

TITLE: Household of God: Household Gifts – Ephesians 4:7-12

AIM: Consider the Giver Christ is & the gifts He has given His Church.

INTRO: If you asked each of my brothers & sister & me who our favorite uncle was, we'd each give the same answer: Uncle Les. I know it's not fair to the others, but just way was. Uncle Les was a WWII vet, a railroad engineer disabled by epilepsy, & unmarried. Sometimes lived w/our family, & sometimes not, but was always good to us kids. If went to visit where he lived, he'd take us to the store & buy us candy. If came to visit, he'd bring gifts. But wasn't just the gifts/candy – he paid attention to us, would play games w/us, made us feel special. But the gifts didn't hurt! Most children, if parents are away somewhere, love to receive gifts when they return, even if they are the hotel shampoos & soaps, etc. (only last a few years, then want more). We all like to be thought of, & we like to receive gifts! Jesus has given to His Church gifts which are very imp for our life, ministry & the work of the His Kingdom. Theme: Household of God – understanding that we are the HofG & seeking to understand what it means to be the HofG. Members of God's Household are the recipients of wondrous gifts from God, but not for our sake alone, rather for the good of the Church, His Household. In Eph.1-3, Paul laid a foundation of this understanding of the HofG by teaching us what God has done for us in Christ, who we are in Christ, & how God has brought Jew & Gentile together into one family/household thru Christ. He prayed for us to understand the wonder of God's gift to us in Christ, the vastness of His love & grace. Then in Eph.4 Paul urges us to walk worthy of this calling to receive what God has done for us in Christ, & to maintain the unity of the Spirit given to us in Christ. We've seen the description of this unity – vs4-7: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God & Father of all, & each given grace & gifts. Then Paul began to focus briefly on some of those gifts & God's purposes in giving those

gifts, which is where we'll focus our attention today, this communion Sunday. Let's celebrate the household/family of God & God's goodness thru the gifts the Lord Jesus has given His Church. Ephesians 4:7-12

Vs7 – ***“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.”*** Grace – God's unmerited favor – is the basis of the gifts given us – spiritual gifts are meant here, but this could also apply to God's gift of salvation thru Christ, His gift of the Holy Spirit, etc. According to the measure of Christ's gift – it's not that some get this measure & others another – yes, we all get different gifts, but “the measure” refers to Christ – according to the measure of Him, the gift of Him. Out of the fullness of Christ, out of the completed work & perfection of Christ, He gave gifts. Vs8 – ***“Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, & He gave gifts to men.’”*** That's a quote of Psalm 68:18, but Paul quotes it somewhat differently that it is most often translated. In Psalm 68:18, where David clearly prophesies of the Christ to come, it reads “He received gifts,” or “receiving gifts.” But the Hebrew word “laqach,” translated “take, receive” can also be translated “take to or for a person” (Strg's). The picture drawn is of a military leader returning to his home country/city after a great victory & proceeding thru the streets w/the triumphant army in tow, followed by prisoners/captives & other spoils of victory, to be dispersed to the nation. The ascension, as applied to Jesus, refers 1st to His glorious resurrection in victory over sin/death & His ascension to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Jesus triumphed over sin/death /Satan by His death & resurrection, seated at His Father's right hand as testimony/declaration of His victory, the completed work He was sent to accomplish. And, as A.R. Fausett wrote, “He received gifts to distribute – the impartation of the gifts & graces of the Spirit depended on Christ's ascension.” In vs9, Paul makes it clear David was pointing to the Messiah, Jesus: ***“(In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but***

