

Ephesians 4:14-16  
Seventh Sunday of Easter  
May 16, 2010

**Ephesians 4:14-16 (New International Version)**

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>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.

**GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A GROWING PEOPLE**

- 1. Up into Christ**
- 2. Out towards others**

My oldest child just celebrated his sixth birthday. Thinking about it I realized that during the last six years there has pretty much always been someone wearing diapers. Baby after baby after baby. And now and then after a long day, I'll plop on the couch, look at the one that's still in diapers and think, wow kid, you have it easy. It must be nice. When you're a baby everyone hurries to your call and everything is done for you. You have the luxury of two large slaves that function as entertainers, food dispensers, housekeepers and taxis. You don't have to do a thing and everybody still likes you, and smiles at you. Even when you stink and have spit up all over your clothes people still find you cute. But there are drawbacks to being a baby. Everyone knows the saying, "It's like taking candy from a baby." Babies are weak. Babies are defenseless. Babies are easily tricked. They'll believe anything you tell them. Babies are vulnerable and helpless.

This is also the problem with spiritual infants. They're easily fooled and deceived. The apostle Paul compares them to a cork tossed about in a windy churning ocean of cunning, craftiness, and deceitful schemes. Today, the ocean out there is immense. It is very large and very turbulent and dangerous for spiritual infants.

Think about the ocean that your typical Lakeside student is exposed to. They have access to anything and everything on the internet. They're bombarded with a daily stream of godless messages like, "Sex outside of marriage is ok, even normal. Families are a joke. The cruder something is, the more funny. God is irrelevant." and so on. Then there's the college scene where the vices that the students are tempted to delve into are exceeded only by the plethora of godless philosophies and ideas inside the classroom. This ocean is intimidating and scary. Parents worry. Even the kids themselves get intimidated. I've spoken with a few graduates who were afraid of what was waiting for them, wondering if they'd be able to handle it. So what's to keep God's people from being infants who get tossed about by the wind and the waves on a turbulent ocean of unbelief?

Today's text speaks to this situation and as hopeless as it sounds this text is one of the most hope-filled texts of the Bible. It's beautiful. It comes from a world that is similar to ours, a world of confusion, a world of wind and waves. For the Ephesians there was a smorgasbord of religions and ideas to choose - from Greek philosophies to Roman religions. Walking through Ephesus one couldn't help but notice one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the Temple of Artemis, their matron goddess, who had been morphed into a fertility goddess. Sexual immorality wasn't just rampant like it is today, but it was also included in their worship. The ocean of unbelief in Ephesus was just as bad if not more turbulent than today.

So what's to keep Christians from being infants tossed about? God's answer is growth. He says, "*Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow into him who is the Head.*" God's people must be a growing people; a people that grow up into Christ. And there are two key ingredients for growth into Christ: truth and love.

Jesus, the Word made flesh is our truth. And while we don't have Jesus the Word in the flesh he has given us his word. This is the truth that needs to be proclaimed in order for God's people to be a

growing people. But it's more than proclaiming the truth. "Speaking the truth" in the original Greek implies more than just speaking. A better translation would be walking in truth, or living in truth, or maybe we can invent a new word and say "truthing". Think about your own household. Is the truth something that is merely proclaimed from time to time or is it something that's lived out? Which do you think speaks louder? Simply speaking the truth or living the truth? Be careful, if the truth of God's word is simply another subject like math or history that a kid has to learn at school, what's to keep them from treating it like any other subject that they can simply toss aside when they're finished? Truth must be proclaimed and lived out if God's people are to be a growing people.

50 years ago men and women in Jefferson County began a high school in a church basement in Fort Atkinson consisting of 42 students. The purpose of this school was to have a place where the truth could be proclaimed and lived out in the classroom and outside of the classroom. What a wonderful tool for parents to use in addition to the truth that is spoken and lived out in the home. Do you realize how rare this is? What % of churches do you think have their own Christian high school in the same town? I would say less than a tenth of a %. Very unique. And during these last fifty years growth has occurred. Those who built Lakeside would never have dreamt that in Lake Mills there would be today a large beautiful campus housing almost 500 students and faculty. Lakeside has been built on truth because truth is what makes God's people into a growing people.

