

Ephesians 4:11-16
The Five Faces of Jesus: apostles
Sunday September 25th, 2016

Today is the 6th and last sermon in the series “The 5 Faces of Jesus.” Next week I begin a series on “What Happens When You Die” which concludes on “All Saints Sunday” with a message on Paradise.

But today I am going to be teaching on “**apostles**”. That’s “apostles” with a small “a”. The word “apostle” comes from the Greek word “**apostolos**” which means “**one who is sent out.**” The first face of Jesus that we see is that of God’s one and only Son who was sent into the world.

John 3:16 and 17 read, “**For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.**”

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world.”

Hebrews 3:1 Says, “**Therefore, brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling consider that Jesus, the APOSTLE and high priest of our confession was faithful to the one who appointed him,...**”

In the early church there were 2 qualifications to be an Apostle, **first they must have seen Jesus. Second, they had to be a witness of the risen Lord.** So from the definition you can see there are and would be others besides the 12 who were designated “Apostles” such as Barnabas, and Apollos. And, *“it seems like they could have and would have died out. But in another and greater sense, the qualifications remain. Anyone who would teach Christ must know Christ; and anyone who would bring the power of Christ to others must have experienced Christ’s risen power.”* Dr. Barclay “Letters to Galatians and Ephesians” p. 168

Now in the early church the Apostle’s authority was recognized throughout the Church. The Apostles went from place to place starting new churches. Thomas went as far east as modern day India and founded what is called the “Mar Toma” church there.

And we are all apostles for we are all sent. Jesus said to all of us in his great commission before he ascended, “**Go into all the world and make disciples...**”

Now specifically, how has God graced and gifted people in his church to be apostles today? The basic nature of an apostle in the church today is a **person who enjoys dreaming and bringing those dreams to fruition**. They are always pushing into new territory. **Apostles like to start new things**: churches, worship experiences, Sunday school classes, social ministries, and building programs. Mature apostles come up with new and innovative ways to do the work of the Kingdom of God. **They help others envision new ways of doing things**.

When they pray the phrase in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” they are looking for new ways to expand God’s Kingdom here on earth. They are never content with things as they are. And a mature apostle takes a God given idea through to its full conclusion whether that takes a week or 14 years.

Examples of apostles in the church that you are familiar with are people like John Wesley, Martin Luther, Rick Warren, and on a much smaller scale Fred Baum. My base ministry is as a teacher, but I have often, for a phase, functioned as an apostle.

In everyday life (I don’t really like the word secular), but in everyday life apostles are people like Bill Gates, Jim Click, and others you would describe as entrepreneurs and business people who take a business idea and build a company around it. Or they are explorers or research scientists always looking for something new.

Now I want to help you understand me, and understand each other in terms of these different giftings, or roles: because that helps in the unity of the church and the building up of the body of Christ. When apostles and prophets in particular are not understood it can bring a lot of conflict into their lives and in the life of the church.

As an example of an apostle here are my scores. I am a 24 as an apostle and 27 as teacher in the “5 Fold Ministry Test”.

What this means is that I am always looking to come up with new things to do and starting new programs. It means in terms of preaching, my sermon content is dead spot on in terms of scholarship and theology. Each of my sermons could be used by a class as a study guide. That is the teacher gift in me.

What being an apostle means is this: at the second church I served in as a youth pastor I took a youth group of about 13 kids and 4 adult sponsors and built it up to a group of between 100 and 120 on the rolls with 34 adult sponsors. It went from 1 youth group to two, to at one point three, with also a choir, drama group, praise band, and discipleship groups. We went on mission trips, God and Country Tours and summer camps. I helped design, fund raise and build a 34k square foot Family Life Center that cost \$3.5 million dollars and in the process brought the Habitat for Humanity headquarters to that church’s campus as well as a Christian Counseling Service.

One of the phrases those who are apostles hear over and over again in their life is this, “Can’t you just leave well enough alone?” Do you know how much that is going to cost? We’ve never done it that way before.

