

KING JESUS AND HIS CHURCH:

The King Calls Every Member to Ministry

Ephesians 4:11–16

Christ. Shepherds. Servants. Saints. Mission.

For four weeks now, those five words have helped us think about Christ's design for His church. And today we come to the fourth word.

But before we get there, let's remember how we got here. We started with **Christ**. Because before we ask how the church should be organized, we have to ask a much more important question: **Whose church is this?**

And the answer is Jesus. He purchased the church with His blood. He is the Head of the church. He is the Chief Shepherd of the church. He is the King of the church. So, everything begins with **Christ**.

Then we moved to our second word: **Shepherds**.

King Jesus has not left His church without leadership. He provides elders—pastors, overseers—who are called to shepherd the flock, guard sound doctrine, devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, and equip God's people.

Last week we came to our third word: **Servants**.

We saw in Acts 6 that when real needs arose in the church, qualified servants stepped forward. People were hurting. Needs had to be met. Unity had to be protected. And servants took responsibility.

But today we come to the fourth word. **Saints**.

And church, **this is where you come in**. Because if we stopped after the first three words, we could accidentally create the impression that ministry belongs primarily to a handful of people.

Jesus rules. Shepherds lead. Servants serve. And everybody else...watches?

No. That's not the New Testament church. In fact, I want to suggest this morning that one of the greatest misunderstandings we can have about church is believing that **the people sitting on the platform are the ministers and the people sitting in the pews are the audience**.

The New Testament gives us a radically different picture. Listen to Ephesians 4:11–12: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

Did you hear it? Who does the work of ministry? **The saints do.** That means if you belong to Jesus, ministry isn't merely something you receive. **Ministry is something you have been called to do.**

And that gives us our big idea this morning: **EVERY BELIEVER HAS BEEN CALLED, GIFTED, AND PLACED BY KING JESUS TO PARTICIPATE IN HIS MINISTRY AND MISSION.**

And I hope by the time we leave today, you aren't thinking: “**I suppose the church needs more volunteers.**”

I hope you're thinking something much bigger: “**King Jesus has invited me into His work.**” Because He has.

I. THE KING CALLS EVERY SAINT TO MINISTRY

Look again at Ephesians 4. Christ gives leaders to His church. Why?

Paul says: “to equip the saints for the work of ministry.” That is a very different picture from the way churches sometimes operate. Sometimes we unintentionally develop a model where the pastor does the ministry and everybody else helps the pastor if he asks nicely enough.

The pastor preaches. The pastor teaches. The pastor visits. The pastor counsels. The pastor evangelizes. The pastor disciplines. The pastor organizes. The pastor checks on everybody. The pastor knows every need. The pastor recruits everybody. And eventually the pastor is exhausted, the congregation is frustrated, and everybody wonders why more ministry isn't happening. That's not Christ's design.

Christ gives shepherds to the church **to equip the saints.** The word translated “equip” carries the idea of preparing or making someone ready for service. So preaching isn't an end in itself. Teaching isn't an end in itself. Discipleship isn't an end in itself.

We are learning Christ so that we can **live like Christ and serve like Christ**. The goal isn't merely, **"I learned something today."**

The goal is, **"Because I have encountered the truth of God, I am better equipped to follow Jesus and serve somebody else."**

And notice the direction. Christ gives shepherds. Shepherds equip saints. Saints do ministry. The body is built up. That's Christ's design.

So, the congregation isn't an audience watching ministry happen. **The congregation is the mobilized people of God**. That means congregational involvement is much bigger than attending services. And it is certainly much bigger than voting at business meetings.

Congregational accountability matters. There are decisions the church should make together. But if our vision of an engaged congregation is simply a room full of people occasionally raising their hands to approve or reject something, our vision is far too small. Jesus did not save us merely to **vote on ministry. Jesus saved us to do ministry**.

That's participation. That's engagement. That's the church. And that raises an obvious question: **"But what can I do?"**

Paul has an answer for that too.

II. THE KING HAS GIFTED EVERY SAINT FOR MINISTRY

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul writes:

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone."

I like the repeated word **Varieties**. It means different gifts. Different kinds of service. Different activities. But still the same Spirit. The same Lord. Same God.

