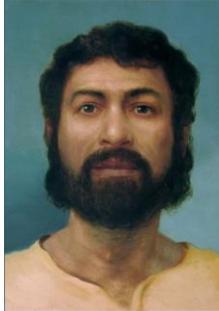


## Ephesians 4

We're going to start this morning with a little thought experiment. What if Jesus was present in the flesh now, and had a Facebook page.

Here's his profile picture. ...



Jesus was here.

And here's his cover photo.



What would his newsfeed look like? Maybe there would be pictures of himself and his disciples as they toured the world, proclaiming that the reign of God had come near.

Maybe there would be selfies in front of the world's most iconic places...the Eiffel tower...the Chicago bean...an Indian market...a baobab tree in the Serengeti.

Maybe he would have posted pictures when he caught glimpses of God's reign...times when desperately poor people were set free from that poverty by social change...times when people were willing to give up something of themselves for the sake of others.

Maybe he would have shared things that exposed how our economic systems hurt poor people.

Maybe he would have shared a picture of a massive crowd by the sea and posted the text of some of his teachings...teachings with some uncomfortable truths about life in God's dominion...truths about money and power and about the rich and powerful being brought down and the poor and outcast being lifted up...truths about forgiveness, even for those who don't deserve it...truths about an unimaginable depth of love for humanity.

What would he have had to say about the struggles we continue to have with racial injustice?

Some of his comments would likely ooze love for those who posted the heart-breaking things that had happened to them. If someone is in need of healing, could he do it over the internet? Or would he show up at their house?

Would he offer webinars of his teachings via Zoom to reach more people with the gospel news of forgiveness and new life?

I don't think he would unfriend anyone...but there would definitely be people who unfriended him. People who thought all this love your neighbor stuff was naïve and weak...people who don't think he should hang out with the queers and the lowlifes.

Perhaps he would be unfriended by powerful people who were threatened by his news that they weren't so powerful after all, because in the end, God would rule in justice, peace and love.

Would he heal the world, or would he get crucified Facebook style?

Well, before this goes too far down that rabbit hole, where is this all coming from?

My little thought experiment takes off from the middle of the passage...the part in parentheses. The verse just before it is based on Psalm 68...when he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive and gave gifts to his people.

So logically Paul says, if God ascended, then God first had to descend. This little bit here in the middle is the good news...God descended to come to us...to take on human flesh.

In fact, God descended twice – once to take on human flesh in the person of Jesus. And then God descended...and keeps on descending...as the Holy Spirit, to take on flesh in our bodies...our bodies as followers of Christ, and also our body as the church.

This idea of embodiment is important in our understanding of God. God isn't just some hazy being out there in the ether...God is embodied, really in all of creation, but most remarkably in us, especially as we gather as the body of Christ.

It's the importance of this embodiment that some have wrestled with in this time of virtual worship. Can Christ's body and blood be embodied over the internet? Is the embodiment of the Word the same over Zoom as it is when we're physically gathered?

In the end, it all comes down to trusting God...if we trust that Christ is somehow embodied in our Zoom worship, then he is. That's what faith is all about.

Whether folks are hearing the word over Zoom or YouTube, or reading it either online or by mail, Christ is embodied in it...Christ always finds a way to come to us.

I don't know if Jesus would have had a personal Facebook page, but the fact of the matter is, with the Spirit of the risen Christ embodied in us, Jesus has a whole bunch of Facebook pages. If you're on Facebook, yours is one of them.

Is your Facebook page worthy of the calling which you have received? Is your Facebook page worthy of the immense grace you have received? And whether you're on Facebook or not, are you living a life worthy of the calling which you have received?

How do you know?

Well, the rest of this passage shines a pretty powerful light to help you answer that.

On Facebook, and in all your dealings with others, are you gentle and humble?

Do you bear with others in love, even when they believe things you think are misguided...stupid even?

For that matter, how often has the word stupid showed up on your Facebook page...or in conversation...or even in your head?

Do you do your best to make sure that what you believe about what's going on in the world is based on truth? Do you consider other perspectives to get a fuller picture of the truth?

Are you angry to the point of festering resentment and hostility? Does your anger lead you to say hurtful things?

What do you see as the purpose of the things you say and do, whether on social media or in life?

Well, if you're wondering, Paul has it there in verse 29 - <sup>29</sup> Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

And Paul wouldn't have known about social media, but I think it's fair to add "let no evil words come off your keyboard and on to social media. But only post what is useful for building up...giving grace."

Christ has made us his body through the power of the Spirit. We are knitted together with all God's beloved.

Our purpose is to truly be that body and to build it up. Our call is to build up people...to speak grace to them.

Our purpose is to speak truth against the lies of hatred and arrogance, and to leave no room for the work of the devil.

In this purpose, anger is not ruled out...we can be rightly angry when others are mistreated or taken advantage of or discriminated against...but instead of letting the anger fester, it needs to be turned to action...not violent action but to compassion and advocacy for those whose voices are too often ignored.

The passage ends with this:

<sup>31</sup> Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, <sup>32</sup> and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Holy cow...this is hard stuff! Sometimes it seems like the only thing holding our society together right now is bitterness and wrath and wrangling and slander.

As Christians, our call is to do a 180 from that. Can we as Christ's body actually be the example for the rest of our society? On social media and in life?

I'd like to see us try.

Last week I challenged us to think about what church could be coming out of this pandemic. What should be different?

Maybe this is one thing...maybe we can focus on being an example of living a life worthy of our calling. So here's this week's challenge...either on social media or in life...or both, be intentional about building someone up. Let someone know you think they're a good dad or mom. Give appreciation to teachers and nurses and doctors.

Tip servers extra...post something that appreciates those who do hard work with their hands...plumbers...auto mechanics...tree trimmers...electricians...carpenters...meat packers.

Assure someone who is elderly or mentally ill or isolated that they are loved.

Appreciate the work of artists and musicians...and the behind the scenes crews of shows.

Practice humility by asking someone with whom you've disagreed about their perspective...and not arguing.

Whatever speaks to you, find some way to build someone up.

Each of us has been given grace by the measure of Christ's gift. And Christ's gift was immense. We have been given immense grace. We will likely continue to fall short of living lives worthy of that.

But each time we fall, we are given a new day...and a new chance to live into that grace. How will you respond?