

Ephesians 3:1-13 Sermon

- A couple of years ago, a couple of buddies and I went over to Spokane for a concert
- You know you get six or 7 college guys together and stupid stuff is invariably going to happen
 - In between the concert and traveling and what-not, we played games, threw around the football, kind of thing
 - Ended up playing this one game, American History Trivia, and we were all competitive so just playing the game wasn't enough we wanted to raise the stakes a little bit so we made a bet that the loser had to jump in the lake, in March
 - So my team ended up losing, it was kinda close, but instead of making us jump in the lake the other team offered a double or nothing solution
 - That night we had cooked ribs in the oven, if you've ever coked ribs in an oven, when you're done there is a thick layer of congealed sludge at the bottom of the pan, mostly fat, but with a little bbq sauce, some salt, some other seasoning, but like 95% fat
 - The double or nothing was that we had to drink a cup of this sludge, and jump in the lake
 - Two of us really wanted to take the deal and go double or nothing, while the third really didn't want to, and our dis-unity over the topic ended up flowing into the game and arguments ensued, and poor decisions were made, and we ended up losing
 - Had to drink a good 4 oz of fat, and jump in the lake, and I can tell you my arteries and heart have never been the same
- Our downfall that fateful evening was our lack of unity, the discord between brothers led to disaster
- Tonight Paul is going to preach the need for church unity, and unity in church mission
 - These concepts were largely unheard of, and not emphasized because they had not been realized until the death of Christ and spread of His gospel.

Pray/Read

Eph 3:1-5

- Paul opens here by identifying himself as a prisoner for Christ. He does what he does for Jesus.
 - At this time Paul is in prison, writing, praying, evangelizing, working for the name and fame of Jesus from a jail cell. All the while not wavering in his why.
 - Paul begins by showing them that what is going to follow is worth suffering for, it is worth whatever risk may follow it.
 - What Paul is in prison for, and what Paul is risking everything for is the revelation of the gospel. Is the sharing, and administering of the gospel news, and more specifically what Paul will call 'the mystery' of the gospel.
- We need to understand something before we move on from here. We need to understand what Paul would have the Ephesians understand before we dive headfirst into the mystery of the Gospel. And that something is REVELATION.

Eph 3:4-5

- What is revelation and why do we need to understand it?

- When I say Revelation I don't mean the last book in the Bible, or apocalyptic literature, or peoples take on it, I don't mean Left Behind, we aren't talking about Kirk Cameron, and guillotines.
- When Paul says revelation here he means 'revealing'. Most often when the Bible talks about revelation it is talking about revealing truth, communicating truth, revealing reality.
- Additionally when revelation is talked about it is used to describe and act of God.
- The Bible is God's revelation to man. It is the way in which God chose to reveal the nature of reality to humanity, and communicate His truths to His people.
 - This prevailing wisdom in academia, and just society in general is that man is the authority of reality. Scientific method, observation, experimentation, reason intellect.
 - The assumption you have to make when determining reality for yourself or letting man determine reality for you is that there is nothing outside of your understanding, nothing outside of your control, nothing beyond what you can control or comprehend.
 - That itself is ridiculous. Just think what we understand now that we didn't 20 years ago. 15 years ago if I was on the internet gaming away and somebody picked up the telephone, oh it was on. Somebody was getting cut.
 - Our comprehension of what is and what is not is always fleeting. There has never been a time where it has not been fleeting.
 - Our reality is always changing, first it was global warming in the 60's, then it was global warming in the 70's and early 80's, then again more recently global warming, and now it's global cooling.
 - How we as people understand reality through our observation and understanding is always changing, it is always evolving.
- When Paul is talking about revelation, he is talking about reality as God has revealed it. He is talking about how things are according to God, and according to the scriptures. The ultimate and unchanging authority of how things are and how things work is God and God alone.
- As we dive into our scripture tonight Paul would have us understand that fact.
 - Because we are talking about a mystery that previously was not understood, but is now revealed in Christ and is now made known, through the cross.
- Paul goes on to tell us what this mystery is, the mystery of the Gospel.

