

January 4

Scriptures: Read Ephesians 4

Key Verse: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Overview

Jesus takes the Church seriously. He has given the Church all it needs to reach maturity. First of all. He has given Himself to the Church. But then, He has given various ministering gifts for the purpose of nourishing and cultivating the Church as it grows, “to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (NIV).

An “apostle” is a “sent one” or missionary — sent out from an established congregation to pioneer in an unreached area. The missionary establishes a new congregation, trains leaders, and works him or herself out of a job. Then it is time to move on and pioneer somewhere else. A “prophet” is someone who “forth-tells” the Word of God (as contrasted to “foretells”).

Although there may be an occasional foretelling, the general function of the prophet is to speak the Word of God to a specific context, correcting, sometimes rebuking, but always bringing encouragement and hope.

“Evangelists” are full-time spreaders of “good news.” Their whole focus is broadcasting the seed of the Word indiscriminately to as wide an audience as possible. Like the apostle, evangelists tend to be on the move.

“Pastors and teachers” are nurturers. They shepherd and feed the flock of believers. They tend to hurts, comfort the sorrows, and live day to day in close contact with their charges. They are the carers.

But all these ministries have one goal in mind for the Church: maturity and effective service. They do their job and those who make up the Church are “no longer infants” (v. 14).

Prayer

O Lord of the harvest, we pray as Jesus asks us to pray, that You would send forth labourers into Your harvest field of this world. Help us today to stretch to the maximum in reaching for the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Thank You for those who labour in ministry to help us. May we in some way bless those who minister to us today.