

April 16, 2017

## *Who are you?*

*"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will, in all things, grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."* Ephesians 4:15-16

On this Easter morning it might be good to take a moment and think about why Jesus chose to die on the cross and why God raised him from the dead. These glorious events did not happen haphazardly, but God, from the very beginning, planned for these things to take place to make it possible for you and me to become what we could not otherwise become.

God allowed Jesus to die on the cross, gratifying the requirement of the law of sin and death with his blood, so that you and I could choose to become his children, to live again, to be unified in the body of Christ, the church, and to become mature. God, our Father, who loves us so completely does not just want us to 'go to church'. Jesus did not die on the cross and raise up from the dead so that we could 'go to church'.

God's plan from the beginning has always been to supply us with an opportunity to be transformed from the *"...objects of wrath..."* (Ephesians 2:3) that we are, into the eternal beings that God designed us to be. That transformation is not a single event, but an ongoing process of maturing.

Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, has placed within the church the leadership that we need to grow-up and develop into the transformed creatures he longs for us to become. The Apostle Paul tells us that these leaders and teachers were placed in the church, *"...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ."*

In no small part the church that Jesus died to save, made up of those who have surrendered their very lives to him, is designed to help this transformation occur. How can we tell if we are being transformed or not? Understand what God's design for us intends to produce in us. God designed us to be transformed into the image of his Son. That means God designed us to be humbled selfless servants, just as Jesus is a humble and selfless servant. (Philippians 2:1-10)

God designed us to serve, to be unified in the faith we share in the Son of God, and ultimately to become the *"...light of the world..."* that he is. A part of being matured is to accept instruction presented in love. It's hard to accept instruction isn't it? We do not like to be told we are wrong, but in order to grow-up we have to learn to accept that reality. When we are confronted with our wrong we can blame, we can justify, or we can acknowledge and accept responsibility. Those who are mature choose the latter.

Jesus died on the cross because I am a sinner. The wrong things that I have done and continue to do or say required him to make that sacrifice. His willingness to take my place is the ultimate act of service and obedience.

I stand before God without excuse. I cannot blame my wrong choices on others or justify them because of others. When I make wrong choices I need to own my responsibility for those choices. One of the strongest marks of the mature is that capacity to own our mistakes and our sins.

So, Jesus died on the cross to demonstrate for me what a humbled and obedient servant looks like. God allowed him to make that sacrifice because, motivated by his great love for me, he wants me to become all that he designed me to be. When he raised Jesus from the dead my Father showed me what I can ultimately become. The challenge of course, is to let God work in me, through his Spirit, and through the church. The challenge is my full surrender to that transformative process. As was true for Jesus; there can be no resurrection without death. My death to myself leads to my being raised to a new life,; ressurected to live forever.

