

Series: Unsearchable Riches in Christ (Ephesians)

Text: Ephesians 3:7-13

Message #12 (November 5, 2006)

UNFATHOMABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

Introduction

1. Everyone experiences seasons in their lives, including pastors! There are times when it seems that sermons become routine, maybe even a little on the bland side, when the preacher feels kind of empty and flat.
2. There are reasons and perhaps even occasions where that might be excusable, but generally that ought not to be the case. There was a time early on in ministry when I used to think on Monday morning, "I have to get ready to preach again on Sunday." But I must confess, as I grow older, I find myself not looking at this as an obligation, but as a great opportunity. It is not approached with apathy, but with passion! Like Jeremiah, "But if I say, 'I will not remember him, or speak anymore in his name,' then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it." It is becoming like Paul, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."
3. There is a reason for this, and I think it is articulated here. Paul never got over what he was before he trusted Christ. And he could never get over what he had become in Christ. He not only held that in his memory, but he became increasingly more amazed at it every day. (I was listening to a CD on my way to the district conference Monday morning that the Kumkoski's had loaned to me. It was a message by C.J. Mahaney of Sovereign Grace Ministries. He was looking at God's grace in our salvation as recorded in Ephesians 1:3-4. As he contemplated how he was running toward hell as fast as he could go and God pursued him, and picked him up and saved him for eternity, he broke down. Why? The better question should be "How could there be any other response?")
4. The better we understand the Gospel, the revelation of God to us in the Scripture, the more our response must be one of passionate gratefulness to the glory of God. And that gratefulness cannot be kept quiet. (Clint Davis story about witnessing to his nurse – how good it felt and how right it was).
5. The mystery that is revealed in this passage is the truth that God has saved both Jew and

Gentile and placed them into the same body. We saw something of Paul's revelation of this mystery in chapter 2 and we saw how he was ready to pray for them, but he found it necessary to back up and make sure the concept was clear. Now today, we explore the depths of this mystery – I would call it the three essential parts of the mystery, involving its proclamation and its purpose and its privilege. Here we go.

I. THE PREACHER AND THE PROCLAMATION (7-9)

A. The minister

1. Paul had the correct perspective. He saw himself in all of this as a **servant**. The word he uses is that of a household servant – the word from which we get our word deacon. He was made a servant. That incredible day while on the road to Damascus, while he was still blinded from the light, God gave him his commission: “I have appeared to you to appoint you a minister (huperetase) and witness...” (Acts 26:16). This was not even his choice. It was God's appointment, but it resulted from God's direct rescue of Paul.
2. Paul also had the correct ministry attitude – **humility**. This great apostle, this great servant of the Lord Jesus, literally saw himself as “the very least of all the saints.” This was not a false humility. Paul remembered his past and from where he came and what it took to turn him around. Though he saw himself on an equal plain with the other apostles in terms of position and authority, he also saw himself as the least of all the saints in relation to the great debt he owed the Lord for rescuing him with His gracious hand of salvation!
3. Paul also had the correct perspective on ministry resource, the power of God: “according to the **gift** of God's **grace** (not in any way merited) was **given** to me by the working (energeo - energy) of his power (dunamis – dynamo). We have power from God only when we remember from where it comes! Paul never forgot.

B. The message

1. The message is the grace of God – the good news. That described the **character** of Paul's message.
2. The message was the unsearchable riches of Christ. That described the **content** of the message. Paul was passionately thrilled and could not keep still concerning the

unfathomable, untraceable, vast, infinite riches in Christ! The message was never trust Jesus and when you die you will go to heaven. That is true, but there is so much more. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote of the 33 blessings that accompany salvation. Certainly we are saved; we are sanctified; we are justified; we are redeemed, we are made secure; our sins are forgiven and forgotten; we have access to the Father; we have a positive righteousness; we have true rest; we are guaranteed resurrection; we have peace with God; we have unspeakable joy; we are in a new family; we have been delivered from the domain of darkness; we have an eternal inheritance; we have true fellowship with God and with one another...and there are a bunch more and I don't think Chafer ever got them all! The essential part of the message that Paul could never get over – that I suspect choked him up every time he began to speak about the gospel – was God's grace. If that does not choke us up a little, then we still don't quite understand it yet. We still kind of think that maybe we were at least a little deserving of our salvation. But if you honestly see yourself as Paul saw himself, you are overwhelmed by His grace!