In other words, **different does not mean deficient**. Maybe you hear a sermon about every believer being involved in ministry and immediately start thinking about everything you cannot do.

“I can't preach.” Fine. “I can't sing.” Okay. “I don't want to stand in front of people.” That's okay. “I couldn't teach a class.” Fine.

Who said everybody was supposed to do the same thing? Paul's entire argument is that God deliberately made us different. Later in the chapter he uses the picture of a human body.

A foot isn't a hand. An ear isn't an eye. And Paul says something almost humorous, “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?” Imagine that.

One enormous eyeball rolling down the hallway. That's not a body. It's a horror movie. A healthy body requires different parts doing different things. And so does a healthy church. You may not have every gift. **But God has given you something.**

Listen to verse 7. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” **To each.** Not just to pastors. Not just to elders. Not just to deacons. **To each.**

And why did God give it? **For the common good.**

God has put something in your hands that He intends to bless somebody else through. That's what spiritual gifts are. They aren't trophies proving how spiritual we are. **They're tools for serving somebody else.**

Peter says it even more simply in 1 Peter 4:10. “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.” There it is again. **Each has received.**

And Peter says, “**Use it.**” You received it. Now use it. Serve someone with it. Steward it. And did you notice Peter's phrase, “**“God's varied grace.”**”

Think about that. God's grace takes different shapes through different people. Through one person, God's grace looks like hospitality. Through another, it looks like teaching. Through another, encouragement. And yet another it looks like generosity. Perhaps it looks like mercy or leadership.

Administration. Practical service. Listening. Helping. Showing up. Sometimes God's grace looks like somebody sitting beside you in a hospital waiting room.

Sometimes it looks like a meal arriving at your house. Sometimes it looks like someone opening the Bible with you. Sometimes it looks like a phone call that came at exactly the right moment. Sometimes it looks like someone quietly saying, **“I noticed. And I'm here.”**

God distributes His grace through His people. Which means there is something God wants to do **through you** for somebody else. And Paul goes even farther.

1 Corinthians 12:18 says, “But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.” God doesn't merely **gift** the members. **God places them.** That means you aren't here accidentally. The relationships you have aren't all accidental. The experiences you've lived through aren't meaningless. The people you naturally connect with matter. The burdens that keep catching your attention may matter.

God has gifted you. God has positioned you. And maybe the question isn't, **“Does God have anything for me to do?”** Maybe the better question is, **“Am I paying attention?”** Which brings us to where this becomes very practical.

III. MINISTRY BEGINS WHEN WE STOP WAITING AND START LOOKING

One of the most influential Bible studies of my generation was Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God*. And one of the ideas from that study has stuck with Christians for decades. **Find where God is working and join Him there.** Now, that isn't a Bible verse.

But it is a wonderfully memorable way of describing a thoroughly biblical posture. Open your eyes. Look around. Pay attention to what God is doing.

And when He gives you an opportunity, **join Him.**

Because one of the sentences Christians sometimes use when talking about service is: **“Nobody ever asked me.”**

And sometimes that's a legitimate criticism. There are ministries where people need to be recruited, trained, screened, appointed, and given appropriate oversight.

But church, we cannot make **“Nobody asked me”** our excuse for a life of inactivity. Because King Jesus already asked us.

You don't need someone from the church office to call before you encourage somebody. You don't need a committee assignment before you visit someone who is lonely. You don't need a title before you pray with someone. You don't need an official position before you invite a neighbor to dinner. You don't need your name printed in the bulletin before you begin discipling someone younger in the faith. You don't need a gilded invitation before you share the gospel with the person God has already put in front of you.

Sometimes we spend so much time waiting for someone to hand us a ministry that we miss the ministry God has already placed around us.

So maybe we need to change the question. Instead of, **“Why hasn't somebody asked me?”** let's ask, **“Where is God already working around me, and how can I join Him?”**

Look around. Who has God already placed in your life? What need keeps catching your attention? What burden keeps tugging at your heart? What have you walked through that might allow you to walk alongside somebody else? Where has God already given you relationships? Where has He already opened a door? Where is somebody already asking questions? Where is somebody already hurting? Where is somebody already searching? Where is God already working? **Go there.** That's ministry.

Maybe it's your workplace. Maybe it's your neighborhood. Maybe it's the ball field. Maybe it's the school. Maybe it's the person sitting three rows away from you. Maybe it's a young family that needs encouragement. Maybe it's an older believer who needs companionship. Maybe it's someone walking through grief you've already experienced. Maybe it's a new Christian who needs somebody to help them understand the Bible.

Maybe it's a lost friend who has suddenly started asking questions about Jesus. And here's what I want us to begin doing. **Look. Listen. Join. Serve.**

Look. Where is God working?

Listen. How has God gifted me, burdened me, and positioned me?

Join. Don't wait forever for somebody to recruit you.

Serve. Use what God has given you for somebody else's good.

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning and praying, “**King Jesus, show me where You are working today—and give me the courage to join You there.**” And then imagine actually paying attention.

You might notice the coworker who keeps lingering at your desk.

You might notice the neighbor whose spouse recently died.

You might notice the young mother who looks completely exhausted.

You might notice the teenager who needs another trustworthy adult in his life.

You might notice the elderly church member you haven't seen lately.

You might notice the new family standing by themselves.

You might notice someone who suddenly starts asking spiritual questions.

And instead of thinking, “**Somebody from the church ought to do something.**” Something changes. You realize, “**I am somebody from the church.**” Church, that's the culture that needs to be built. Not a church where everybody waits for somebody else to notice. A church full of people whose eyes are open.

A church full of saints looking for where King Jesus is already working.

Because something beautiful happens when that becomes the culture of a church.

IV. WHEN EVERY PART WORKS, THE WHOLE BODY GROWS

Come back to Ephesians 4. Paul says in verses 15–16:

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, **when each part is working properly**, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

There it is. **When each part is working properly.** Not when the pastor is working properly. Not when the elders are working properly. Not when the deacons are working properly. **When each part is working properly.**

Christ. He is the Head. He rules His church.

Shepherds. Christ provides shepherds to lead, teach, guard, pray, and equip.

Servants. Christ provides servants who move toward practical needs and help care for His people.

Saints. Every believer is gifted and called into the work of ministry. And what happens when all of that is functioning as Christ intended?

Mission. The body grows. People are cared for. Believers mature. The gospel is proclaimed. Disciples are made. The church becomes increasingly what King Jesus intends His church to be.

That's why we've spent these weeks talking about church structure. Not because structure is the goal. It isn't. We said last week, **Structure should never become the ministry. Structure should serve the ministry.**

The goal isn't to move boxes around on an organizational chart. The goal isn't simply to change bylaws. The goal isn't to replace one group of people making decisions with another group of people making decisions.

The goal is to **release the church to be the church.**

And I want to say this as clearly as I know how: **We aren't taking ministry away from the congregation. We're giving ministry back to the congregation.** Not merely the responsibility to attend. Not merely the responsibility to give. Not merely the responsibility to vote.

The privilege of ministry. The joy of knowing that **King Jesus can use me.** Imagine a congregation like that.

Saints equipped. Gifts unleashed. Homes opened. Neighbors loved. Children disciplined. Widows remembered. Hurting people comforted. Meals delivered. Hospitals visited. Young believers encouraged. Lost people befriended. The gospel shared. Disciples made.

Not because the someone else organized every moment of it. Not because a committee approved every act of kindness. But because the people of God began living every day with their eyes open to the work of God.

Christ. Shepherds. Servants. Saints. Mission.

That's not an organizational chart. **That's a church alive.**

So, here's what I want to ask you to do this week. For seven days, every morning, before you get caught up in everything else demanding your attention, pray one simple prayer. **“King Jesus, show me where You are working today—and give me the courage to join You there.”**

Then open your eyes. Pay attention. And when God puts someone in your path...when a need becomes visible...when a door opens...when somebody starts talking...when the Spirit nudges your heart...don't immediately think, **“Somebody ought to do something.”**

Remember that you are that somebody! You are part of the body of Christ. You have been called. You have been gifted. You have been placed. And King Jesus has invited you into His work.

Church, we are not trying something new. **We are trying to be faithful to something ancient.** Our goal is not innovation. **Our goal is apostolic faithfulness.** And perhaps apostolic faithfulness begins tomorrow morning with a very simple prayer.

“King Jesus, where are You working?”

And then an equally simple response: **“Here I am. Let me join You.”**

Let's pray together.