

Thank you for allowing me once again to be here and speak. I am always excited to worship and praise alongside my church family. But it also gives me a special kind of joy when I also get to share the Word of God with you.

Last week Billy spoke to us about the mystery which has been revealed, and that mystery revealed is Jesus Christ. God's glorious plan is no longer hidden, but instead we know that we have access to Him through Christ. This morning I plan to build on that, and give us further insight through what has been revealed to us and its implication in our lives.

Ephesians 3:7-11 (NLT)

7 By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. **8** Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. **9** I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. **10** God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. **11** This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Purpose. A word that has become a buzzword in the last couple of generations. It's a word that causes some to fear and others to charge in to action. The dictionary (the one on Google), defines the word purpose as:

The reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

Now under that definition it can be easy to understand what purpose is supposed to entail. But the fact of the matter stands that not everyone will agree on what their purpose is. For some it means to be a father or mother, for some it means to excel in their vocation, and for others it changes from month-to-month, year to year.

In fact, if you were to ask those within the Church/Christians, the answers really don't change much on what they feel their purpose is. In fact, I would go as far as saying that as Christians this is something that we think on quite often. Whether out loud or in private we ask:

Who has God called me to be?

Where does God want me to work?

Where does He want me to live?

Who does He want me to marry?

How many kids should we have?

What purpose do you have for me Lord?

These are the age old questions asked by Christians, and are probably asked more frequently now than any other time in the history of Christendom.

I'm not excluded when it comes to this line of questioning. In the last 6 months I have probably asked more questions about my purpose, more than I have in my entire lifetime. The day in and day out of daily prayers, endless thoughts, and insistent questioning has been a part of the process. And although not all things seem clear, I do know for certain, that God has His purpose. And if I can continue to be honest, these last couple of weeks have helped me through the questions and doubts that I've had. Reading this passage has helped see things more clearly.

- Paul was a man with conviction & walked with the certainty of what his purpose was.
- Paul knew he was called to be a conveyor of the Gospel truth and a deliverer of the mysteries of God. He was called to be a steward of this message and convicted to speak it at all times. In fact, it was exactly what he spoke of in his letters to the churches.

Romans 1:1

This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News

1 Corinthians 1:1

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus

1 Timothy 1:1

This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus

- But Paul is not different from us.
- "But he wrote Scripture though!"
- He was just as in need of grace as we all are. He knew that... He constantly admitted that.
- But for Paul purpose didn't have its ultimate definition in what he was doing, but instead, WHO he was doing it for.
- It is the WHO in his life that dictated the WHAT in his life.
- Of course we know the "what" for Paul was to be a messenger of the Good News
- Paul, walking in his purpose, stewarding this wonderful message from God, passes it on to the Gentiles. A message that they were also called to steward and share. Which brings us to this question: How will we, as the family of God, see our purpose and respond to this wonderful mystery that has been revealed? How will we see what God has already done? How does this impact the way we view and understand purpose?
- Paul, as we will see in a couple of weeks in verse 14, is about to start praying. But before he gets there he has this profound aside.

- An aside in which he starts geeking out on this mystery that we heard Billy talk about last week. A mystery that has now been revealed.
- Jew and Gentile, are brought in to the family of God. All who would put their faith in Christ can now come to the Father.
- He rejoices over this... a man who also happens to be in chains. Although he is bound it doesn't matter, because he has been given the privilege to reveal this mystery. To speak and spread THE Good News! (v.7)

Good News

v. 8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.

- The NLT does some disservice to the original Greek here.
- The word TELLING here is (you-aung-lee-zo) "euaggelizō"
- It means to bring good news, or announce good tidings
- For the majority of the New Testament, when this word is used it is referring to the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the salvation that is found in Christ
- Paul knows the treasure, the Word, that has been given to him... as well as he knows his purpose.... and it is the privilege of spreading this Good News
- He knows what has been revealed, and he can hardly contain his excitement
- He wants to speak of the endless treasures available in Christ... Some Bible translations translate the word endless into: unfathomable or immeasurable or incalculable
- Choose which word you'd like, but ultimately these riches in Christ mean that we have been forgiven, we too have been raised to a new life, we are reconciled with God, we have access to the Father through Christ and His Holy Spirit, we are members and the children of His Kingdom, we now have the mind and love of Christ, and because the treasures are endless, these are only a foretaste of what is to come!
- So yes, this is why Paul geeks out! This is why he sees it as a special grace and privilege of speaking of the mystery that has been revealed
- He says in verse 9 in-regard to what has been revealed:

