

Sunday 5th May, 2019

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A Gift and a Responsibility

This is an exciting day – is it not? For 3 months we have been rudderless – that has been quite exciting too. But today is a very exciting day. Today, as a Church, we receive a gift – I will come to that later in the message.

For some time, and I am not just talking a few weeks, there has been a group of people committed to praying together for this day. For two years we have had a group of people spend countless hours seeking wisdom and discernment to determine what God was saying about who it was we needed to lead us to through the next phase of our work here - as the Body of Christ. Another group of people spent time reviewing the applicants and refining the list and making decisions about who to interview and who to turn away - I promise that was literally people from all corners of the earth. Then, for the 12 months of last year, there was a group of Elders who were preparing and praying and readying themselves to lead the Church through this transition of Pastor – a time that could be likened to “The Wilderness” – fortunately for us all it was only 3 months and not 40 years!!

So there has been excitement, commitment, discernment, diligence, prayer and preparation. And above all, might I suggest, anticipation amongst us all.

And here we are today - standing on the doorstep of our future.

Tell the Story of Tony B taking Dennis through the Door.....

Well, we stand at the door too – but there are much more exciting things on the other side of this door. I cannot tell what that is – that will be revealed to us as we journey together. But you know, God is faithful and He knows! They say that you can tell what is ahead of you by looking behind you. We are a faithful Church that has been worshiping here for 148 Years [I found this interesting summary of our history – I think it is accurate!! Caversham Baptist Church became a distinct parish in 1873. In 1871 a church building was established on the corner of Surrey Street and Main South Road. In 1884 a schism occurred, 74 of 170 members forming a separate congregation. These schismatics built a hall in Playfair Street, though they were known as the John Street Baptist Church. In 1895 the two groups amalgamated and the Playfair Street building was used as a Sunday school until a new church building was built in 1907. The Playfair Street building was then sold to the Caversham Brethren Assembly. The church remains active today. Actual church members numbered 146 in 1896, 149 in 1914, 181 in 1929 and 213 in 1938 (though later figures had a much larger proportion of members residing outside the region). Their Sunday school attracted an average of 168 students in 1897. In 1907 approximately 158 were listed in classes. By 1931 scholars and Bible class students totalled 196]. That is quite the history...

In the last 6 months we have seen great examples of God working, through his Spirit – no more than in the weeks in November when we made the decision to call Murray and Sandra. There was the Elders meeting with the Call Committee where God bought 12 different views to one accord in the space of a 3-hour meeting. And then there was a highlight for me – the Church meeting we had here when we all agreed to make the Call. God was clearly working here that night and what privilege it is to be his vessel on those occasions. You know the one thing I remember the most that night? After we had voted and closed the meeting, Brenda Pitts standing – just down there stood up and said....“Well, are you going to ring him and tell him?”

There is much more that we could point to in this process but here we are today celebrating God's goodness and faithfulness and provision to us. Today we have welcomed Murray and Sandra into membership and shortly we welcome Murray formally – commission them both – as our Senior Pastor. I say both because we know and we have seen they are a team and together they will lead us. So, when I thought what it was that had to be said today, I stalled, and I stalled and I stalled a bit longer. I have never done this before and have no idea what sort of message one should share at a service like this – but somehow it all came together, somewhere over the Southern Alps. - It is so much easier to write messages with the extra room of the Exit Row!

Let's look at today's passage: - To the church at Ephesus, the Church that Paul himself pastored for 3 years and was then led by Timothy - Ephesian 4:11- 16. Paul's letters were to the Church he loved dearly but a Church that was suffering under false teaching and let's say – misunderstandings of what the scriptures were saying..... That led to a Church that was not certain of its belief and one that was easily influenced by the confidence of some of those leading and teaching them. The results speak for itself - 30 years later John is writing of them in Revelation – they had lost their first love. I am not talking about us – but that is the context:

Let's Read: Ephesians 4:11 – 16:

And then Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians Chapter 1, in verse 10, the apostle says, "I beseech brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing. That there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.. High expectations!

To the individual it was no easier: Matthew 5:48 be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect: We have spoken of this before:

But how do we become perfect? There are 3 ways:

1. We are made perfect when we join Our Father in Heaven. Having a lived a life of faith and going to be with God.
2. We are made perfect through our faith in Jesus and the salvation that brings –
3. We are commanded to strive for perfection while we are here on earth... in our day to day lives. A practical perfection:

Let's focus on the practical perfection - this does not mean that we lead sinless lives.

The word perfection is *katartiso* in the Greek, and it means to be fully equipped, mature, complete, full grown. So it can have all different meanings. It doesn't have to mean absolute sinless perfection, although it can mean that.

But how on earth (literally) do we become perfect, fully equipped, mature, complete?

The Holy Spirit is the agent of the development to perfection. Here are 3 things the Spirit uses:

1. Testing – we can spend a month on this right? At Easter Camp they spoke of crossroads – when we are tested we face crossroads – how do we react? – every time we choose God's way we grow – just a little bit more..... James 1:2 – *"When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing"*
2. Suffering - [1 Peter 5:10](#) says that "Christ Jesus and God are working to perfect you." Then it says, "after you have suffered a while."

