

United For Maturity And Service

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[0 : 00] Let's pray as we are. Precious Father, we want to thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross.

And when you, Jesus Christ, said, and I, when I shall be lifted, I shall draw to myself people from all corners of the world.

We are drawn together today in your presence by the love that you paid it all. And therefore speak to us.

Use me, Lord. I give you my heart, my lips, and my voice that you may use me and help me to listen to you, that I may communicate what comes from you to your people, to the glory and honor of your holy name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. May you be seated. Again, I want to say, Pastor, I feel honored to be given this opportunity.

[1 : 16] I know it was a short notice. And when I got the call that, will you be willing to preach? I just say, my African culture says that when your boss tells you, jump, you only say how high.

You don't say, I will not jump. And therefore, this is a great opportunity and a great honor to be given this opportunity. I am so much reminded when you and Sandra came, and one other person I don't remember.

Yep. When you came and you blessed people in Massindi, and we had a wonderful, wonderful time there together. And as a pastor from this church, where we have been having this relationship for over 30 years, your coming had a great milestone.

And we want to thank you and thank all of you for sending Camille Holstrom. Every time she came, we saw New City Fellowship.

We didn't see an individual. We saw a church coming through her. And all those people who always came with her, and I want to thank God so much. Thank you for welcoming me home.

[2 : 32] When I was asked to share from the word of God, what came to my mind is what always has been burdening my heart for the church in Uganda.

I do not know about the church here, but I have been a pastor for over 30, almost coming to 40 years now in ministry. And when Pastor Wilcox, who is my mentor, who came as my mentor, I was still a young man, and we preached, we made a lot of altar call.

I am an evangelist. I love preaching and making altar call and people coming to Christ and praying for them. And going out there and start saying that, whoa, we had a big number of people come to Christ.

Thousands of people come to Christ. And when they come like that, you felt it was like the consolation. But one of the things that I found that was touching to my heart, was when we go to the islands of Lake Victoria.

And every time we go there, we preach and hundreds of people come forward and we pray for them. And many of them, you pray for them while they are weeping and crying because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 48] And then we go away. The next year, we come back. And we preach. And I got to notice going the third time, whenever we make altar call, the same people who gave their lives and came forward three years ago are still the same people coming forward.

Same tears coming forward. And I start saying, wait a minute. Are we coming just to recycle the same people spiritually? We preach to the same people and they come to Christ and then we come back and then we recycle them again and they come to Christ and we go and say, we have done a great job.

I realize that there has been one of the biggest challenges we have in Uganda. The challenge of discipleship and being kingdom focused.

One of the biggest challenges has been that. Christianity has been in Uganda over a hundred years. The church has been there. Many people pray to say, I am a Christian. I am a Christian. I belong to the Anglican Church. I belong to the Pentecostal Church. But you will find that many times, many people profess to be Christians. They confess to be Christians, but very few of them profess so.

[5 : 11] Because we have not emphasized the importance of spiritual growth and maturity and encouraging that we are all for service.

And today my message is entitled United for maturity and service through a perverse generation. United together as believers first of all for us to mature in our faith, in our relationship with God. And second, that we will be able to become servants, to go out to serve, not to mature and be there. And yet, we are doing it in today's generation where there are a lot of challenges. Turn with me to the book of Ephesians chapter 11. I mean chapter, sorry, chapter 4 verse 11. I wish there was chapter 11 in New City here.

All right. Because of time, I'll just get a few verses over here. Verse 11 says, and he himself gave some, I'm reading from New King James Version.

[6 : 33] And he himself gave some to be apostles and some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

Praise the Lord. This is the word of the Lord. Discipleship is one of the greatest challenges we have. I don't know how it is here.

But above all, not discipleship because there are so many. I've gone through a lot of discipleship trainings with Billy Graham School of Evangelism, with the Campus Crusade, Evangelism Explosion.

I remember Randy coming in when I was young and they could teach us about Evangelism Explosion. What would Jesus do? And all those wearing, all those bracelets and to help us to really grow.

