due to being a youth.

Your ability to be strong and bold means nothing in the kingdom of God

We live in an upside down kingdom, he uses the least of us so that we know he is the best of us

We are ALL called to be evangelists, You might be great at public speaking, or really gifted in knowing deep theological arguments to difficult questions, if that is you I would encourage you use those abilities for the betterment of the kingdom, many of us

could learn from you in sharpening these abilities within ourselves.

And those of you who aren't great in these abilities, I want to encourage you that you can get better. I used to shake in fear of standing before people and telling them about my faith.

In fact to those that are bold you have an obligation to the rest of the body to sharpen the rest of us, and the bunch gatherings are the perfect opportunity for you to help us.

And to those of you who need sharpening in these areas of boldness, be willing at the bunch gatherings to be sharpened by those who are bold.

but whatever side of that coin you fall on I want to say to you that your worldly abilities will have very little to do with how effective you are at being an effective evangelist.

You can stand on every street corner you want and be as bold as you want, but that doesn't make you an effective evangelist

So if were all evangelists, yet boldness and intellectual arguments don't make you an effective evangelist, then what does?

What characteristics do you need to possess to make you an effective evangelist?

Remember an evangelist is one who proclaims the excellencies of God, one that's heart displays the characteristics of the kingdom, one that is a bringer of the good news of the Kingdom of God

The greatest thing that you can bring to anyone has nothing to do with you or your ability and it has everything to do with what Christ has done for you and in you.

All of us were dead in our sin, unable to save ourselves, God in his grace and mercy and according to his Sovereign will chose to save those of us who believe in him, he saved us from our sin through Christ and he set us apart as his own, though we didn't

deserve it. He has created us to be his representatives to the world, so how do we do that?

Matthew 5:13–16 ESV

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

what is Jesus talking about here?

well what does salt and light do? they permeate the environments they inhabit,

lets look first at salt, we think of salt in our culture primarily as something that adds flavor to food, and whilst it was used for this in the ancient world, more often it was used as a preservative. this seems more likely what Jesus is alluding to.

now you might be asking, how can salt lose its saltiness, we have to remember that Jesus is talking to people in first-century Palestine, and their main source of salt was the Dead Sea.

The salt from the Dead Sea was mixed with other minerals, many of which could contaminate the purity of the salt and leech the saltiness out if not dealt with. Jesus is telling His people that they are the salt of the earth, he is saying they must not allow their saltiness to be leached away. It must not be destroyed by contaminating forces.

Something we all should be asking ourselves, how much effort are we giving to our day to preserve his good news within us, instead of allowing the culture around us to leech that from us.

well what about Light? isn't Jesus the light of the earth?

Jesus says in

John 8:12 (ESV)

12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

So our light is a reflection of His light. He is the originator and sustainer of light, if we have His light in us, that light can't be hidden. If we truly have His light in us we won't be able to do anything but radiate it through our every fiber and being.

are we radiating His light?, or is our reflection one that looks no different to the world around us?

Christ is saying that if a believer truly reflects the Kingdom of God, which is what an evangelist is supposed to do, then they will be a preserver and a permeator of the characteristics of the Kingdom of God, not just an effective communicator of those characteristics.

so what are the characteristics of the Kingdom? and how do we apply them? where do we need to look in order to find them?

we don't have to look far, step back just before Jesus saying this in Matthew chapter 5 to see what characteristics were supposed to be preserved and permeated in this upside down kingdom

Matthew 5:2–12 (ESV)

The Beatitudes

| Matthew 5:2–3 (ESV)

| ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What Jesus means is that one who is poor in spirit is one who recognizes that they are completely and utterly destitute in the realm of the spirit. They recognize their lack of spiritual ability and recognize their complete need for dependence on God

Matthew 5:4 ESV

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

One who is blessed in their mourning is one who recognizes and deeply mourns their sin and acknowledges their need for a savior, Its also one that mourns over the injustices of this world and sees that Mans condition of sin is the root of that injustice.

Matthew 5:5 ESV

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Being meek or your translation might say gentle or humble. This isn't being weak, This is sometimes mis-characterized, I would turn you if you want to dig further into this characteristic to its origin, Jesus is quoting Psalm 37:11 here, go and read that psalm and you will see what meekness is, it is one who does not fret over or envies after what the world desires,. It is one who's delight and desires are in the ways of the Lord

Matthew 5:6 ESV

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

We must have an insatiable hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God in our own lives

Matthew 5:7 ESV

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Over my professional career I have worked with some of the most vile people, people that have caused unspeakable harm to others, people that the world and maybe yourselves look upon in disgust. I want to tell you that if there no hope for those people, then there's no hope for you or I either. We need to have mercy on people no matter the cost, it doesn't mean there aren't consequences to actions, but there needs to be mercy in our hearts

Matthew 5:8–9 ESV

⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Being pure of heart, means that within you is a purity, the worlds impurity cannot compete with Gods purity in your heart. and that within you must be a deep desire for peace within all circumstances, if you are often combative or argumentative in nature perhaps you need to bring yourself back to this verse in your prayers

Matthew 5:10–11 ESV

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

These last two aren't giving us all a freedom ticket when we are persecuted for doing wrong, but someone that is bold in persecution and will not deny the faith despite persecution is one that knows within their every being that Christ is their Lord and savior

Paul Washer once said

"you want be a good evangelist, be a good christian, be a disciple of Jesus Christ, have these characteristics in you, cultivate these things."

That's what it means to be an effective evangelist. You will never be qualified and appointed in the kingdom of God based on your outward efforts

but the reality is that if we want to know how to be an effective evangelist we need to first know how to be a bringer of the good news in our hearts. We need to inhabit the character of a witness long before we enact the outward action of being a witness.

We all need to be ready and willing to answer questions

We all need to be ready and willing to invite people to things like alpha

We all need to be ready and willing to proclaim the Good news of the Gospel

But I want to encourage you to first proclaim the good news through your understanding of your desperate need of a savior, and how you mourn the injustice of this world

Proclaim it with your delight and desire in the ways of the Lord

Proclaim it with your hunger for his righteousness and your mercy to others

Proclaim it in keeping your heart pure and desiring peace in all circumstances

and though I pray you never receive religious persecution, I pray that if you do. On that day you are bold in your proclamation despite the suffering that may come.

As we close I want to remind you to spend time after this in communion, you will be reading through 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 These passages are all about what Christ did at his death and Resurrection, and as you meditate on this I want you to consider how Christ has come into your life, though you were unworthy of it and I want to encourage you to consider how your life proclaims the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.