Revealed

v. 9 I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

- In verse 8 he says Gentiles, but as if it wasn't clear before, he says EVERYONE, here in verse 9.
- To the Jew and Gentile, for the generations who would proceed them, he has the privilege to explain the mysterious plan

- That is Paul's purpose, that is what he is passing along.
- God, the Creator, who created us all, has revealed this mystery. It was once hidden, but now it has been revealed.
- No longer is it a secret... We can rejoice alongside Paul that His plan is revealed
- We can rejoice that through Christ, we are now a Kingdom Family, Jew, Gentile, and all who would put their faith in Him!
- It's here that we can actually miss a valuable point and example that we see in Paul and the message he has been purposed to spread
- He uses language like "privilege" "least deserving" "chosen to explain" when talking about why he is able to reveal this truth.
- He doesn't say all of this because he is an overzealous preacher... or because he's trying to slip in a humble brag about how he didn't deserve to be chosen, but he was anyway.
- Paul, realizes the magnitude of what has been revealed to him, and he sees himself as a steward of this good news.
- He stated as much in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 4:1

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

- It is not just some regular old message... it is not just another educational course... and it is not just another teaching.
- Verse 9 in the CSB translation actually says he was chosen to "shed light"
- What Paul explains... or what he has been chosen to bring to light, is so much more than anybody could've dreamed of. Through this message God has chosen to bring His light to those who are in darkness. And he does it through Paul and he does it through His church... He does this through His Kingdom Family
- This is mystery that has been revealed, and what has been revealed now defines all of history
- It is a message with a purpose. It is a message that brings life.
- And Paul, not only stewards this message, but he has also passed it along.
- As he continues to write he reveals even more of God's purpose.
- He is not the only one through whom God shares His Good News... He is not the only one through whom God displays His wisdom

Kingdom Purpose

v. 10 God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- Here is where we come to the crux of our message this morning

- As if the mystery that has been revealed wasn't enough, Paul drops the proverbial truth bomb on his readers.
- See, the church in his day was already starting to live out the mystery that is found in the salvation of Jesus Christ.
- Both Jew and Gentile were already forming the church and family of God
- In Acts 2, after Peter delivers his sermon on the day of Pentecost, after 3,000 are saved to their fellowship, it talks about what the church does:

Acts 2:42-47

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals, and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. **44** And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. **45** They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. **46** They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— **47** all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

- In the book of Acts we find that the believers were already devoting themselves to teaching, sharing meals, fellowshiping with one another, and praying together.
- But the truth Paul is revealing here in Ephesians was maybe even more than some of them could see, or more than they could have expected.
- Almost as if Paul is saying: "In case you guys missed it, God's purpose in all of this was to use YOU to display His wisdom. He's using YOU to bring his glory to His Name"
- That truth is life altering... That truth is purpose giving!
- Peter speaks on this in 1st Peter

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

- God has already called on His people
- He has already given a purpose!
- Proclaim excellencies? That means, His good deeds, His good works
- He has already prepared and done the work
- Yes we are kingdom kids, and yes we are a part of His kingdom family... But we can't miss that He also has given us a kingdom purpose
- God's purpose over our lives is set

- BUT, are we too consumed in achieving our purpose, or looking for our purpose, that we have completely missed it?
- John Piper explains this exact thought:

"Most of us live our lives with far too little awareness of the stupendous realities around us. Most of us go through day after day and seldom feel the impact of the magnitude of what we are caught up in by belonging to Jesus Christ, the God-Man, the ruler of the universe. And we don't take enough time to meditate on how our jobs, our home life, our leisure, our church involvement—how each of these fits into the cosmic significance of the church. And consequently our lives often lack the flavor of eternity and the aroma of something ultimate. O, that there might be more people among us whose manner of life mirrors something mysterious and wonderful and whose words have a cosmic significance."