Eph 3:6

- The mystery of the Gospel is that through Jesus salvation and redemption is offered to all, Jew and Gentile alike are offered citizenship in the Gospel Kingdom.
 - The mystery Paul speaks of, the mystery revealed only by God is that all men are saved by God alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
 - There was so much enmity between Jew and Samaritan, between the Jew and the Greek, between the Jew and Roman, between the Jew and gentile. There was a tension there somewhere between 'hate' and 'loath'

- Think Red Sox – Yankees, or Miracle Whip – Mayo, Democrat – Republican
- It was a division as deep as blood, for one side there was no redeeming quality about another, there was barely an acknowledgment of humanity between the two, one side called the other a dog, if one would pass the other on the road beaten and left for dead he would put the blinders on and keep walking, never giving it a second thought.
- When the gospel started to spread, the Jew and the Gentile started mixing and mingling, because of God's revealing of the mystery.
 - Christ hadn't even died yet when we started to see the mystery being revealed.
 - Matt 28:18
 - What was once, according to conventional wisdom, only for the Jew was now for all, it was for the Gentile as well.
 - Where there was once a hatred that goes beyond anything we will ever experience now exists a bond. The deepest bond of all, Christ.
- Fellow heirs, one body, partaker of the promise.
- Where there only ever existed conflict and enmity now existed unity. Unity in Christ.
 - As Paul identified himself at the outset as a 'prisoner for Christ' when Jesus becomes our all, Jesus becomes our all.
 - Our identity, our worth, our glory, our everything becomes found in Christ.
- Within Christendom, no matter who we are, we will always have the same Lord, the same God, the same identity, the same king, the same Jesus. Within
- Paul the Jew is saying this to the Ephesian Gentiles.
 - They are co-heirs, co-laborers for Christ.

Eph 3:7-9

- Paul is describing to the Ephesians his task from God as preaching the gospel to the gentile. To share the riches of glory in Christ with Gentiles. The task he was given was to preach, and preach to un-preached.
 - Paul's task was to preach, and preach to all the glories and majesty of Jesus and His cross
 - Paul, the self proclaimed "least" was charged with the preaching and teaching of the gospel to the gentiles.
 - The guy who before his conversion was killing and imprisoning any who would profess faith in Christ, would try and judge the Jew for faith in Christ, is now preaching and proclaiming the imperative of the cross, the need for Jesus
 - Why the shift?
- So God revealed the truth of the gospel in that it is for everyone, and He has charged Paul with sharing it with everyone, the Gentile specifically
 - So why the shift from Jew only to All people?

Eph 3:10-13

- Paul is saying that this mystery that God has revealed, this mystery that was not understood or comprehended by those before, the mystery is the Church

- God's purposes are unwavering, He is unchanging, and from the outset of creation God's vehicle for displaying His wisdom and His glory is through the church, of which Christ is the Head.

Eph 1:22-23

- Jesus was given to the church as our figure head, as our leader, as our example, and through the church God demonstrates His wisdom and glory
- God revealed salvation, then God revealed the need of all men for that salvation, and Paul preached to all men the need for that salvation, and those who accepted, those who believed, those who loved Jesus, became the church
- For the church. So that the church might be the representation of the wisdom of God. That God might be made known through the church, that the church might reveal to creation the glories of God.
 - The church is comprised of the people of God, submitting to the authority of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit.
 - When we receive God's gift of salvation, part of that gift is participation in the church, the unified body of believers

We then can shift our perspective from the individual, to the corporate, to the church

- We see two main points of emphasis in our text for the church, and the first is Unity, that there would be unity amongst the church

Eph 3:6

- Paul says that we are one body, one people, co-heirs, all partakers of the promise, we are one body under one head, Christ
 - From the beginning, God has had a plan for the church. The diverse church. The church made up of every language every race, of red socks and Yankee fans alike, democrat and republican alike.
 - From eternity past to eternity future there has never been no, and will never be a greater unity between people than what is found in Christ, than what is found in the church.
 - Nowhere else can you find a deeper bond than the bond of redemption in Jesus Christ.
 - In this room we have a variety of different people. People from other countries. With different accents. So many different likes and dislikes, different hobbies and pastimes, different majors, we are all so very different
 - Yet we are all unified in Christ and in the Church
 - As different as we are, we share our identity in Jesus
- I am participating in a mens study at SoHO, and we are reading a book called
 - The book a short history of Revival, and kind of summarized and tries to a degree to explain church revivals throughout our history
 - During one of these revivals, the Third Great Revival, or Businessman's Prayer Revival