3. The 3rd tool the Holy Spirit uses to complete us is very clear in what he 'charged' Timothy to do. 2Tim 3:14 – 16. To go on being made complete – surrounded by the word to be wise for salvation through faith. And then in V16 – “all scripture is God breathed and it is profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete*, equipped for every good work (* Perfect)’

How are we made complete on earth? Trials, suffering and the Word – we are to study it, to meditate on it day and night, to let the spirit train us and inspire us as we do.

Developing in knowledge, deep understanding of God.

Because it was so important Christ gave us the Gift.

V11 - Christ gave the Apostles and Prophets as a gift. That was to build the early Church: Today he gives us the Shepherd/Pastor – to preach and to teach.

Read that way, Murray is God's gift to us. A gift to carry out the call God has on his life to be a Pastor – to perfect the saints – that is us – so that we can be equipped to do the work of the Ministry. That is, to build up the body of Christ – the Church.

It was only reading this again on Friday night when I got it!! The order of things: We are fully equipped so that the Church can be built up until we attain unity, so that then we may no longer be tossed to and fro by the waves or carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes....” This is a corporate thing. It is not a sole-position. We need each other. As I said to those at Easter Camp – look around you. Like it or not these are the people we are in unity with – as Alan said so well earlier it is covenant, with the church body and with each other that we are called to.

It is me being equipped, and you being equipped and then you and me joining together in unity so that we can stand against the things of this world, the things that do not reflect the truth of God and of his Son Jesus. It us forming together to be the body of Christ.

We live in a world that is equivocal – everything is okay as long as no one gets hurt. It is okay as long as you don't force your beliefs on me, believe what you want just don't tell me what to do. My rights are the most important thing – I am entitled to it, I deserve it.....

How do we, for example, stand strong in our faith and belief in the Israel Folau discussion? The man has quoted the Bible accurately and he is being labelled judgmental, a bigot, intolerant, a homophobe and worse for what he has posted. How do we take part in that discussion around the water cooler speaking the truth in love? I know myself how tempting it is to be blown to and fro and hide away from speaking the truth? How do we talk about the comparison in the news on Thursday – comparing how the great ambassador Sonny Bill Williams is reported as being for his faith and the way Folau is being represented. We are not called to walk away from those discussions....

But, Paul says in 2 Timothy that Scripture is God breathed - used for teaching, reproof, correction and training so that we may be made righteous – complete. Perfect.

Ephesians verse 15 - when we are fully equipped, mature we can speak the truth in love. When we have the firm foundation and surety of the knowledge that we are being trained and growing in - We can find a way to withstand the winds that threaten to blow us to and fro and hold strong to the standard that we are given. Let's change tack a little:

This is Murray's bookshelf in his office: **Powerpoint of the photo:**

The bottom shelves are all Bibles, Commentaries, Reference Books used for teaching and studying the Word. On top of that he has placed everything else – his books on Mission, the Holy Spirit, Worship, the Father Heart, Youth Ministry, Accounting 101, great Church Structures, Fellowship, Witness, social programs for Churches, etc....

They are all important things – all worth reading about and learning but all of it is stacked on the books on the Word. I promise you that was not a set up!!

Christ gave us the gift of Murray and Sandra to be our Pastor/Teacher/Shepherd so that individually we can be equipped and corporately we can be built up, made perfect;

We do this together. Growing more and more into the fullness of Christ. That comes from the power of the God-breathed Word that is sent to equip us for our works and when each part is working properly the body grows and builds itself up, in love.

The gift of a new pastor, a full-time pastor – what a luxury! What are we to expect? Are we looking to Murray as an answer to getting all of the extra things done that we think the church should be doing or may have been missing out on? To be checking off our wishlist? Taking some of the heat off those who are doing the work of this place perhaps? I have news! As I read Ephesians 4:12 it says 2 very important things:

1. Murray's job is to equip us. His job is to make us complete, mature, and perfect as saints. He does that through teaching and shepherding us in the way of the Word. He will do it through building up teams to preach, and leaders to teach small groups, and individuals to disciple one another and to speak to each other the truth in love to train, correct, and teach. That is the reason why Christ gave pastors to His Church.
2. **Secondly, verse 12 tells us is that having been equipped, our job is to do the work that God has prepared for us. Without the equipping our work is not as effective.**

Just like Murray's bookshelves – everything we do in this place needs to be built on a strong foundation. That strong foundation comes from being saturated with the word. With the passion that develops from being equipped, trained and confident in our knowledge of the Word that God breathed out – so that we are enabled to do the work that God has set for us to do.

[II Corinthians 3:18](#) says, "As we gaze at His glory we're changed into His what? Into His image by the Holy Spirit."

Look to Murray and Sandra as a gift to us – a gift that is to continue our growth into maturity in our knowledge and understanding of God. A gift to lead us to be fully equipped as individuals for the work God has for us to do in His kingdom and when joined together, a Church that is fully equipped and motivated by the Spirit for the work of this Ministry and the building up of this church.

A gift that always directs our gaze to His Glory so that we are changed more and more into His image.

Out of that springs life and life in all its fullness.