

Scripture

4 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."⁹ (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended^[a] into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Sermon

You're the one. You're the one to do this. Has anyone ever said that to you? You're the one for the job. You're the one to lead that conversation. You're the one that can make a difference here. *You* are the one who's needed in this moment. Maybe you can't identify one time or place where you were singled out for a particular gift you have. But I bet that you have gifts in this community, strengths, skills, natural talents that no one else here has.

When Jon, my husband, told me last year about a new show I'd love, I was all ears. Until he said a few things:

"It's called Ted Lasso. It's about an American football coach that is chosen to coach a top league soccer team in England..." And I looked at him and said,

"None of what you just said makes me think I'll like this show."

"Oh!" he said, "but it's about forgiveness, and humility, about grace. It's so dear."

"Hmnm." I said.

So Jon—who has the gift of networking—told everyone else he knew about how they should watch it. So when it came full circle and someone Jon recommended the show to recommended it to me, finally, I watched it. And could not stop. Jon re-watched it with me and we blew through the whole season in a week.

Ted Lasso centers around the title character, played by Jason Sudeikis. Ted is a happy-go-lucky, clueless and almost cartoonish character, he's so kind. He is a second-rate American football coach who is hired to coach a premier league soccer team in England. No one understands why. It makes no sense.

At first, the team is not excited to have Ted Lasso as coach. The one who is the least excited to have Ted as coach is the team captain, Roy, a standoffish, foul-mouthed, veteran

player. Now I don't want to give a spoiler alert, so I'll just say that Ted's simple, funny, sentimental, and quirky antics start charming people.

There's a scene in one of the first episodes, where Nate, the passive, laundry and maintenance guy, is getting bullied by some of the players. Roy doesn't like it, so he goes to Coach Ted and angrily says,

"Hey I just wanted you to know these guys are harassing Nate."

"Right." Coach Lasso says.

"So you know already," Roy says.

"Yep." Lasso says.

"So you'll take care of it," Roy says.

"No." Lasso says.

Roy proceeds with some choice language for Ted. Ted tells Roy in a funny and roundabout way that he's not the one to handle it, because the best person to handle it is the one who can instill confidence in the team. The best person to handle it is the, person who the team trusts and looks to. The best person to handle it is team captain. Lasso tells Roy he's not going to handle it because the best person to handle it, is Roy. Roy says,

"So you're not going to do anything."

"No" Lasso says kindly. Roy is disgusted so he scoffs and walks off.

Then the assistant coach who's in the room, gestures to Roy, and asks Ted,

"Why are you winding him up?" And Lasso calmly says,

"Because he's the one. If we're going to make an impact here, the first domino that needs to fall is right inside Roy's heart."

He's the one. It turns out that Ted Lasso is right. He may not know anything about soccer, but he's a good coach. Roy confronts team members in his foul-mouthed standoffish way, and things change. One of the things that changes is that he shows the team that he cares, and that changes the whole dynamic. He's the one.

And if our scripture for today has anything to say, you're also the one. And I'm the one. *We're all* the ones. That's one of the things the writer of Ephesians wanted readers to know. Where you can see something no one else can or have gifts that you bring that no one else has the same combination of, and that's amazing.

The writer of Ephesians is writing to a community of people. Our scripture says, "¹¹ The gifts [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. We each have different gifts, and we are that way because we need all of those gifts if we're going to live out God's love in the world as a church We are what makes up this church. We're here together, and we have so much to offer when we work together as the body of Christ.

The writer of Ephesians says "you're called." But it's not an individual you, it's a "you all." It's a we, as the body of Christ. Some are the hands, some are the feet, some are the ears, some are the ligaments, as the scripture says, joining and knitting everything together. But we've all got a part to play—the things we can do that others can't in the same way.

First UCC Northfield

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You're the ones, but in the "you all" sense. You all are the ones. Together. Hear the words from Ephesians again. "I beg you [all] to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In other words, you're the one to do the work that Jesus did. Be the loving justice seekers and peace makers. We're all the ones to do this. To steadily pour out love for each other. To notice our differences, and still stay connected. To be quick to mend the fences we can, to stay grounded and walk together in this community of faith we share.

As a faith community, as a church, I think we actually know pretty well—or are good at discerning—what we as a community can do. This congregation is filled with passionate leaders, each with their own gifts. That doesn't mean that our unique gifts align with one another. I had a friend once who said, "my wife is the most generous person I know. She is amazing. She would do anything for anyone. It's what I love most about her. It's also what drives me the most bonkers about her, because there is always someone to help." That's why the scripture today says we've got to grow up in our unique gifts. We've got to focus on the bigger picture.

I was talking to volunteer who was at church setting up for the Lighten Up sale held here last week. She wasn't a member, but she was talking with someone else who was new to town who was interested in our church. And the volunteer said, "this church, First UCC, is the church that lives out God's love. This is the church that doesn't just talk. They *do*. They're the church that does the social justice work." Now, we are not a church that owns social justice work in town. There are 27 churches in the Northfield area, not to mention other centers of faith, and we all get to share in God's love and work in the world. But maybe, maybe we have the sense that we are the ones to be the hands and feet and ears and ligaments of God in town, doing the work, sharing the love.

Indeed, we aren't just supposed to share God's love and be the Body of Christ in the world, the writer of Ephesians says we are *called* to it. So I invite you to think about your gifts. Maybe ask someone else who knows you to tell you about them. What do your gifts bring to the community, to the world? I am certain you have gifts that only you can bring to this moment and this place. What ways are you using those gifts? What ways might they contribute to the body of Christ in this church? What gifts do you see in others here, and how can we better make room for them? You are the ones. We are the ones. You are here for a reason, you are here to make a difference. You have gifts that only you can share in your unique way in this church, homes, workplaces, and communities. Maybe you know what yours is, maybe you don't.

But when the rubber hits the road, when life gets hard for you or someone else, they matter. Because you might have something to gift to sustain someone else, or even yourself. It doesn't mean each one for themselves. It means we need each other. As the scripture says, God calls us to use those gifts for the sake of one another and the world. May it be so. Amen.