

August 8, 2021 St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX “Fully Relying on God”

Ephesians 4:1-16 1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. 7 However, he has given each one of us a special gift[a] through the generosity of Christ. 8 That is why the Scriptures say, “When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people.” 9 Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. 10 And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself. 11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

In today's text, Paul speaks of growing up in every way into Christ. The paraphrase says, (Ephesians 4:1 Message) **In light of all this, here's what I want you to do.**

While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. God has a plan for our lives as we work together for Him.

Paul writes the Ephesians begging them to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, since there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Most of us don't like conflict so we would end to keep the peace. But if so, would you “speak the truth in love” or not? To achieve a balance what do you need to learn? There's a topic called emotional intelligence. It means being able to read the feelings of others, be aware at the same time of your own feelings and respond to them in a caring way. Or as one writer put it, there are four characteristics: 1. Personal Insight with a better understanding of your own emotions than do others. 2. Personal Mastery or the ability to control and regulate your own emotions and reactions better than others. 3. Relational Insight or the ability read, understand, and empathize with the emotions and reactions of other people better than most. 4. Relational Mastery or the ability to use emotional reasoning and more skilled at effective, persuasive communication than others.

We can be more caring about our relationships with others. That includes how we help anyone in crisis. When it comes to crises, I am reminded of a story about a man walking along a river on a peaceful day. All of a sudden, the quiet is broken by cries of help. Someone is in the water, carried by the current, calling out. He runs down hands them a long branch and pulls them to safety. The next day, the same thing happens. “Help, help I'm drowning.” The day after that, he brought a friend with him and together they pull someone to shore. The friend says, we need to open a lifeguard station here. The first man agrees that something needs to be done and encourages the man to open the

lifeguard station. But he says I have another more important task. “What,” his friend asks, “could that be than rescuing people who are drowning?” The first man says, “I am going up the river and find out who is pushing them in. That is where I want to intervene.” The river of life rages at times around us and at other times within us.

Twila Paris has a song called *Peace, Be Still*, that I shared in Sunday school a few months back. One verse says There is an ocean inside my heart, mostly the water’s calm. Just enough breeze to keep me sailing, I feel safe and warm. Angry winds blow suddenly. I become a churning sea. Then I hear a quiet voice, He says to me: Peace be still, peace be still, peace be still to the wind and the waves. Peace be still, peace be still, peace be still and the ocean obeys.

When I feel like I am drowning in my inner river, I know the Holy Spirit will be waiting for me with a ring toss buoy or a safety line. I also know that Jesus is the one intervening up the river, the redemptive force for good. He is about the business of redeeming still - both directly and through His people. He intervenes in societal structures that hurt his children and cultural rebellion that attacks his church. He rescues the prisoners.

We can help defend what is right and just. Ephesians 4 reminds us of the problems of trying to live the Christian life apart from the church. We need others because we don’t all have the same gifts of the Spirit. We are part of a greater body, called the body of Christ, with Jesus as our head. This presumes few hermit monks, few living in isolation who take offense at an imperfect church and who yet believe in Jesus. Whenever we work out our difficulties, it is a witness for the good. It helps when we grow in our emotional intelligence in every relationship.

Ask yourself the question: How do you need to show humility, gentleness and patience in dealing with a difficult relationship this week?

That’s a tough question for me when I am disquieted inside. I know we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. I know that Jesus is our peace. There are times I get tired of

the gentle, humble and patient route, but if I really let my anger show, it would accomplish only the enemies' agenda.

In the end, the scriptures remind us that we need to gather around our heavenly Father to satisfy our needs. When you look at how people satisfy their need to feel significant and secure in life, you see people building their own kingdoms to feel secure. We try to act unique, dress funny, loud looking and sounding cars, bright pink hair, get degrees, get elected to political office, take up a cause, flaunt expensive cars and lifestyle. The list goes on in ways we try to be significant. We are significant, however, because we are part of the body of Christ, the Lord of the universe. We are children of our heavenly Father, living in His power as one song's words say (In Christ Alone) *No guilt in life, no fear in death*

This is the power of Christ in me. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me

from His hand. Till He returns or calls me home. here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

We are secure because of our relationship with Jesus. How do you hunger and thirst after God knowing He is with you every day? What do you seek from Jesus? What can you do today to rely on God rather than on things or people to satisfy your important needs? For that is the call. As the Israelites ultimately relied on God for rescue, as the Ephesians relied on God for unity, as those following Jesus relied on Him for eternal life – we are called to rely on Jesus and let our lives show it.

A good acronym to remember this is F R O G. Frog. F-fully R-relying o-on G-God. Fully relying on God. Frog to help you remember to fully rely on God. As we fully rely on God together as His church, we can faithfully address opportunities to hos His love and grace. Amen