

Service for Week 29th July -4th August
2024 by Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us that so often we love only ourselves and our every thought is for our own welfare Teach us what it means to belong to a community and in serving them may we equally serve you.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

Amen

Bible Reading Ephesians 4:1-16

Paul writes - As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

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. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 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.

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 men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 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.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God

Reflection.

Paul spent a long time either in prison or as a house prisoner. In such a time he wrote a letter to the early Christians meeting in Ephesus encouraging them as a group meeting together. He says that among their community group there will be people with different skills and capabilities that have been given by God. Some are inspired leaders, some will make preachers, some teachers. What Paul is saying is there



are people among you that will inspire you and others, to be the type of people that God wants you to be.

Paul says that over time the benefit to your community will be a greater understanding of God through the teaching and life of Jesus Christ. You will together develop a more mature and stable relationship to the world you live in. No more will you be confused by the conflicting ideas you may hear. No more will you be deceived by the trickery and lies of some people.

How this comes about, Paul implies, is through being part of a community. Helping each other, learning from each other, caring for each other so that you keep strong together. All the time using the words and example of Jesus as your guide. He describes this as being part of the 'body' of Christ, because just as a body has different parts and functions so members have different roles to play in order to achieve the common good for the community and to help others who are outside of it.

What we can learn from Paul's words and from his encouragement to the Ephesians is that people with different skills and capabilities will be present in any community that we may be involved with. There will be those who are leaders, others who will inspire others with their words and others who

have knowledge that they can pass on to others.

You may think that with the passing of time there is not very much you can do for those you live with or those around you. You may not, for example, be able to get around as well as you used to. Or perhaps you may not feel that you can communicate as well with others as at one time you were able to.

But it is amazing that even a few words, a small reaction a smile perhaps can help someone else through the day. It helps them and confirms in their mind that they are part of a community -something bigger than themselves. It gives them a feeling of belonging, of not being on their own. And for you it has the same effect because when we start thinking about and caring for others, we stop thinking about ourselves and our own concerns and troubles. It draws us together as a community.

In doing this we become, I believe, as Paul says part of the 'body' of Christ joined and held together in love and care. **Amen**

Closing prayer

O, Master, grant that I many never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Amen

From hymn 'Make me a channel' by Sebastian Temple
Opening Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett