

Sermon Starter – Gifts for the Praise of God’s Glory

Ephesians 1:1-14

This sermon focuses on the fulfillment of the church’s growth in God’s love that leads to ultimate communion and praise. This sermon holds together both the missional identity of the church and its co-union with God in praise. These are both the character and the call of the church. The spiritual gifts at work in the church lead the church to God in praise and into communion with God’s flow of healing, hope and love to the world.

Acts tells the story of Pentecost and the Spirit’s coming to the church. Ephesians presents the church’s theological reflection upon that event and on its Spirit formation, identity and call.

Ephesians 1:1-14 can be read as a passage of proclamation of praise. Note the “bookends” of praising proclamation (verses 3, 14b). Recall how often in Scriptures the utterance, proclamation, testimony, and singing of praise is recorded. The church’s identity and call is praising God—an identity that expands beyond this world to cosmic significance. The spiritual gifts and spiritual leadership of the church are ultimately for this end: Praise! Seeing God in the spiritual gifts given, and seeing God at work through spiritual gifts empowered in the church, inspires utterances of testimony, proclamation and praise. Our praise is both gift and response to God.

A communion service could be held, with spoken elements crafted from the conclusion of Ephesians 1 (1:15-23). Communion enacts the praiseworthy fullness of the body’s spiritual union with divine love and with one another. We enter into communion as an act of affirming our co-union with and praise of God.

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