[8 : 02] And we realized that every time they met, it was just a program. You don't see any maturity among the people in Uganda. Because many times, we love preaching, don't we?

When we come here and we preach and we challenge people and we make altar call and people run forward to give their lives to Christ. And we say, yes, we have made it. But one of the things that I have realized today is the importance of spiritual maturity.

Especially in this perverse generation. And so, this scripture tells us here that Jesus Christ himself, when he came, he took captives and he gave gifts to people for ministry.

Some people sometimes talk about five-fold ministry, but sometimes when I look at this scripture, I don't want to limit it to only these five-fold kind of five positions that have been, but I'm limiting it, I mean, I'm putting it in terms of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ gives in the body of Christ.

The ministerial abilities that he gives to the church and to the body of Christ that they can be able to serve and all of us together because it is our work as pastors to equip.

[9 : 26] Because the Bible says that the purpose of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit we have, not just to brag around. One of the greatest problems we have in Uganda, I don't know about it here, we have hundreds of denominations begin, but many of them are divided just because of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Because I speak in tongues, I want to begin a church which speaks in tongues and I think that is the only thing that will take me to heaven. Because I do healing and deliverance, I want to say, I want to call my church miracle center.

We have a denomination and all is oriented on miracles. Just getting one gift of the Holy Spirit. Because we want to emphasize the gospel.

I don't know you have it here, we hear full gospel. I don't know whether others are half gospel, but you find the whole church becomes full gospel and they think they will make that.

But when you look at the emphasis of each of these denominations began is the misunderstanding or the administration of spiritual gifts and ministerial gifts.

[10:42] And Paul says this, that when Jesus came, he called people to himself and people believed and when they believe, they don't only believe to be there, he gave gifts.

that when you believe, then you have to serve him. As you believe, you have to serve him. Not to believe and wait for the rapture to come so that you can be taken to heaven.

Then you are not good for heaven yet. Because you believe in order to serve, worship him, glorify him, and thank God for the song that we say, glorify him.

Do something for him while you are still on earth and make use of the gifts. And because of that, many of us are gifted differently.

Many of us are gifted differently. But it is our duty of the church to put all those gifts in unity. And that's why I entitled my message, United for Maturity.

[11:46] We are united so that we can build up one another. We are united so that we can shoulder one another. We are united so that we can uphold one another.

There are those who are weak. There are those who are strong. There are those who are too powerful that they need other people to share in their powers. Otherwise, they will destroy those around them.

So they need to share. So God has gifted us differently. And in this different gifting, I would like to share three points and then I will stop there.

Paul began the church in Ephesus. If you read Acts of the Apostles chapter 19 and 20, he went and evangelized the church there.

He found already some believers were there. And he challenged them. The Bible says he spent three months when he was challenging them and sharing the gospel.

[12:47] And many people came to Christ and they believed. And what he did is when many people started opposing because they saw that many people were coming to Christ, Paul says, okay, I think I should stop evangelizing.

I'm just having numbers. And the Bible says he went into some house called Tyrane and he spent their time teaching them, equipping them, and strengthening them for two years.

He evangelized for three months and he spent two years building them up, strengthening them up. And it was out there that miracles began to happen.

Even handkerchiefs from his pocket were picked up to be taken to the people, touched them because people had matured and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were beginning to manifest among them.

And that is the living church. church. And he began to equip leaders and that's where Timothy, Titus, and all those came and they took over for succession plans.

[13:57] So it is from there that while after his third journey he wrote a letter back to encourage the church that he had found continuing to disciple them and he brought this.

he wrote this letter the first three chapters were talking more about the treasure the riches that we have in Christ about the adoption, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, and inheritance and the seal of the Holy Spirit that believers who accept Jesus Christ will be.

They are adopted. They have got an inheritance the assurance of their identity in Christ in the first three chapters. and then he came to the fourth chapter where we are today here.

He starts saying now if you have all those treasures that wealth of spiritual blessings that you have amidst you here are what you need to notice.

There are gifts that you need to put into practice. gifts. We do not want to be pure warmers to sit there and say oh pastor spoke.

