Lownes Free ChurchSunday Morning – October 20, 2019

**The Mystery and Majesty**

**of Jesus Christ**

*How God’s Glory and Promises Find Fulfillment in His Son*

Exploring Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians

***Diversity: Each of us plays a part in the Unity (fullness) of Christ.***

***Ephesians 4:1-16***

 How can the grand and glorious goal of seeing all things summed up in Christ ever be accomplished? Divisiveness, hidden agendas, and garden variety tribalism threaten unity at every turn. Christians are not immune to these things, and so the Lord graciously helps us see how WE have a part in making unity happen under the hand of God.

 However, we need to define or describe unity. It is not unanimity, as in everyone thinking the same, nor uniformity, as in everyone being the same. Rather, unity is the purposeful integration of all the parts of something working together in a fully functioning way, as a body.

 God’s command is not to create unity, but to preserve the true unity that exists in Christ. How is this done? First, by recognizing that unity, approaching it with humility, and then realizing and actualizing your place in it. If YOU do not do your part, the body, the unity, suffers.

 “Diversity” today has become a political buzzword useful to divide us into tribes and competing victimhoods. But the God who created us and whose Creation is marked by purposeful diversity, has a better plan. And that is to gift His Church with the leadership and teaching necessary to avoid divisiveness and promote healthy growth in each part.

***How does God draw all things together in Christ? Through His Church:***

***God calls us to unity (with other believers in Jesus).*** vv. 1-6

Each must act consistently with His calling. That is, we cooperate with God’s Spirit in humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

 What is that calling? It is following our One Lord in what He has taught us, and witnessed in our baptism. It is the unity of God our Father who is over all things and guiding them into Oneness in Christ.

***God equips us in diversity (for other believers in Jesus).*** vv. 7-12

 The Holy Spirit has come, giving grace to every single believer, as a result of Jesus’ victory over sin, Satan, and all of God’s enemies. God’s gifts include the original founders and now, teachers of His people, His Church, equipping each believer for ministry to the Body.

***God trains us for maturity (loving other believers in Jesus).*** vv. 13-16

 The ultimate goal (achieved in Heaven) is to begin now, by our growing into mature, productive servants. As gospel grace is lovingly proclaimed and applied, believers grows up, avoiding doctrinal error and childish factions, instead, developing into fully functioning local churches which carry out Jesus’ command to reach the nations.

***How does this “unity in diversity” apply to me? We should ask. . .***

 1. Do I function as part of a local church, or just attend services?

 2. Do I greet those who are different from me with grace or judgment?

 3. Am I growing in loving and relating, or am I more self-absorbed?



***Why it matters. . .***

*How is true unity different from unanimity or uniformity?*

*Is Paul implying that all believers will agree on every doctrine? Phil. 2:1-11; 4:2*

*Paul implies that immaturity hinders unity. How? 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4*

*How does maturity keeps us from deceitful teachers and their false doctrines?*

*What keeps believers from fully participating in a local church? Rom. 12:1-13*