

Church Together

Growing In Christ – United, Serving And Maturing

25th February 2024

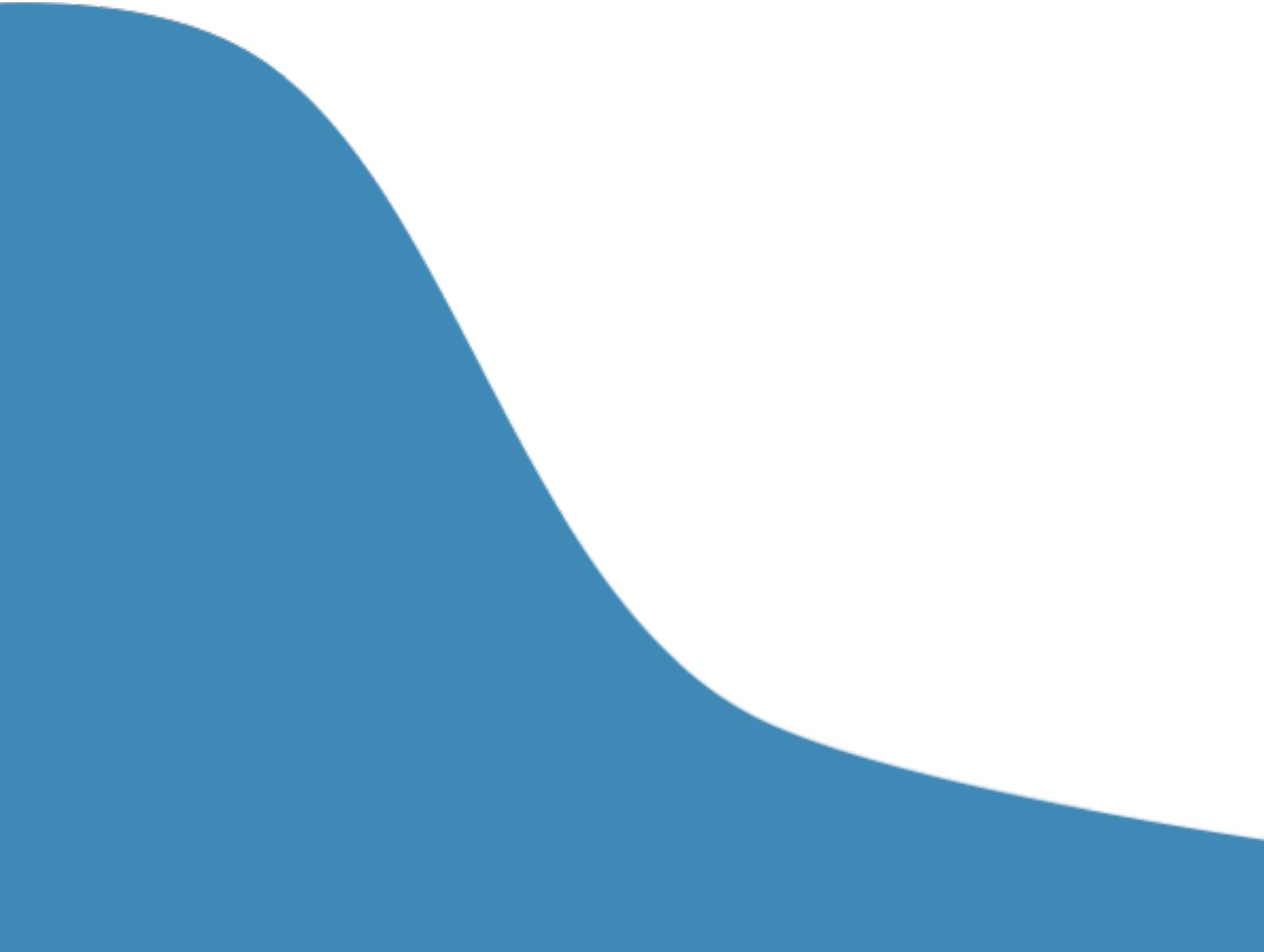


Welcome

Today's Service we will be looking at: **Ephesians 4 v. 1 - 16**

The theme for our service today is: **Growing In Christ - United, Serving And Maturing**

We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for today's service and that you would be able to **Know That Growing In Christ Enables Us To Mature In Our Relationship With Jesus And Each Other**



Call To Worship

Psalm 62 v. 5 – 8 NLT

I wait quietly before God,

For my hope is in him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,

My fortress where I will not be shaken.

My salvation and my honour come from God alone.

He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy Can reach me.

O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart
to him,

For God is our refuge.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you declared yourself the way, the truth, and the life. Reveal to us today we pray, your truth, and inspire us with your life, that now and at all times we may find in you the way to the Father.

We proclaim this day that Christ Jesus is Lord. For the God who said: 'Out of darkness light shall shine', has caused his light to shine in our hearts, the light which is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So be among us today Lord in our time together, for we ask these things in your precious name.

Amen

Song Suggestion

Be Still For The Presence Of The
Lord





WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY
OF THE CALLING TO WHICH
YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED.

