

Sermon Notes on Ephesians 4 vv 1 – 3; 1 John 4 vv 7 – 16
‘Living the vision day by day’ 13th September 2026

We have all known life changing moments in our lives and one of the biggest is the terrifying joy, or the joyful terror is when you become parents for the first time. I remember the panic, the uncertainty and the question of ‘What am I to do?’ or ‘Why is the baby crying?’ This is what is behind the power of Paul’s ‘therefore’ here in verse 1 and that life changing moment when we say yes to Jesus. There is the awe and wonder of realising all that Jesus has done for us, the joy of knowing our sins forgiven, peace with God, Jesus living in me but then there is the equally panicky question of how do I live the Jesus way? The answer to this is given in Ephesians chapters 4 – 6 and the lifelong journey of trusting and obeying, of loving God with all that we are and loving our neighbour as ourselves, of knowing his peace and joy in our lives, of being salt and light in our day by day lives or as I would like to say as we listen to and follow what Paul is saying in Ephesians, ‘Practicing Resurrection’.

I thought Wednesday night’s meeting was brilliant. I have taken the time read everything which was written and I found it to be so heartwarming as we begin taking the next steps after our Vision Day and the challenges the six areas from our Vision Day give us. I’d like to make two general reflections after Wednesday. Firstly, the question was raised about how are we to prioritise these six areas? It was asked if it was possible to do one at a time and the simple answer to this is no; but also, I would suggest yes too!! When we look at the model of Jesus, or of Paul or my own experience of ministry what they have in common is that they all require multi-tasking. When we read the Gospels, we read that Jesus prayed, he preached, he performed miracles and he disciplined the Twelve all at the same time. It was the same for the Apostles in Acts or their letters and it is the same for me. To focus on all six is part of my identity as your Pastor and you would be right in expecting me to have all six in my heart and mind. This is why the answer is no, but it is also why it can be yes. It is yes for the simple fact that not all of us have the time or mental space to hold all six in your heart and mind, but you do have space for at least one. There is a model for this I like very much which can accommodate this and it is called a ‘virtuous circle’. In this model you would journey doing area at a time and moving to the one that then connects best for you. The beauty of this model is that we can start at any point and follow any pattern we like. But and this is important; this means that none of us can claim our way is the best or only way and so we need to listen and learn from each other.

My second reflection was I continue to ponder the two texts I read on Wednesday (Ephesians 3 verses 14 – 19 and Joel 2 verses 25, 28 and 29) I realise more and more that there are so many different ways of ‘skinning this cat’. The two texts I read speak of our needing to have an intergenerational approach where we give everyone in church irrespective of age the opportunity to participate in this process and I am planning that we do this on Sunday 27th September.

Our Vision Day’s six areas are another way of us hearing the significance of what Paul is saying here in verse 1 and how we are to walk worthy of our calling. Our Vision Day is Jesus calling us to his new future as a church, which is one which involves me and one which does not. This is why the next 12 months are so important, they are to get

you, and me, to walk worthy of Jesus and I hope this underlines the equal importance of all of these six areas and this is where verses 2 and 3 come into play. As we talk and walk our way through these six areas, so we need to be humble, gentle, patient and bearing with each other in love as we do so. This is because our real focus is not on our favourite or preferred area but upon our relationships with each other as the body of Christ. Therefore, we are to learn that your and my thinking on our preferred area, in terms of what it means and how we are to live it is always limited. On Wednesday what I found most encouraging was the words which I hadn't thought about for each of the six areas and I am very grateful to everyone who thought of these. In particular what was best were the words used to describe how we could put them into practice.

Paul's vision of who and what we are to be as a church is far greater than these six areas. What we must never lose sight of in this process is our unity as a church in the Spirit symbolised by this bread and this wine; or this one cup and one loaf. We are to remember all that Paul says in Ephesians 2 as well as the vision of the Father's plans and purposes in the Son in Ephesians 1 verse 10. They all describe what it means to be part of this new creation and last night's People's Emergency Briefing is a reminder to always have this bigger perspective in mind. As important as these six areas are, and they are, I think Paul would also say to us not be so goal focussed that we forget what Ephesians 4 verses 4 – 6 are about as we seek to live out verses 1 – 3.

1 John 4 verses 7 – 16 shows us that living a life worthy of our calling is to live a life which is all about love. For love is the heart of all these six areas and love is the path we are to walk if we are to achieve the best outcome. Paul knew this was true and this was why he was willing to be a prisoner in the Lord, why he had the right to say this and why we are to listen to him and do what he says. Is our Vision Day optional? The very short answer is no!! This is why Paul uses the imperative, I urge you, because he is commanding us to live in a certain way and we have no excuses not to do what he says. We are just do it and our Vision Day is the path we're to walk in together if we are to live a life worthy of our Lord and our Saviour Jesus.