that He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? In order to carry out His Father's will & plan of salvation, Jesus had to 1st come down, empty Himself of His divine powers & privileges for a season, be born of a virgin, taking on our likeness, except sin, live a perfect life in obedience to His Father, die on the cross, bearing our sin, & be buried in the tomb, carrying our sin to the grave. "You came from heaven to earth to show the way, from the earth to the cross my debt to pay, from the cross to the grave..." Paul continued – vs10 – ***“He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fulfill all things.”*** "From the grave to the sky..." The grave could not hold Him & He was raised for our justification, ascended to His rightful place of triumph, & began to give gifts. Jesus told His disciples that it was to their/our advantage that He go away, that He might send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). Thru the gift of the Holy Spirit Jesus gave other gifts to His Church, which would enable us to carry on His work. Vs12 – ***“And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelist, the pastors & teachers...”*** "He" is Jesus Himself. David Gudzik: "Jesus established these offices...they are a divine institution & not a human invention. Paul lists 4 leadership gifts/offices. Some say 5, but probably "pastor & teacher" is one office - "pastor-teacher." Can easily see the imp of these offices/leadership gifts in the early Church, newly formed, but they continue to be vital for the life of the Church today. Apostle means "delegate, messenger, one sent forth w/orders" (Strg's). The apostles, along w/the prophets of old, were used by God, as Gudzik wrote, "to provide a foundation (preserved as the NT) as described in Eph.2:20," which says that the household of God is ***“built upon the foundation of the apostles & prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.”*** The apostles oversaw the formation of the early Church, established churches thruout the Roman Empire, & thru their verbal teaching & writings, laid out the 1st principles of the faith,

which we must still build upon, live by today. The office of apostle may be in place still today, but maybe not. If so, they do not carry the same authority as those in the 1st century. I think of missionaries who establish new works as possibly apostles, or church planters, maybe. A prophet is one who speaks forth the word of God; always, as Gudzik wrote, "in total consistency w/the foundation of the OT & NT." A prophet may speak of what is to come, as the prophets of the OT pointed to the coming of the Messiah & even to His 2nd coming, or simply (not so simply) declare, "Thus says the Lord." Paul taught (I Cor.14) that prophets in the early church were subject to other prophets (church leadership), who were to discern whether or not they were speaking God's truth/message. I do think we have prophets in the worldwide Church today, & have thruout history. Jonathan Edwards was certainly a prophet in his day. Someone like John MacArthur, Francis Chan, or Mark Driscoll could be considered a modern day prophet, calling the Church to take seriously what it means to follow Christ. And some in the local church may be prophets, to whom we must listen as they listen to what God has to say to us all. Evangelists are those specifically & especially gifted to preach the gospel, proclaim the good news. All of us are called to evangelize, be Christ's witnesses, but some are gifted to speak w/boldness to the masses or individuals. Peter was an evangelist on the day of Pentecost & beyond, as was Paul in Athens & elsewhere. It's obvious that George Whitfield & Billy Sunday & D.L. Moody & Billy Graham were/are evangelist raised up by God to reach untold millions w/the gospel. Dave Zbikowski is an evangelist if I ever saw one, as is Adam Vergobbe. Pastor-teachers are those raised up by God to shepherd His flock. The primary way (but not only way) this shepherding is done is by teaching the Word of God, because in the Word of God we find the truth of salvation thru Christ & the foundational truths & deeper truths of following Christ. Vs12 gives

us God's purpose for giving these gifts/establishing these offices: ***"...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."*** To equip means to completely furnish, fit for action. An army must be equipped w/armor & weaponry before it goes into battle. An athlete must have the right equipment for the game he is playing. A craftsman or common laborer needs the tools of the trade. And Christians, members of the HofG, must be equipped for the work God has called us to do. Note that the saints – every believer is to do the work of ministry – service to the church or as the church. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers are to equip. Apostles & prophets – lay the foundation – here is the truth/way – walk in it. Evangelists are to reach many w/the gospel, thus adding to the Church, but also by example & word to teach witnessing. Pastor-teachers are to teach & exemplify how to follow Christ, how to trust & obey, how the Christian life should look, what God expects of us, etc. They should be able to say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." They should be able to say, "This is what God wants us to do." But the saints, all of us, the people of God, are to do the work of ministry. What is this work of ministry? It is multifaceted, but as we shall see, it is intended for the good of the whole, the building up of the church, the body. It may be encouraging others in their spiritual walk, teaching one another, being examples, serving one another in tangible ways, being a witness to those around us. Certainly it involves service in the church family – perhaps serving on a committee or playing an instrument or teaching SS/Jr. Church, or serving a meal, etc.; but most of the work of ministry takes place outside the walls of the church building. It is caring for one another thru the week, doing the work of the church in the world, representing Christ in our community, pointing our world to Christ. Raised up leaders equip – pray for your leaders that God may equip you thru them; equipped saints do the work(s) of ministry; & the body/church is

built up – grows, numerically & spiritually, becomes stronger. A built up body is healthy & effective in the world for the kingdom & glory of God. That's what we're to be about. We are the Household of God!