

March 10, 2013 - You Function Here

Want to start by revealing to you a very profound truth, a very, what I believe is a very un-deniable fact and here it is: Are you ready for it? Lego's are very cool! And this is a fact that I keep discovering over and over again in my life and sometimes they get put away on the shelf and then, for whatever reason they get brought out again. And I realize that legos are just fascinating things. You can do all sorts of things with Legos. I was thinking about that this week and I realize, you know what? Guys, if your wife has been hounding you to finish that project at home, maybe just go get some Lego and you can build her a nice island in the kitchen or whatever else that she needs done around the house, you just go get your box of Lego and you can do that up. Or you can even, Lego has done some fascinating things; there's even Lego theme parks around the world that you can go see. So you could go to Lego theme parks and see all these weird things like giraffes and Albert Einstein, and all those wonderful things. You could go see life size dinosaurs made out of Lego or maybe even a dragon and a knight made out of Lego. The only thing is, I will caution you, do not stay at the Park for too long or it will start to have an effect on you. (Picture of family made out of Lego). So get out of there before it's too late. I remember when I was growing up I used to play with Lego a lot and as I remember it, when I was playing with Lego there were five colours and about five or six different shapes or pieces that you could use to build stuff with and so, that's what we had to work with. But today, it seems like there's an infinite number of pieces and colours and whatnot. I looked it up and actually there are officially, 6800 different pieces of Lego that you can get and you can use which, believe it or not, is down drastically from a few years ago when it was 12,000 different kinds of Lego that you could use and build together. What I've noticed is that nowadays when I play Lego with my kids, it's not just your standard kind of blocks that they have they have all sorts of different kinds of shapes and pieces and sizes and things and they have gears and cogs and pins and hinges and clips and hooks, they have all shapes and sizes and colours. Each little piece, especially if you're trying to build something out of a set, each little piece has it's own place to fit. They all have their own part to play and this Christmas we got on this kick and we thought we'd take all of the Lego kits that we've amassed over the years and we'll try and rebuild them all over Christmas break and see if we actually have all of the pieces for all of them, which, I think, was the bottom line of the whole thing. As we were doing it things were going along and as you'd get about to the end of one of the kits you would realize "You know what? I'm missing one piece." And so, you would kind of rummage around through the pile to look for that piece and maybe you would find something that you could try and substitute, but you knew if you substituted that piece in this model then when you got to the next model you would be missing something else and you'd have to substitute something else to fill in there. There were lots of things where we were trying to build this and you couldn't just make it fit right or make it function right or make it be right without that right certain part that you needed to fit in that gap or that hole or that space. Now, maybe some of you have had that same experience.

I know some of you, your Christmas project isn't actually with Lego, it's with puzzles and

you have a puzzle that you throw out on the table at the beginning of the holidays, right? You just kind of dump all the pieces out on the table and as people wander through the kitchen or the dining room or whatever over the holidays, they can put a piece in here or there and over the holidays the whole thing starts falling together. Then when that's done, you take that one off and you put another one on.

A story that I heard and I love so I'm going to share it with you. The Mather family apparently does this, they have the puzzle out on the table during the holidays and Quinten, when he was younger, thought the most exciting part of the puzzle was the last piece. And so he really wanted to have the last piece on this particular puzzle, so what he did is when no one was watching, he took one piece off the table and he hid it. And so, when it got down to the end of the puzzle there was one piece missing and we have to find this one piece and the only problem was, he forgot where he hid it. And so, he couldn't find the last piece to the puzzle. But when you get down to that point, when you need that last piece for the puzzle, you really need that exact piece right? You can't just take any piece from any puzzle, that won't work. It's got to be the right piece. You can't even take a piece from the same puzzle that kind of has the same shape and kind of jam it into the hole. You might it to fit but it's still not right. It's not the right picture. It's not complete. And so what you really need, is you need the right piece from the right puzzle into the right place. And that's the only way to get the complete picture.