[15:12] He really said it. What did he preach? He really preached powerful. What exactly did he preach? Oh that was really fire. You don't know whether he got banned or not.

Now what are you going to do about it? Because Paul now starts saying that there are gifts. When you believe there are gifts. And here is what I want to share in these three points.

One it's important the point of understanding and identifying spiritual gifts and ministerial gifts in the body of Christ. It's very very important.

As we serve him as we believe in him it is important for each one of us to begin to examine yourself. What is my spiritual gift? I was saying there in Sunday school and say what can we do if you feel you don't have anything?

I said you can have a gift of presence. Come to Africa and just be there. Where do you come from? I come from Chattanooga. Where do you worship?

[16:19] New City Fellowship. What are you here for? Just to be here. And that will do something. And many people will start saying what a sacrifice that you have preached the gospel.

So nobody who is a believer lacks a gift. Because God says he equips his people. Some are called to be evangelists.

Others are to be preachers. Others are to be prophets. Others are to be healers. Others are to be servants. Others are administrators. Others so many things that you can be. And therefore, many times when we sit in a congregation and we have all these gifts, we don't discover them, they will be inside us.

And if you don't discover your spiritual gifts, sometimes you end up misusing it because the Holy Spirit will not let you sleep. You either use your spiritual gift to destroy others, or you misuse it, or you misunderstand it, or you are puffed by pride because of it.

The most important thing is to discover that you have a spiritual gift and it is my duty to unite together with my brothers and sisters in the congregation that we can impact one another.

[17:48] That is the most important thing. Second point, the importance of developing and rightfully using the ministerial gifts and the spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

Verse 12 tells us that for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God.

These are very profound, powerful things that sometimes many of us misunderstand. That when we come to the church and probably I have a gift of music, singing, or maybe I have a gift of whatever gift I may have, I may focus on that one gift.

The purpose is that each of these gifts will impact the other. They need all to be used in unity. unity. And when they are used in unity, that all of us, little here, little here, all these gifts, they are used for this, one, the faith that God has called us into to know Jesus Christ and him crucified.

That is the most important thing. We need to help and encourage one another to get to know Jesus better and to have trust in him. The second part of it here, it says proper knowledge.

[19:20] sometimes we wrongly know today we have all these challenges we have in our society today. I don't know whether you have these.

Some of them are being transferred from here to come over to Uganda, but we have enough.

Please don't give us some of the things you take from here.

We have a lot of witchcrafts, we have a lot of demons, we have a lot of traditions and cultures which are so pervasive and have destroyed so many people.

We have behavior problems, we have issues that many families are destroyed, many marriages are destroyed, and others are now being brought in. You don't have enough.

Here is something we have from here. But sometimes we forget that actually these challenges are not a problem.

[20:17] Amen. I love a scripture in the Bible, in Hebrews, I think it should be chapter 10 or chapter 12, I will not go there, where the writer says one more time I'm going to shake the world.

And not only shaking the world, but also the heaven. So that those who will not be shaken will remain.

And those who can be shaken off will be shaken off, so that the pure will remain. There are some challenges that are coming into our society today.

And sometimes as a church, instead of concentrating on maturing our faith, concentrating on fixing our eyes to the child of God, the son of God who is our savior, the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, and the hope of eternal life that he has given us, we have diverted our minds.

The enemy is coming in and saying, look, here is something. Here is, you know, lifestyle is something. And then the whole church begins to say, oh no, let's not preach the gospel, let's oppose.

[21:34] In Uganda, that's what is happening, many of the church leadership. Oh, we are hearing that they are bringing this lifestyle, liberalism, and all these kind of things. And they say, we pass a statement, we don't want this.

That is not what the church is. The church is to concentrate on maturity. Let those things come.

They will find their levels and they will hit a rock and they will go back.

But if they find we are not mature, that is when they will take us over. They will rip us apart. They will divide us. They will make us devour each other and will begin biting each other because we have left what we ought to do.

Anglicans love this. We have left what we ought to do and we have done what we ought not to have done and there is no truth in us. The greatest calling that God is calling us today, let us concentrate in building up the body of Christ in discipleship.