- John Piper

- God could have done it any other way
- We can take the phrase in verse 10, "to use the church" out of the passage and it would still make sense. In God's unlimited power and wisdom He could have done it another way.
- It IS His wisdom after all... He did as He saw fit. And He saw fit to do it through His church, His kingdom family
- His wisdom here is called a wisdom with "rich variety" other translations call it manifold or multi-faceted wisdom
- It is intricate, and can be seen from different views and positions, and it would still be inexhaustible
- But in His glory and goodness, He uses the church, His royal family, to display His wisdom
- His purpose, our purpose, is to display His wisdom

• *Displayed to Whom?*

- Unseen rulers and authorities in heavenly places
- This can be read as if Paul is speaking about the angels and those who surround God.
- Or it can also be read as those principalities of darkness who do the will of Satan
- Different commentators on the passage will give a few views on the matter
- I honestly believe it is both... It is being displayed to everyone, including the entire cosmos
- The angels who view this unfolding, marvel and glorify God for what He has revealed, and is continuing to do.
- Those principalities of darkness and evil are reminded that God has all the power and authority. In the revelation of His multi-faceted wisdom the enemy is reminded that no one is like our God!

- The world views the church, and they have the opportunity to see what He has done in the life of every believer.
- If the mystery that was revealed is that through Christ we have been redeemed and reunited to our Father... that through Christ we are now part of God's Kingdom Family... The universe then has the opportunity to see how God has done this in our lives
- His wisdom is displayed when we walk in the truth of what He has done in and through His Kingdom family
- It is why Jesus said:

Matthew 5:14

You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.

- We are the light. The light has been shed upon our hearts
- And this is who we are already because of who Christ is in us
- I don't try to achieve the light... He is the light!
- God is displaying the light that a dark world needs through His church
- The church is Acts showed us a lot of what the looks like
- Really, a lot of what this morning looks like

Eternal Outcomes

v. 11 This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

- This is God's plan.... HIS doing
- An eternal plan, that no one can thwart and frustrate
- Including us.... trust me, I try all too hard to insert my ideas and my plans
- And because we want to work hard to find the list of things we need to do so we can serve God, we end up doing our own purposes
- We want to try with all of our strength to accomplish His purposes... But we end up doing our own thing
- And yes, God calls us to respond, and to be responsible for everything He has given us
- But God has already accomplished His ultimate purpose through us

* * I came back late last night from teaching at Junior High camp. I was also able to slip in some fun in the sun here and there. But if you have ever been around 40 plus junior high student for an entire weekend at camp, two things are true.

One, nothing tires you out more than the constant fun you have along those students.

And two, there are very few things that will cause such pure joy in your heart as when you see junior highers begin to know God and worship Him with all their heart.

The reason I share that with you is because the Lord showed me that it is not in the big works that I do, not in the job that I have (or currently don't have), or the size of my family that gives me purpose. He showed me that it is in the everyday, intentional living, of allowing Christ to shine through me, of giving Him glory through every action, that I have found my purpose. He was speaking to my stubborn heart, "I have already done this work, I have already laid it out, walk forward in faith and I will show you my wisdom... I will show the world my wisdom."

- I don't want to share an incorrect message this morning... Im not saying that God doesn't give us responsibilities and/or His work to do. Actually we are all called to do HIS WORK... But it is that, HIS work, HIS purpose
- Paul wasn't excited because of what has been revealed in Christ, and because God uses His people to display it to the universe!
- God has already done the work, and in His wisdom He demonstrates to the whole cosmos that there is nothing like Him
- There is nothing like the love of God that is found in the face of Jesus Christ!
- God has called you to your families, your jobs, your responsibilities.
- He has called us to this Kingdom Family
- And in this family, we walk in God's purpose, when we walk according to what His Son has done in our lives
- Christ becomes our words, He becomes our actions, He becomes the way we love... and this was God's eternal plan
- This morning we need to be reminded that the mystery has, yes, been revealed. In Christ we have salvation. All people, every tribe and every nation, can come to the Father. Each one of us joined to His Kingdom Family.
- And this mystery is now being made know through His church
- The world is crying out to know God!
- People are desperate and hurting in this world, and they are deep in darkness that they can't even see what they need.
- Purpose has a definite definition for us in the Family of God
- We are called to reveal His plan, His mystery, His mystery, to the world
- God is using His family to display the love of Christ
- God, is using His Kingdom family to display His love to the world!

(call the worship team)