Maybe some of you aren't puzzle people so maybe this will resonate a little better with you. If you were working on a farm and a farm has all sorts of different equipment on it and so on a farm you have a cultivator or something so you can do the summer fallow and then you need a seeder that can put the seeds into the ground for you; you need a rock picker to pick the rocks up off of the ground; you need a tractor to tow all of these things around. Maybe you have a sprayer that sprays the crops to kill off insects and bugs and stuff. And then, of course, you're going to need a combine that's going to harvest all the stuff and then you need a truck to take the grain to the elevator and have it processed there. Now, each piece of equipment is important. Each has it's place. Each has it's job to do and it's role to play. You wouldn't try to cultivate your field with a sprayer and you wouldn't try to harvest your crop with a rock picker and you wouldn't try to haul your grain to the elevator inside the cab of your tractor, right? You wouldn't try to do any of those things because each of these parts has it's own role to play; it's own thing to do. You need a different piece of equipment doing the job that it was made for, working together to get the job done.

Now all of that is very similar to what Paul is going to tell us in Eph. Chapter 4, very similar picture he is trying to paint. Starts Chapter 4 and he says this:

“Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.”

Now, before we go any further we have to stop at the first word and I may have told you this

before but it's really important. Whenever you are reading in the Bible and you start reading and the first word is 'therefore' you've started in the wrong place. Now here is how I always remember that. If you were out on a golf course and you were up there trying to chip on the green or whatever and you hear someone behind you yell "Fore". What do you do? You duck or you run but before you do any of those things, the first thing you should do is look behind you because what has happened is somebody has hit the ball and it's gone longer than they thought it would and it's coming toward you so they've yelled "Fore" so that you know it's coming. Now you've got to look behind you to see where it's coming from so you know which way to run so it doesn't hit you, right? Well, that's what happens on the golf course and when you're reading in your Bible and you come up to this word that says 'therefore', it's the same thing. It's the author's way of saying: "Stop!" Look behind you, see what's coming and where it's coming from so that you know where to go from here. And so we can't really go into Chapter 4 till we back up and look at this last part of Ephesians, Chapter 3, which is what Robert read for us earlier so I'm not going to read through the whole text again this morning but I'm going to highlight a few words out of this passage in Eph. 3:16-21 and see if you can find some themes or get a sense of the underlying point that Paul is making as he leads us into Chapter 4. Here are some things that he says, he says:

"He may strengthen you with power...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts...being rooted and established in love, you may have power...how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ...know this love that surpasses all knowledge...be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

So as Paul leads us into Chapter 4 he says "Here are two things that you really need to understand. Here are two things that you need to have at the forefront of your mind as you listen to what I am about to tell you:

1. God's unfathomable love for you.
2. Christ's power working in you.

And so, keep those two things in the front of your mind as you go into Chapter 4, and Paul says "because of that, because of God's power and Christ's love, here is what I'm going to tell you. Lead a life worthy of the calling that you've been called by God." Now, what he's talking about there is referring to what we talked about last week. Last week we talked about Ephesians, Chapter 2 and Paul reminded us that, where we were before we came to Christ and he says "before we came to Christ we were a mess we were a disaster, we were dead in our sins but you're not there anymore. Now you are here. You went from being a broken, lost, falling apart, self-destructive, mess to God's masterpiece in the world. And now in chapter 4, Paul says "that's where you were, this is where you are, now act like it. Live like when God calls you His masterpiece, you actually believe that it's true." And Paul goes on from here to describe what that kind of living actually looks like. Here's what he

says in Eph. 4:1-3:

“Therefore, I a prisoner serving the Lord, beg you to live a life worthy of the calling for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.”

Now, what jumped out at me as I read that passage over and over this week, is that all the things that Paul lists in this passage are all about how we treat each other. It’s as if Paul was saying “That’s where you were. Now you are here and this is how you treat everyone else who is here.” He says “Always be humble always be gentle. Be patient...make allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit. Bind yourselves together with peace.” And to Paul, this is what a life, worthy of God’s calling, looks like. And as I look at that list I’m not sure how worthily I live sometimes. There are some things on that list: Always humble and Gentle. Well...sometimes humble and gentle, but always? Patience. Sometimes. Make allowance for faults because of your love for each other. Keep united in the Spirit. Bound together in peace? And I can think of much easier and much more convenient things for that criteria of a worthy life. But Paul says “this is what a life worthy of God’s calling looks like.” Then he goes on to say, he says “if you live this way you live this way because of where you are. You are now in Christ. And so, here is what he goes on to say after that passage. Eph. 4:4-6 he says:

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Paul tells all the Christians in Ephesus and not just Ephesus because the letter he wrote probably started in Ephesus but circulated around the whole area of Asia Minor. And so he’s writing to all the churches of that region and he says:

“You live this way and you treat each other this way because you are one Body. You are the Body of Christ and His Spirit is in you. Your Lord is Jesus. Your faith is in Jesus and his death on the cross. Your hope is in Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. You were baptized in the name of Jesus. You serve one God. You are the Body of Christ, so treat each other accordingly. Live out this reality of who you are in the world.”

Now, Paul is going to go on from there and say some very interesting things starting in verse 7, BUT we’re going to put those aside right now and we’re going to come back to them next week so we can deal with them a little bit further. But what I want to do, is skip down further past that section and pick up Paul’s train of thought again in Verse 15-16. In verse 15 Paul kind of sums up his entire point of this section. Here is what he says:

“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ,

who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

Paul says, the church is one body. Christ is the head. He’s the source, he’s the mind, he’s the identity of the church. And all the pieces have been fit together by Christ himself. In 1Cor., Chapter 12, Verse 18, he says:

“But in fact God in fact arranged the parts of the body, every one of them just as he wanted them to be.”

So the body is as God wanted it to be. The body is as Christ formed it to be and that means, when you are here, you speak the truth but you do it in a way that the person you are talking to has no doubt in their mind that you love them. You continue to grow every day, more and more like Christ. You do what you can to help the rest of us grow each day more like Christ. You do your part whatever that part might be. And this is really Paul’s description of what a fully functioning church looks like. Paul says “A functioning church is one. It’s a body that is healthy and is growing and is full of love.” And it is that way because of God’s power working in us and because of Christ’s love for us.

You have a function here. Some of you may say “I’m not sure exactly where I fit in. I’m not sure what I should be doing. I’m not exactly sure how I should be getting involved. And there are lots of answers to those questions. We have a lot of activities going on and we’d love to see you participate in any one of those. And we have a lot of different ministries that happen and some are very big ministries that have a lot going on and some of them are a little bit smaller but they are all doing very valuable work for God’s Kingdom and some of them are kind of official ministries of the church and some of them just kind of spring up and happen and it would be wonderful for you to be a part of any one of those things. But here is the very simple answer to those questions. Here is where you fit in. Here is where you can function when you are here. Start with this: Do your part to keep the body healthy. Care for the injured and the hurting. Encourage the downhearted. Pray for the struggling. Lift up those who are weak. Do your part to keep the body growing. Maintain unity within the body. Create and get involved in opportunities for growth and maturing. Feed your own spirit and nurture the spirit of those around you. Do your part to keep the body full of love. Forgive and accept and reach out and show concern for others. Now just imagine for a moment what it would be like, if someone were to walk into this building for the very first time and immediately become aware that this is what things are like here. Imagine how you would feel on those days when you are struggling to live out your faith if you are reminded that this is the kind of body that you belong to and perfectly fit into. Imagine how people would react if they asked you “What is your church like?” And your answer could honestly be “Well, it’s healthy and it’s growing and it’s full of love.” Imagine how people would respond to that answer. I’m guessing in all those cases the response would be: “Now that’s how church is supposed to be. Now that’s how a body is supposed

to function. Now that is a place I'd kind of like to be." And Paul's message in Ephesians 4 is: That you who are in Christ, that you ARE in Christ. Now go out a live according to God's call. Be the church, be the body that God has made you to be.

We are going to leave it there this week but we have more for next week. But I want to encourage you as the week goes on...last week I challenged you to read one Chapter of Ephesians each day and I hope you started that, if you didn't, go ahead and start it this week. If you did it last week, I want you to do it again this week but try and do it in a different version to get a little different sense of what Paul is writing to the Church in Ephesus.