

Good morning, Symphony! We'll be reading through Ephesians 4:1-6 today. Just 6 verses for today, but they are such good verses.

*1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

In our passage today, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to grow and practice unity. He urges them to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which they have been called”.

So far in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul beautifully outlines the awesome mystery of the Gospel, and how the grace of God displayed through the work of Jesus on the cross has ushered in a new reality for those who believe. They were now alive in Christ, not dead in their trespasses. They were now joined together with all humanity, no matter their ethnicity or culture or manmade identity, since Jesus has become their cornerstone.

And in light of this new life we have in Christ, we are to walk in a manner that is worthy of all that this new life has to offer. Paul strengthens his plea to the Ephesians by making a really interesting observation, that life with Christ follows this pattern of ones. He says, “there is one Spirit, one hope we’re called to, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all.” And just like all these, there is one body of believers. It wouldn’t make sense to have all these united, harmonious aspects of our faith, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, etc., only to find that the body is not one.

Paul recognizes the importance of unity, but he also recognizes how it can be difficult to maintain unity. After all, Paul is well aware that humans are sinful, and are prone to not living in the reality of Christ. That’s precisely why he urges the Ephesians to take care to grow in humility and gentleness and patience, and to practice bearing with one another in love and being

eager, not just willing but eager, to maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

What would it look like for you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called? What would it look like for you to be more humble, more gentle, more patient, more loving and more united to the body?

You know, if I can be completely honest for a moment, something I realized over the years is that we have a tendency to enjoy the private life. I don't know if it's a Boston thing, or a society thing, or a Symphony thing, but I've noticed that we often put most of our lives behind a curtain, only for us to experience. If we were to consider all the aspects of our life, and sort them into "personal" and into "community", I think we put a lot more into "personal" than we should. "Community", a lot of the times, only applies to the few events we attend at church, hanging out and meeting up with people from time to time, and that's kind of it.

We like to keep things personal and private, and we only really share a sliver of our lives with those around us! And that might seem easier, that way we don't have to invite people into the messy parts of our lives. We don't have to share our struggles, or deal with the growing pains that come with deeper relationships. We can put on the air of unity for the few moments we choose to spend with others, smiling and saying a few friendly words of encouragement and asking them about their day, but that's not enough to maintain true unity. After all, if we all only share 1% of our lives, then we can only ever be 1% united.

I'm trying to work on opening up myself more to community. Of course, there is value to the private, personal parts of life that God has designed to be private and personal, but I wonder how much better life would be if I spent it being more eager to maintain unity, being more eager to explore this bond that we have found by the peace of Christ? To have more opportunities to practice humility and gentleness and love and unity because of the deep and encouraging friendships that are built on the foundation of Christ? Not just spending a little bit of time with only those

that I have good “chemistry” with, but instead seeing every brother and sister as just that, like a brother and sister, because of the greater bond we have as members of the body.

It’s a tough challenge, to go against our tendency to withdraw and instead to jump into unity, and that’s why it’s so important that we remember that we’re walking in a manner worthy of our calling. What is our calling? To be like Christ, more than that to live our lives in light of the grace and unity He introduced to us. We were once separated from God, we were not united at all, but Jesus showed us great humility and gentleness and patience and love and His desire to unite us once again and form this bond of peace was greater than the separation we had.

Because Christ showed us such commitment to His unity with us, and He calls us to this calling of being united with Him and with the body, let’s walk in a manner worthy of that calling.

Today, as you go about your day and you have these opportunities to choose to be united in the body, I pray that you walk in a manner worthy of your calling. As you meet with your family group or your micro-church this week, I pray that you walk in a manner worthy of your calling. As you spend time with your friends and your people around you, with people from our church, I pray that you walk in a manner worthy of your calling. Even as you pray and you think of all the different things that people shared with you, that you could have an opportunity to take part in, by interceding on their behalf or by being hands and feet and by serving them to help them in all of these different prayer requests that they have, I pray that you walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

Let’s pray and let’s invite the Lord to help us do this. That we can walk in a way that really glorifies Him and really is true to what he showed us first.