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE PROCLAMATION (10-11)

- A. The revealed wisdom of God (The reason Paul was made a servant, the reason he was given the responsibility to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ was so that God's wisdom might be displayed! Note the incredible display of this wisdom).
1. God desires that even now the church educate the angels on the manifold wisdom of God. God is using this assembly, Lakeview Church, to make His wisdom known; He is using you as individual believers to teach the angels His manifold wisdom.
 2. There are several references to angels in the Bible in reference to our salvation. They are said to rejoice in heaven when people trust Christ (Luke 15:10). They look down from heaven as the church worships and learn something about submission and harmony and love in leadership (1 Corinthians 11:10). They desire to take a deeper look into the very idea of salvation (1 Peter 1:10-12). They also look at the church when she disciplines her own in keeping with obedience to Christ (1 Timothy 5:21). Why does God put the church on display? He does so, so that the angels might see His wisdom and be further exposed to His glory! The idea that God would take

destitute sinners from every nation and bring them together into one body – the angels just shake their heads in wonder and amazement!

3. And what do the angels learn? They learn more and more about the multi-colored, manifold wisdom of God! They saw and knew in part the power of God in creation and the wrath of God at Sinai. They learned of the love of God at Calvary, but apparently they need to observe the church in order to see the wisdom of God. Even the evil angels learn something. They learn that their leader doesn't have any wisdom. This entity called the church, this one body, made up of Jews and Gentiles, this fellowship of people from every tongue and tribe and people and nation – which was a mystery in ages past, but has now been revealed, shouts – “To the only wise God be glory!” If the enemy had any idea of the far-reaching effects of the cross of Christ, he surely would have tried something else. He spent all this effort and time and intrigue in finally bringing Jesus to the cross, only to discover that this was God's plan all along – the Son, crushed by the Father for our transgressions – and all of that planned before the foundations of the earth were laid! What wisdom! What glory! As one commentator said, “In the classroom of God's universe, He is the teacher, the angels are the students, the church is the illustration, and the subject is the manifold wisdom of God.”

B. The accomplished purpose of God

1. Again, this was all according to His eternal purpose. We might from time to time have our doubts about the church. We might think, surely God could have done something more effective, but the angels sit back and marvel at the wisdom of God in it all!
2. I told you that the essential part in the proclamation of the mystery was grace. But what about the essential part of the purpose of the proclamation of the mystery? The essential part of the purpose of this proclamation is glory! The church is a trophy of the grace of God and as He applies that grace to us, He is glorified! What we do today in making known His mystery will bring glory to God not only now, but that glory will reverberate throughout the ages in eternity future! Look what happens in heaven as recorded by the Apostle John (Revelation 7:9-12). The church glorifies and

praises God so much that the angels break out in praise! There is a heavenly praise rally the likes of which have never been seen here before!

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF THE POSITION

A. A change in position

1. We now have boldness and confident access through faith in Him! That is quite a change. Can you imagine what this must have meant for a Jew? The very idea that everyone could have equal access to God was unheard of. Only the Levites and not even all of them would have opportunity to enter the holy place. It was a special, high privilege for a select few. Now it retains the same great privilege, but it is opened to all who are in Christ – Jew and Gentile alike!
2. With access comes a boldness to enter. We come without fear of judgment. We come with reverent fear, but with confidence that we will be graciously received. (The monarch in the story of Esther).

B. A change in perspective

1. Paul says this brings glory to God – this is a gift of God’s grace, so do not lose heart over his trials or trials of our own! Paul endured the trials of life for the sake of the Ephesians and others because it was for the glory of God. Any price paid was a small price in view of the unfathomable riches in Christ! To the Romans Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). How could he say that in light of all the suffering he endured? It was because of this mystery of which he was a part!
2. What are we willing to do? Where are we willing to go? What are we willing to give for the sake of the mystery of God – the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. Will you note chapter 6:19-20? Paul was asking the Ephesians to pray for him that he might proclaim the mystery of the Gospel to the glory of God! Every day the chains brought an opportunity to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Every day those who were able to come and visit were given encouragement and were challenged to make the Gospel known. Everyone who read Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians and to the Philippians and to Philemon received counsel and encouragement and boldness to make the mystery known.

Conclusion

1. The proclamation is **grace**. The purpose is **glory**. The privilege is **gain**, for we gain a new perspective and a new position in Him. The question of the hour for us is, “Does this truth grip your soul? Do you have any idea what you have in Christ? Do you understand even a little what you have been given in Christ and what is now your obligation and privilege to make known to others about Christ?”
2. Some of you are not saved. You are not part of the body of Christ. You are outside, looking in. Today, the Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit of God has made known the Gospel. Perhaps right now the light has come on. Perhaps right now, the burden of sin is so overwhelming that you cannot bear up under it, but the light of the Gospel is so brilliant and blinding, that for the first time you see that Jesus can take that burden from you and carry you into His presence. Like Paul, you are blinded by His righteousness, but you hear His voice and you are trusting Him, ready to do whatever He calls you to do. That’s the way He works as he draws men and women and boys and girls to the Gospel – to the Lord Jesus. Trust Christ and all that He has for His own will be yours as well.
3. Believer, can you say about Jesus, “Christ in me, the hope of glory”? Are you really living by His grace, for His glory, according to the gain you have in Him? If not, why not? Perhaps it is time to repent of your coldness and watch Him heat you up with a holy passion for His glory!