Now there are not many apostles in each church. In fact, Churches tend to boil them off, meaning they frustrate them and block them to the point they find a new more accepting church, or they go to start a new church or ministry on their own. Apostles get very frustrated with the slow administrative nature of the church. It almost kills the soul of an apostle when they hear, “But we’ve always done it this way.” And often times when there is more than one “apostle” in a church there can be fireworks between them unless they get on the same page.

Most churches, like most people, they do not want to change and yet change is the most prominent dynamic of our culture today. The church to be able to survive and thrive into the future desperately needs the apostles who thrive on change.

When churches or ministries accept the innovative leadership of an apostle, powerful things can happen.

When deep respect and trust develop between an apostle and a church, marvelous, creative expansive things can happen. And yes of course not all apostles are pastors of the church.

When I used to take youth on mission trips it usually was just the youth group who went. But one year I looked at the program and we had a marvelous praise band, a good drama group and a great choir and they all wanted to go on a trip. Many of the kids did not overlap in the programs and I did not want to take a mission trip, followed by a youth choir trip, followed by a praise band trip and all the different fund raisers that would take, so I said lets take all the groups at once on one grand trip.

I got a lot of initial blow back for that idea. I got a lot of “that will never work,” but we had a marvelous trip to Long Beach California. During the day we rehabbed homes and churches and in the evening we put on great youth lead worship services where the youth did everything including the preaching, altar calls and praying. It was an amazingly powerful experience, but initially the idea was firmly put down and dismissed, because we had never done that before.

Respect, trust and innovation are the hallmarks of an apostle working to build up the unity and ministry of the Body of Christ.



A story is told about “A former Marine Corps sergeant who took a new job as a high school teacher.

Well, just before the school year started, he injured his back. He was required to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body, Fortunately, the cast fit under his shirt and wasn’t noticeable.

On the first day of class, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in the school.

The smart-aleck punks, having already heard the new teacher was a former Marine, were leery of him and he knew they would be testing his discipline in the classroom.

Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, the new teacher opened the window wide and sat down at his desk. When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he picked up a stapler, stood up, and stapled his tie to his chest.

There was dead silence.

The rest of the year he had no trouble with discipline.” Mickey's Funnies

Apostles are creative, innovative leaders and when a spirit of trust and respect is present great things can happen in a church.



Now there are immature or young apostles and they are truly hard to work with because they have a hard time staying on track. In this world today there is a constant never ending flood of creative, innovative good ideas and immature apostles have a hard time distinguishing between those ideas and the ones that come from God. They tend to try something new every week and exhaust the followers they do have with the constant change and nothing coming to complete fruition.

Even mature apostles need the counsel of prophets to discern God's will as well as the counsel of those who have the gift of pastors and teachers to explain to the congregation where they are going. And let them know it's going to be ok!

In my life, I keep some people close to me to help me discern where I need to take the church. I need my prophets and pastoral counselors, because one of the characteristics of mature apostles is that

once they are convinced they are on a God given path come hell or high water, it will not stop them.

My prayer always before I begin something new is “God let this be your will, because you know me Lord, I do not give up.”

Now I will emphasize again and again that ALL the gifts and graces are needed for maintaining unity and building up the body of Christ. All the Five Faces of Jesus are necessary within the body of Christ.

6 slides will go here with the pentagon on them. Pull up the first blank one and then each one as I name them.

Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher.

A healthy church or Christian ministry has apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers working together to build up the church!

Within the body God gifts many to be pastors and teachers. Not too many are apostles or prophets or evangelists, but all are necessary.



There is a children’s tale that goes like this: *Who flew the kite?*

“I did,” said the wind!

“I did,” said the paper!

“I did,” said the string!

“I did,” said the boy!

“I did,” said the sticks and the tail!

But in reality they ALL flew the kite! If the wind had lulled, if the paper had torn, if the sticks had broken, if the tail had caught in the tree, or the boy had fallen down, then the kite would have come down too!

EACH HAD A PART TO PLAY!

Remember, Ephesians 4:7 says, “To each has been given a gift of the Spirit for the good of all.”

Each of you has a gift. Each of you has a part to play. This is God's word to you. What will you do with it?

In Jesus' Name Amen