EPHESIANS 4:1

Bible Reading

Ephesians 4 v. 1 – 16 NIV

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature

body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Song Suggestion

Come Let Us Sing Of A Wonderful
Love



Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

If you feel that your are able to, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.



Church Together Thought

Your story about a sower and his field is very familiar to me, Jesus, but I've suddenly realised what you're getting at. The good soil produces a successful harvest - and that good soil could be me!

I've considered what it means to be like the other three types of soil: the hard - packed earth where the seeds just couldn't grow; the rocky ground where the seeds had little root; the soil where thorn bushes grow. None of those are very attractive for long, but it's daunting to think of myself as the good soil in which the seed of your message just grows and grows until it bears fruit as you tell us in **Luke 8 v. 8, 15**.

When you were teaching in Galilee, you must have looked around the crowd and caught sight of one person here, one person there, and realised that these individuals had the potential you were looking for. So, you chose them to follow you. You must have looked at Simon Peter like that, seeing his faults, of

course, but knowing that he was good soil. What an amazing change you brought about in Peter's life. This man, more used to fish than to speeches, was the one who preached the first ever Christian sermon! Wow! He proclaimed your message to thousands of people and went on to heal as it tells us in **Acts 3 v. 6**, and he opened your message to people other than the Jews as we are told in **Acts 10 v. 44 – 48** which says: 'While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues [a] and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 'Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptised with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' 48 So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days'. Just think, I might be transformed like that. If I cooperate with you, you might take me, faults and all, and give me gifts which change my life and the lives of many others. Am I ready to allow you to do that?

I suppose, though, that your sower story is not just about me on my own. It's about my church that I'm part of, your church that you want to be part of, and how we might grow

and work together. Surely this is what **Ephesians 4 v. 16** is about when it says: 'When each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself in love'. Just as you, Jesus, took on the challenge of change and growth, as we see in **Luke 2 v. 52**, so you tell us that we must change and grow because we are your 'body' as you tell us in **Ephesians 4 v. 16**.

I like the picture of the church as a body! A body is meant for movement, for new challenges, for development. If the church is a body, we can't just sit around doing nothing, refusing anything new and just pretending to listen to your message. We must grow, or else we wither and die. To be honest with you, though, Jesus, the task you give us is very challenging!

The Apostle Paul told us that you want us to grow to 'the very height of Christ's full stature' as we read in **Ephesians 4 v. 13**! It means that whatever you are, as we read about you in the gospel stories, we should aspire to be like that too!

At the age of twelve, you were described as growing in strength, mentally, socially, and spiritually as it tells us in **Luke 2 v. 52**. Even that verse is challenging! It looks as though this is going to be a tough assignment and I'm afraid I might fail to measure up to what you want for me.

Perhaps I should go back to your story and

remember that soil doesn't take the initiative. It is just there, opening itself to the sun and rain alike, ready to receive the seed and to give the growing plant its nutrients. I just hope and pray that you, Jesus, will sow the seed of your message in my life and cause it to grow in me.

After reading the first three chapters of Ephesians we can only marvel at the love of Jesus, who was prepared to do all it took to win us reconciliation with God. What a marvellous life we are called to! How can we live up to that call?

Maybe **Ephesians 4 v. 1 – 16** begins to show us how that is possible, how we can grow in Christ by being united, serving and maturing. Let's take a moment to look at what that means for us to- day.

We grow in Christ by being . . .

UNITED (Ephesians 4 v. 1 – 6)

Ephesians 4 v. 2 tells us that there is no room for aggression, temper, or grudges in the way we deal with our fellow – Christians. When we consider what it cost Jesus to win us reconciliation with God, shouldn't we be ashamed of how slow we are to seek reconciliation with each other?

Ephesians 4 v. 4 – 6 goes on to tell us that in God, we are one whether we like it or not – seven times over, and in **Ephesians 4 v. 3** we can see that it is our business to live what

we are in practice, as well as in theory.

SERVING EACH OTHER (Ephesians 4 v. 7 – 13)

Like a conquering hero whose triumphal procession fills the whole universe, Jesus distributes the spoils of his victory to his loyal followers. **Ephesians 4 v. 7 – 10** says: 'But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.' 9 (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

These gifts are remarkable in that from his throne, the victor could have kept them all to himself. It is a mark of Jesus' magnificent generosity that he allows us to share them as **Ephesians 4 v. 11** goes on to tell us.

Sometimes we treat the tasks we undertake in the life of a church as chores (**oh no, not the flower rota again!**), but they are in every way a privilege, for we have been allowed to participate in the work of Jesus himself. It is not surprising, then, that gifts are not to be used with a selfish motivation – they are ways of serving each other, as we read in **Ephesians 4 v. 12**.

Their purpose is that as a church we will grow, becoming united in what we believe,

united in what we know of Jesus, and mature in the way that Jesus himself is mature, as we are told in **Ephesians 4 v. 12, 13**. What an ambition! If your talents are lying idle, you are missing out on a thrilling project!

MATURING (Ephesians 4 v. 14 – 16)

Maturity does not automatically come with experience; it comes from using your experience to allow you to grow!