Getting them rooted, getting them built up, and to understand the hope of our salvation. And that is Jesus Christ. When we get to know him, the salvation he has given us, the adoption we have received, the inheritance we are about to have, and that we know that we know that one day when we are taken home, we know where we are going.

[22 : 59] We are not here to begin fighting those who act differently from us. It's up to them. A time will come. Those who are amidst us who want to act like them, there will be a time the church is going to be shaken, who stands for the truth.

And if you are not hanging on Jesus Christ, you will be shaken off. And I want you to be part of those who are unshakable. Hanging on to Jesus Christ.

And let the cross of Jesus Christ be part of where you hang on in the midst of all. Whether they pierce your ribs and water come out and blood come out, just stay there.

And finally, why do we need that maturity? We need that discipleship for maturity because circumstances that are coming to shake us.

Verse 14 says that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro. The other version says by the waves.

[24 : 11] Friends, today, our generation today have waves that are coming. I don't know whether you feel them here. The waves are coming. COVID came and it waved us and some of us have been taken up.

But there are things that are more than COVID that are coming to shake the world. So that we may no longer be children tossed back and forth.

Because of spiritual immaturity, some of us are tossed up. Because the storms of what they call relativism, modernism, secularism, traditionalism, denominationalism, conservatism, materialism, hedonism, and all those isms and isms and isms are coming up to take people and to turn us here and there.

And our eyes get open and we start following those isms and isms and isms. And we forget to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the perfecter of our faith.

That is the calling that today, everywhere I go, I want to challenge that as Christians, we got Christ Jesus who is never shaken.

[25 : 31] And if God is for us, who can be against us? Let us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ. Let us continue to expect his coming. And when we hang on to him, whatever happens, there could be issues in our family systems.

There could be issues in our church systems. systems. We need to be very, very alert and hang on to Jesus Christ. Those shaking sometimes, they are within us.

And that's why Paul says, I pray. When he was beginning to shift, he began in chapter 3, verse 19, verse 14, and they say, I pray for the family, for all, every name, where every family derives its name.

That's the kind of prayer that he was praying, that you will be built in your inner being. We have this flesh, friends, and sometimes our problems are not all those other people who impose it to us. Sometimes we have this flesh. We have issues with emotionalism. We have issues with intellectualism. Those are other isms. we have issues of personality kind of isms that come and take us up.

[26 : 50] And even the word of God, when it comes to us, instead of concentrating on maturing and focusing on our inner being, in our relationship with Christ, we are taken up by all our flesh.

We develop personalities that sometimes rip up the body of Christ. Christ, and we do not end up staying together in the unity. My challenge this morning is, may the Lord help us to identify our spiritual gifts.

Secondly, may the Lord help us to unite together to build up one another. May the Lord help us to ignore whatever storms that the enemy is trying to raise against us.

They will always be there, friends. I was told of Billy Graham writing and says, there's no true church.

And if you find one, don't join it. Because you will be the one to spoil it. Everywhere there are flowers. Everywhere there are issues.

[28 : 00] But with the unity of our gifts, we perfect one another. with the unity of all our ministerial gifts, with the support of those who have been gifted differently, we can encourage one another.

And all of us together will be united. And probably the rapture will come. I come from Uganda. You come from New City. And we all meet in the air.

And there we start saying, welcome to heaven. I pray that God helps us in that.

Let us pray. Father, our brother came here in his confession prayer.

He prayed about the importance of unity and that we have caused the division. salvation. And sometimes, Lord, we have misused our gifts.

[29 : 08] And sometimes, Lord, we have not examined ourselves and discovered our spiritual gifts. And some of us who probably have the gifts, we have been taken by pride and use it for our own glory.

We become the assistant Jesus. Have mercy upon us, Lord. Teach us, Lord. We need the unity of believers.

We need that, Lord, you bring us together. We need this solidarity so that as the world shakes us, that as circumstances shake us, Lord, we will be held together by the bond of unity that you, Jesus gives us, Jesus wy Singing bless us in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.