- What happened was a group of men would get together for an hour once a week and just pray, and week to week it grew until thousands and thousands were meeting and praying together in locations all around the country.
 - One of the unique things about this revival was that there were no denominational lines at the prayer meetings, it was a gathering of Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Protestants, Calvinists and Armenians, if you were a Jesus Loving, Bible Believing Christian, you were welcome to join in prayer
 - They actually had a sign up as you entered with the rules for attendance, and one of them was that you could not discuss controversial issues
- What this event in history teaches us, is that Jesus transcends everything
 - The gospel transcends everything
 - That means that I am a Christian, I identify with Christ, I am a Christian before I am anything else.
 - Christian before I'm a husband, Christian before I'm an American, Christian before I'm a sports fan.
 - As we discussed before our identity is in Jesus
- Don't get mis-hear me, it is a good thing to define our doctrine, to refine our theology and our understanding of scripture, and there will be disagreements and differences between believers, our methods will be different, and a separation of churches becomes a good thing,
 - But all of that still remains within the context, of Jesus First
 - Our Unity in Christ is more important than the unity of each church within itself.
 - Being brothers and sisters in Christ transcends being members of the same church, though there is value in that
- We are charged with Unity as One Body under Christ, co-heirs of the same inheritance

What's Next? What does Paul do?

Eph 3:7-9

- Paul went on Mission, Paul responded to revelation with spreading the 'Unsearchable Riches of Christ'
- The second point of emphasis we see for the church is Mission

We are to go on mission as the church and share the glories of God as the church.

Eph 3:10-13

- The wisdom of God is found in the Mission of the church, and mission of the church is the means for gathering the people of the church
 - The mission of the church the means of God to gather His people for the church.
 - Romans 11 Paul talks about the 'gentiles' being grafted in, being added to the covenant people of God.
 - The mystery of the Gospel' as we are discussing it, is the universal nature of the work of the cross for all kinds of men and women, from all kinds of nations, speaking all kinds of languages.
 - All believers are now partakers in the inheritance promised to Abraham, the Kingdom of God is available to all

- And the way that it reaches all, is the mission of the church. Matt 28:18-20, Jesus charged all his disciples to make disciples of all nations.
- All of Christendom is charged to make disciples for Jesus of all nations.
- We are charged with preaching, with sharing, with showing the “unsearchable Riches of Christ”

Eph 2:7

- The unsearchable riches of Christ, are found in Christ
 - The greatest most valuable thing given to you or I, the most valuable thing given to the church is Christ Jesus as our head, and that is what we share. That is what we preach. That is what we show.
 - The church is the church because of Christ, without Christ, there is no church, there is no unity, and there is no mission.
 - We are not who we are without Christ, SoHo, GCF, Community groups, none of it exists outside of Jesus, our head, our center is Christ.
- The mission of Paul was to tear down the dividing walls between Jew and Greek, and to unite all people under the banner of Jesus, that is what he did, and that is what we are called to do!
 - We have been called to share the good news of Jesus with anyone and everyone, Conservative and Liberal alike
 - As daunting a task as that is, as intimidating as that is, it is our calling.
 - Are we all called to preaching from the pulpit? NO
 - Paul says His calling was to preach and teach specifically to the Gentile people, he had a specific calling, he had specific gifting's that he used for the growth of the church and the glory of Jesus
 - Each of us have specific talents, specific gifts, specific personalities, we are all different, desires and passions, most of which are God-given
 - Our calling is to use what God gave us for the growth of the church and the glory of Jesus
 - This is probably one of the most difficult tasks for us in our generation, specifically being so materialistic, so immediate, the twitter/facebook, social media, you are what you have been for the last 10 minutes, perception means more than reality,
 - we face struggles and difficulties as we labor for the church
- AS we struggle through this life, and we will struggle as Paul says, we do not struggle alone, we do not live independently outside of the church, we live in unity as part of the church.
 - We get help, we get advice, we get encouragement from the unity that exists between us, and graciously give that help, advice, and encouragement to one another
- Our call to unity, our call to one-another, is vital to our individual walk with God, I would argue it's impossible to be independent of the church and have a faithful walk with God.
 - We place emphasis on community because God does, unity is important to us, because it is to God
 - Paul's calling to the church was worth the suffering, his commitment to the mission of the church was hard, difficult, caused struggles, and suffering, but it was worth it
 - It was worth it

- Friends as you leave here I would strongly encourage you to commit to community, and to commit to relationship, to yearn for unity
 - We are one body, one church, co-laborers, co-heirs, partakers in the new covenant, unified under the head, Jesus Christ
 - We are a body in motion
 - We are a body on Mission