Consider the example of Mrs Betty Tudor from Exeter. At the last count she had clocked up 273 hours of driving lessons. In that time, she had exhausted nine instructors, and has been banned from three driving schools. She has only taken the driving test seven times, but has failed them all. On the last occasion she went the wrong way round a roundabout, and the examiner was so terrified that he insisted on driving the vehicle back to the test centre himself.

Some Christians go to their grave in ripe old age with their L - plates still attached, 'tossed back and forth' by the traffic flow of religious fads. God longs for us to mature!

Standing together in unity gives us assurance that we will not be diverted from true worship of God by the allure of any sect or philosophy which (**with good motives or bad**) adds unnecessary complications to the grace of Jesus which has joined us to

God, as we read in **Ephesians 4 v. 14**. Even with the limited anatomical knowledge of the first century, Paul realised that a body's actions and movements are totally dependent on the control of the head.

If each Christian sees them self as part of the body, in touch with and under the control of Jesus the Head, then they will grow in every way, becoming a larger, more mature church, a church in which everyone gives and receives support, and one where love allows people to trust and be at one with each other, as we see in **Ephesians 4 v. 15, 16**.

Song Suggestion

What A Friend We Have In Jesus



Always be humble

AND GENTLE.

BE PATIENT

**WITH EACH
OTHER**

**MAKING
ALLOWANCE**

**FOR EACH OTHER'S FAULTS
BECAUSE OF YOUR LOVE.**

Ephesians 4:2

Prayers Of Intercession

Let us pray this week and as we do so, let's Pause & Pray:

Heavenly Father, we come before you today, and we thank you for teaching us how to pray simply and sincerely. We thank you today for hearing us when we cry out to you in moments of despair and anguish, and we also thank you for the ability to praise you and glorify your Holy name.

Pause & Pray

We praise you and thank you for good health and daily food, for the shelter and care of our homes, for the love and loyalty of our family and friends. Thank you for the teaching and example of Jesus, who is both our Lord and Saviour. We give thanks for forgiveness and salvation, for your presence with us always and for the service into which you has called us. Help us today, we pray, to thank you not only with our lips, in praise and prayer, but also in lives full of hope and love; for you and for each other.

Pause & Pray

Loving Lord, we would thank you for all the bright things of life; for the wonders of creation that is around us and the joy that that brings to us. Help us to see the wonderful things of life and the beauty of your creation, and to remember them and to count our blessings.

Pause & Pray

Heavenly Father, we pray for those who govern over us. We pray for our Prime Minister who leads this country and

his elected cabinet. We lift before you our Royal Family, and all the complexity of their lives at this present time. We pray for those countries around the world that are at war. We also pray for those countries that are hostile to other countries at this present moment.

Pause & Pray

Loving Lord Jesus, we pray for our families and friends. We thank you that you know our every situation. Help us today we pray to face the many different situations we face with dignity and love, and give us peace in our hearts and minds.

Pause & Pray

We continue to pray for those who are unwell, both at home and in hospital, or hospice. We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes. We pray for all those who care for their needs, both professionally and within the family. So, as we share a moment of silence together today, we bring before you those known only to ourselves and name them before you, Lord Jesus.

Pause & Pray

And finally, Lord we pray for ourselves. Help us Lord to follow your example in all that we do and say as we journey with you. We place ourselves, this Church and all your people into your loving care.

Pause & Pray

Amen

gifts

Christ gave gifts to men—he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of caring for and teaching God’s people. Christ gave those gifts to prepare God’s holy people for the work of serving. He gave those gifts to make the body of Christ stronger.

Ephesians 4:11-12

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
And the glory, forever and ever.

Amen

Poem - Help Me

Forgive

When rage and fury overwhelm my heart,
It's time to look to God's own Word.
I search the Bible for His good advice;
My will to His commands must be deferred.

In Romans, God reveals His love for me;
In all things God works only for my good;
He gives me blessings I can't understand;
I'd be peaceful if I'd do the things I should.

Jesus forgave so much; why then can't I?
I want to mold my life after His own.
I pray, I try, but my sinful nature wins;
Lord, help me, I can't do this thing alone.

In Colossians, I read about the peace of Christ;
Oh, how I long to feel it in my heart.
All I have to do is to forgive,
But Lord, it seems I don't know where to start.

I need to walk a mile in someone else's shoes;
They're doing what they think they have to do.
I know some problems are blessings in disguise,
But Lord, sometimes I feel so down and blue.

Ephesians says: 'forgive as the Lord forgave you;

Get rid of anger and every form of spite'.
I'd love to just let go and release it all,
But on my heart is a wound that's become so hard.

I'll keep praying, trying, Lord, no matter what;
I'm determined to let go and relinquish blame;
Some day, I'll say, and be truly sincere:
'I forgive it all in Jesus' precious name'.

Song Suggestion

Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning



Blessing

We have gathered here today, Lord God as your people to offer you our sacrifice of prayer and worship.

May the love of Jesus Christ bring us wholeness, the grace of God the Father grant us peace, the breath of Holy Spirit instil within us passion and the unity between them give us strength for this and every day.

Amen