

## Who we are in Christ (2)

These preaching notes are placed here for the benefit of the deaf community at Christ Church. If others find them helpful that is fine, but note that are not in publishable format. They are simply preaching notes.

**Duncan McLea**

Ephesians 1: 15-23

7pm/cck/28/09/2008

---

Last Sunday Andrew began this series of sermons in which we are looking at the opening section of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

It seems God has been stirring in us and calling us to become more intentionally engaged in the lives of the people we live, work and hang out with.

We say this often but it is worth saying again, that the we when we come together like this in Christ Church Gathered mode it is in order to be strengthened and better equipped and more effective when we are in Christ Church Scattered mode – when we are out there in Cape Town and beyond in our Monday to Saturday lives.

Andrew used the analogy of a rugby or hockey team in the change room at half time to illustrate this.

At half time the team comes off the field for a rest period to assess the look at the score and how things have gone so far, to have a team meeting and let the coach clarify the strategy we are going to use in the next half. Perhaps they have a bit of physio on the aching muscles, some ice on the bruises and a maybe a few stitches to some open wounds. But it is all so that we can go back onto the field of play. It would be pointless if we just stayed in the changing room and never went back into the heat of the game.

I found this graphic that Andrew used last week very helpful.

To be effective out there on the field of play as it were, we need to know God's story. We need to know what God has revealed to us about himself.

And as we do that we find ourselves immersed in God's story. We learn to uncover our own story, and see how we need Jesus. We gain a greater grasp of how God's story has impacted our own.

And then we start discovering the story of someone who doesn't know Jesus. We hear about their hopes, fears, good news bits and bad news bits.

As we spend time with them we can share with them and tell them about our story, and us in God's story, and then open up and invite them to look at God in their story.

To do that we need to know God's story, and us in God's story – and that is what this sermon series and study of the opening section of Ephesians is about. It is to help us gain a better grasp of God's story and us in God's story so that we can start to intentionally share that with others in our Monday to Saturday lives.

So lets look at the second half of chapter one.

READ Eph 1:15-23

Paul writes

*15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all his people,*

*16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*

I identify so much with Paul in these words.

Tomorrow I will have been Minister of Christ Church for 19 years. I have learned so much from you all and have been blessed by being part of a church that is full of faith and faithfully and lovingly expresses that faith.

I can say that not only have I heard of your faith but I have seen your faith and seen the way in which that faith in Jesus is expressed in all manner of ways in seeking to reach out to the poor and to those who are ill and lost and vulnerable and needing God's love expressed in tangible ways.

So I can say with Paul I am **thankful for your faith in the Lord Jesus**.  
I am thankful for and inspired and encouraged by your faith in Jesus.

I can also say with Paul I am **thankful for your love for all his people**.  
I am aware of the love that is present in this church. I am aware of the kindness, the generosity, the caring sensitivity, the joyful sacrifices of time and resources to serve and in practical tangible ways love others.  
What an amazing privilege it is for me to lead Christ Church. I am humbled and awed. I am aware of what a high calling this is. I feel many times inadequate for the task, and am brought back to Jesus calling out to him for help. As I was preparing this sermon I did that again.

So I can identify with Paul and make his words my own. He continues...

*17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

That is my prayer too, and that is the purpose of this service of worship, teaching and Holy Communion ... of this time in the change room between halves ... ***that you know Jesus better.***

Now you would not be here if you did not know Jesus. If you did not know about his love and compassion, his power and authority, his teaching and example of a life laid down for his friends.

You know Jesus. I know Jesus. Paul knew Jesus. The Christians in Ephesus knew Jesus. But Paul prays that they *may know him better.*

*"I want to know Jesus better!"*

That is what you are saying by being here, isn't it?

Well then say it.

*"I want to know Jesus better!"*

What is the key? Wisdom and revelation.

*I keep asking that the God ... may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*

**Wisdom** is the fruit of using our minds, drawing on our experience, using reason and reflection. Having our minds and understanding shaped and moulded by God.

*Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Notice the connection between *renewed mind* and *transformed lives*.

The *Spirit of wisdom*, that Paul prays for the Christians in Ephesus, is not one that will just lead you on a path of intellectual discovery. He is a Spirit that will transform your lives. He will give you understanding that will lead to you live differently.

That is the journey I am on. That is where God's story and my story intersect right now. I am learning and gaining understanding about Jesus that is enabling me to live differently.

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on .... (Phil 3:12)*

Paul also prays for the Spirit of Revelation.

**Revelation** is when God speaks to us. When God draws back the veil and communicates his desires, his instructions, his love.

I have become aware that God wants to communicate much more to me than I realised. God wants to speak into the detail of my life and the situations I face.

I used to have the notion that God gave us broad guidelines and principles to follow – love your neighbour, care for the sick, honour your father and mother, respect those in authority – but then it was basically over to you.

Now he does that. He certainly gives us broad guidelines and general principles, but he does more than that. He gives revelation about the specifics of our lives.

I find that I do this more and more often now. I stop and ask God to give me revelation about what is happening and what he is doing. I ask what is coming against what God is doing. How is the enemy trying to disrupt and confuse?

There are countless ways this happens. I am no pro at this but I want to tell you that I am getting better at hearing God for the ministry I do and for the people I see, for the dynamics in our family and amongst our friends, ...

God is a communicating God. God is a revelatory God. He wants us to know his will. He wants us to walk in his ways. He is not playing a guessing game.

### **For me there are two key things about hearing God.**

**The first is to ask God to speak.** To put ourselves in a place where we say, *"Lord, please speak to me. Lord, I want to know what you want to say to me about ...."*

When David was leading the people of Israel in battle he time and again took decisions to the Lord.

*1 Sam 23:1 When David was told, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors,"*

*2 he **inquired of the LORD**, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah."*

*3 But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!"*

*4 Once again David **inquired of the LORD**, and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."*

*5 So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah.*

Remember this was his work context. He was not asking God which Psalm to use in worship or whether he should write another Psalm. I am sure he did that too, but the context of these enquiries of the Lord were in his work situation as a soldier and commander of troops.

**The second is obeying him when he does speak.** When God speaks and gives us revelation about a situation; when he gives us an instruction to follow

and prayer to pray; a call to make and payment to arrange; an email to send; what ever ... Do it. Don't delay.

Later on in 1 Samuel we have what must be some of the saddest words in the whole story.

*1 Sam 28:5 When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart.*

*6 He inquired of the LORD, **but the LORD did not answer him***

Why? Because he had wilfully disobeyed God.

It is actually an amazing story because what Saul does when the Lord does not speak to him is he finds a woman who is a medium and gets her to call up Samuel (who is now dead) so he can ask him what to do. It is amazing that Samuel appears to Saul and says through this medium.

*1 Sam 28:16 Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy?"*

*17 The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbours--to David. 18 **Because you did not obey the LORD...***

If you want to grow in Jesus. If you want to grow in hearing God in the immediate and detail of life.

One – ask him to speak and pause to listen.

Two – obey him when he speaks.

This is how we get to know Jesus better.

**Going back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He continues ....**

*Eph 1:18 I pray also that the **eyes of your heart** may be enlightened in order that you may know the **hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*

*19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

The **eyes of the heart** is simply a way of speaking about our inner being, our soul, our true selves, the part of us that determines who we really are and what we really believe.

Now if the prayer is that our inner being is enlightened, by implication its natural current state was one of darkness. Being in darkness means we do not see properly. We see shadows. We are easily deceived.

We are deceived about the hope to which he has called us. We are deceived about the nature of God. We are deceived and believe lies about God.

That is something else I have come to realise – just to what extent I am deceived and prone to deception.

The thing about deception is that it deceives! We get deceived about ourselves and about God.

### **Saved not condemned**

One of the lies that keeps many of us from growing in Jesus is that we believe that he came to condemn the world not to save it.

