



Sermon Notes

Term – Spring 2019

Series – Wholeness: Ephesians

Gathering & Date – the 10, 10 March

Title – What's the church for?

Preacher – Paul Langham

Reading – Ephesians 3:1-13

Main message of this talk in one sentence – God designed the Church to showcase God's wisdom and beauty to the whole creation and the heavenly realms (Ephesians 3:10, Who?)

The word 'wholeness' – which is the umbrella title for our series at both the 10 & the 5 – is an invitation
To be more fully loved that we may more fully love

The season of Lent – alongside these notes, you'll find a brief explanation of what Lent can mean for us, and how we can use it as we pursue intimacy with Jesus. We're encouraging church family members to use the Lord's Prayer daily during Lent – you can pick up a card to pop in your bibles when you're next in church ...

Paul does his own little recap in the first 9 verses of chapter 3, reminding us that God's purpose is to bring Gentiles (everyone born not a Jew) into the covenant promises and family of his eternal plan.

Main points –

God has designed the church to showcase his beautiful wisdom ...

The word 'manifold' in the NIV is from a Greek word meaning 'many colours' hence my word beauty.

Interestingly, it has always been God's intention to reveal his character through those who follow him:

Obey (God's commands) completely, and you will display your wisdom and intelligence among the surrounding nations. When they hear all these decrees, they will exclaim, 'How wise and prudent are the people of this great nation!' For what great nation has a god as near to them as the Lord our God is near to us whenever we call on him? And what great nation has decrees and regulations as righteous and fair as this body of instructions that I am giving you today? Deuteronomy 4:6-8

We can trace this right back to Abraham – 'through you all nations of the earth will be blessed' (Genesis 12:3)

Last week, we were listening to Jane Achaloi talking to us about how God is using his people to bring transformation to the communities of Uganda.

Did you notice how similar their focus is to ours?

Connect ... Grow ... Influence ...

They're using scripture to connect people to God (Jane's own testimony is that she always went to church but never knew God in the way she does now through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) and build a sense of family or community.

Did you notice how their opening bible studies emphasise identity? And how that releases purpose?

Did you get the sense of people being empowered to transform culture?

The language is the same because God is doing the same thing across the world ...

If you heard Jane, you may remember the obstacles people faced when they first began to allow the Holy Spirit to teach them afresh through scripture:

- We have nothing ...
- How can we change anything ...?

But that all changed as they asked the question, what do we have in our hands? They began not with what was impossible but with what was possible ...

And we can do the same. Perhaps as we listened last week we were tempted to think, well, that's all very well in Uganda – things are far more complicated here ...

Well, why don't we take our cue from our brothers and sisters in Uganda? What do we have in our hands?

Two practical things we can all do:

1. Why not give up negativity and take up positivity for Lent? A number of church leaders have been talking about this over recent months and one of the results went out earlier this week across the Together4Bristol / CAB and Arise networks.

Bristol's Mayor, Marvin Rees, launched it on the BBC RB John Darvall's show ... and The Post, Points West and the Festival of Ideas are all joining in too in their own ways. It's an awesome opportunity to see God create a sea change in the atmosphere over our city!

#ThePositivityExperiment

Lent is a natural time to examine ourselves and think about the kind of people we want to be. At the same time we are aware of a world riddled with negativity that desperately needs God's love - in thought, in word and in action.

So during Lent we are inviting Christians – and everyone – across the City into an experiment. Not just to fast from negativity, but to be a more positive influence on our city, our work places and our communities.

Over the six weeks of Lent, can what we think, what we say and what we do have a clear and noticeable impact on Bristol and everyone who lives here? Each week different writers will share some ideas to encourage you along the way.

Share your thoughts and ideas on social media using #ThePositivityExperiment #Bristol

2. Pray through the attached worksheet on The 'One Another / Each Other' sayings in the New Testament

Questions

- As you read through the lists, which ones is the Holy Spirit highlighting to you? Were there any that surprised you? Or disturbed you? Which ones are the hardest to put into practice?
- How do you 'live in harmony' (Romans 12:16) with those you find difficult or with whom you disagree?
- How do we 'spur one another on' (Hebrews 10:24)?
- Do we have people with whom it's possible to 'confess your sins to one another' (James 5:16)?
- The key question is this – which ones is the Holy Spirit asking you to work on?