When we take a look at the ministry of Jesus we see that he had the truth; he never compromised. But the truth was never alone; it was accompanied by incredible love. Jesus could've just sat in the temple and preached the truth. He could've simply written books expanding on the truth, but he didn't. Jesus preached the truth but always in love. He loved the people so much that he was always with never having a place to rest his head. He loved the people by feeding them after he preached, he loved them by taking his time to heal them, and he loved them and us by showing the greatest love of all in sacrificing himself.

The love of Christ enables people to distinguish the truth. Love is the vehicle that impresses the truth on our hearts. As the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians, *"Without love I am but a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."* If I were to tell my wife every day that I loved her yet never acted upon it, never showed her my love, then my words would soon be nothing but a resounding gong. Truth and love are like the two wings of the airplane. You can't have one without the other. When truth and love are proclaimed together God's people are a growing people; a people that grow into Christ.

And when God's people grow into Christ, something amazing happens, they also grow outward. Listen to verse 16 again, *"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."* Because they grow into Christ, this outward growth is seen in our Lakeside students. Each year many of our Lakeside graduates go on to Martin Luther College to study for the ministry. Many, many others that I personally know will continue in their faith in the workforce and public university, proclaiming the truth and love that they have learned from little on in places void of it. Many of these students will be carrying on their own private ministries in their dorm rooms, with their professors, and at work.

Even in high school Lakeside students are representing their Savior to the outside world. People see their attitudes on the field, singing in choirs, or marching in the band. It hit home with me a couple years ago when I was talking with school buss driver who occasionally subbed for Lakeside. She told me that there was something different about the Lakeside kids. They really impressed her.

It's amazing. With all the falsehood and with all the deception in this world; With Satan who's had thousands of years of practice. With a society of brainwashed peers that are egging them on, asking them to leave Christ for them, God's people from Lakeside and in other places are still a growing people! A people that don't just simply hunker down to wait out Satan's hurricane but a people who invade the satanic storms displacing the tempest and the tidal waves with the calming light of Christ.

So should we worry about the wind and the waves? Should we fear the ocean of unbelief? Not as long as truth and love are proclaimed. Not as long as we are growing into Christ. Why? Look at the source. Look at what truth and love connects us to. Through faith we are connected to the head, that is, Christ. The parts of a body receive their life, power, and direction from the head. So also you, the members of Christ receive your life, power, and direction from Jesus. We are connected to the one who has overcome everything that stands against him and his kingdom. As the Bible says, *"We are more than conquerors through him who loves us."* Nothing can impede our growth when we're connected to Jesus.

And maybe it's not the dark ocean around us that you're concerned about maybe it's the darkness you see in yourself. Maybe you've been neglecting your growth. Perhaps you've been a lousy member of the body, like a hand that refuses to bring food to the mouth. Growing into Christ we also have an unlimited amount of forgiveness and love that drives out that darkness within. Through that connection to our head Jesus Christ we receive his life giving blood that purges away that darkness. God's people must be a growing people; a people that grow into Christ and grow out towards others.

And I think the kids at Lakeside get it. At the end of the year the seniors are asked to give a bible verse as their graduating verse which is read out loud as they receive their diploma. Most of them take this seriously, and do you know what the most common verse is that they pick? Philippians 4:13, *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."* Oceans of unbelief, craftiness, cunning, falsehood, schemes, your own inner darkness, yes, they are out there. But so is that rock that rises above it all, Jesus Christ. There in the midst of the chaos is an island of peace. An island built on truth and love where we can plant our roots and grow strong and pluck lost souls out of the ocean of unbelief. May the truth and love of our Lord Jesus keep God's people, here and at Lakeside, a growing people.