Think of the way we have been taught about sin. We connect sin with condemnation. Sin separates us from God and brings us under his judgement. Jesus died to pay the penalty on our behalf so that we do not have suffer punishment. God's wrath falls on him.

I recall that my Scripture teacher at school when I was in Grade 3 asked us to draw a picture of God. I drew a picture of Mr Plod the Policeman at the top of a tall ladder.

It is saying he came to condemn. He is out of reach. He is watching me to see if I put a foot wrong and then he come down on me and punish me or lock me up.

*John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world **to condemn** the world, but **to save** the world through him.*

God has come to set us free from sin. Sin is what prevents me from living authentically and fulfilled and whole.

Jesus comes and says I have come to set you free. I have come to remove all the junk that stops you being the real person you are meant to be.

ILL: Clearing out the gray water non return value. It had become a no way value. Nothing got through. Full of junk.

*Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.*

That is the *hope to which we have been called*, that Paul talks about in Ephesians.

Now remember that Paul was writing to Christians in Ephesus. He was writing to those who were followers of Jesus. He says to them,

*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.*

They were faithfully following Jesus but they saw shadows. They were deceived about who God was.

Can that not be true of us too?

What are the lies we believe about God? How are we deceived about who God is?

As we were praying before the service we asked God that question, "What are the core lies that people are believing?"

We sensed we got this from the Lord.

1. This is as good as it gets – God has given you all that he is going to give you and should not expect anymore.
2. God wants to cramp your style – like having to put on tight fitting shoes that pinch your toes – he will squash out your unique personality and shove you into a straight jacket of expectations.
3. You have done stuff that means that God will never be able to use you. Forgiveness works for everything but what you did.
4. You believe that God can't deal with the stuff in your life
  - a. sexual sin
  - b. relationship with a family member that has impacted you negatively your whole life
  - c. A weakness that defines you and drains you
5. There is a sense in which people feel condemned.
  - a. My religious activity – church going, quiet times, etc. are not good enough. God is displeased with me. The report card note – “could do better” sums up what you believe God feels about this area of your life.
6. There is a limit to amount of truth about God I can learn.
7. Others are so much further down the line than me. I don't really belong here.
8. My time has past – God can't teach old dogs new tricks.

Those are lies!

I have quoted John 3:16 & 17

Verse 19 reads.

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light*

Paul prays ...

*Eph 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be **enlightened** in order that you may know the **hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,  
19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

How can we cooperate with that prayer? How can we make it our own?

### **Recognise.**

Recognise the lie we have believed. At core believing a lie about God is a sin. So this would be to recognise our sin in believing this lie. To name it as such. To express to the Lord that this is how we see it.

*“Lord, I recognise that I have believed the lie that*

*this is good as it gets ...  
 that my time has past ...  
 that I should really not be here ....  
 I acknowledge before you that that is a lie. And that as I have believed that lie  
 I have been in sin that has separated me from you.*

## **Repent**

Repent of believing a lie about God. Ask his forgiveness and turn away from it.

*Lord I repent of believing this lie. I turn away from it now. I am truly sorry that I have been deceived, deluded by the shadows. I ask for your forgiveness and release.*

## **Receive**

Receive God forgiveness and the fresh infilling of his Holy Spirit.

1 John 1 :8 & 9

*8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

*9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Repentance is the gateway into true life and freedom!

Jeremiah 15:19a

*Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me;*

Ezekiel 18:32

*For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!*

2 Tim 1:7

*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

## **Replace**

Instead of believing the lie about God I will stand on the truth of who God is.

So we want to fill the vacuum. We want to replace the lie with the truth about who God is.

A good way to do that is worship. Where we sing out truths about who God is.  
When we allow the truth to replace lies.

Tonight we celebrate Holy Communion – we are reminded again of who God  
is and what Jesus has done for us –

*Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your cross I cling  
Fowl I to thy fountain fly, wash me saviour or I die*