

## Who we are in Christ (3)

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.

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Ephesians 1: 15-23

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Do you want to share Jesus with others?  
Do you want to be effective in doing that?  
Do you want to be better at doing that?

In order to be effective in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others we need to know what that Good News is and how it is good news for us and how it is good news for them.

In the first sermon in this series in which we are looking at the opening chapters of Ephesians, Andrew used this graphic. I put it up last week and I want to put it up again.

To be effective in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others we need to know ...

(1) God's story. We need to know what God has revealed to us about himself.

(2) We need to have a better grasp of how we find ourselves immersed in God's story. We need to learn to uncover our own story, and see how we need Jesus. As we do that we gain a greater grasp of how God's story has impacted our own.

(3) And then we can 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 them in God's 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.

Last Sunday we looked at Ephesians 1 verse 15 to the first part of verse 18. But let's read the whole passage again to refresh our memories.

READ Ephesians 1:15-22

The place I got to in this passage was the prayer Paul prays for his Ephesian friends, for the Christians – followers of Jesus in Ephesus, that ... “the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened”.

I pointed out that the implication is that the current state of “the eyes of their hearts” – which is just another way of speaking about their essential inner being, their souls, the bit inside us that determines how we see things and how we act – the state of this part of these followers of Jesus, was that it was darkened. It was in the shadows. They were not seeing properly. They were deceived.

And the thing I said about deception is that it deceives, and we don't see it. We see shadows which we think are the real thing but they are not.

We live out of a view of who God is and what he is like and what he does and of how we fit into God's story and we are deceived. We believe lies. And I suggested some of the lies we believe about God.

Paul's prayer is that the darkness will be pushed back and out there would be more light so we can see properly.

ILL: Threading a needle to sew on a button – needed to get into the light ... You need to do something. You need to move to the window. Turn on the light. Get the right background.

Now there are three things that Paul prays that we will see more clearly, his actual words are ...

“That you may know” => grasp and understand

Three things – (verse 18 and 19) – hope, inheritance, power.

**The first of these is HOPE**

*Eph 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you*

We are called to hope.

This is not a hope in hope. I hope things get better. I hope the market improves. I hope the American rescue package strengthens the economy. I hope I pass. I hope I get the job. I hope the medical tests are good.

Important and significant as all those may be, the root – the base of our hope is in what God has done through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus.

Peter writes ...

*1 Pet 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

God has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him. Our hope is that God our Creator has bridged the divide; that God cuts through the barriers that separate us and says to us – you are not alone. I am with you.

This was achieved definitively and established for ever through Jesus' death and resurrection.

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

At base level our hope is that we are not alone. Our hope is that our life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:3)

### **Emily's tribute ....**

What Emily's message shouts out loud and clear is "I am not alone". God is with me and this is real. This touches the deep inner part of me and it comes through people who touch me.

Do you see that this is not a technical understanding of hope. This is not something you get from learning the definition. It is something that you live and understand from the inside.

Peter says this ...

*1 Pet 3: 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

We need to be able to tell our story and explain how our story finds its place in God's story.

*Eph 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you*

We are called to know the hope that is our in Christ.

## **Second we are called to know our inheritance**

*Eph 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people,*

Now the astute amongst you will say, hang on the text says "his glorious inheritance" – i.e. God's inheritance. You have said we should know our inheritance.

You are right – but in that we are God's inheritance – which is another way of speaking about us belonging to God – we share his inheritance because we are his. We are his precious possession.

For me one of the most profound chapters in the Bible is Luke 15. It contains the three parables Jesus told about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. We call that last one the parable of the prodigal son. But in fact it is the parable of the loving Father.

It is the story of the Father who welcomes home the prodigal – even though he had squandered his inheritance.

It gives us a picture of the Father watching and waiting to receive back his son putting a ring on his finger – affirming his identity, putting shoes on his feet – not a slave but a son, putting a robe on his back – an honoured guest, killing the fattened calf – declaring a celebration.

Luke 15:29ff

But there is the other son – the loyal older brother who labours faithfully but does not realise his inheritance.

<sup>28</sup>“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup>But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup>“ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

The parable ends on an unresolved note. Will he, or won’t he go in to join the party?

We know the younger son “came to his senses” and went home to be received with joy by his Father.

Did the older son come to his senses? Did he realise that his inheritance was there all the time and say, “Thanks dad, I never realised how good and generous and kind you are. Can I come and join the welcome home party for my younger brother. Because dad, I want to be like you”.

Did he say that? Is that how the story ends?

Or did he pout, stick out his lip and grimace and say, I have worked on this basis all these years. I am not changing now. Did he remain outside and refuse his Father’s invitation to share in the inheritance like a son?

In fact both sons had opted for the slave relationship.

The younger son said, “treat me like a slave”.

The older son presumed he was a slave.

Slaves don’t inherit. Sons do.

*My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.*

*Eph 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ... the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people,*

I go back to Andrew's graphic. As we share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others, we need to know our story and us in God's story.

This is not something we learn out of a book. It is not a formula we trot out. It is a living experience of being included in God's story, not as a slave but as a son.

So Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that you may know ...

(1) the hope to which he has called us,

(2) that we may know our inheritance – we are not as slaves, we are sons and daughters.

### **Third that we may know his incomparably great power for us who believe**

<sup>18</sup>I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the ... his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup>he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Paul collects all the synonyms he can lay hands on as he describes how the power (*dynamis*) of God functions according to the operation of the strength of his might.

The word for power - *dynamis* conveys the sense of its capability or potential;

The word translated as exerted conveys the idea of it being effective.

The word translated strength conveys the idea of power exercised with control.

The power of God that Paul prays the eyes of hearts are opened to see:-  
Is capable.

It is effective.

It achieves results.

It is controlled. This is not wild power let loose. It is submitted to the Father.

It is power under authority.

It is incomparably great. It is mighty.

It is able to do far more than we can think or imagine.

But Paul wants us to have our understanding and grasp of this power available to us who believe based and grounded in reality. And he mentions three successive events that this power achieved.

- First it raised Jesus from the dead (vs 20).
- Second it seated him in a place of authority over all other authorities (vs 21).
- Third it made head over the church (vs 22).

(1) Paul points to **the resurrection**.

This is something rooted and established as fact. It happened. This is not a matter of faith. There is historical evidence for us to be sure that Jesus was tried, sentenced to death, died and agonising death on a cross, his body was laid in a tomb which as sealed, and on the third morning that tomb was unsealed, the stone rolled away and Jesus physically came back to life, was seen by a number of people - up to 3000 people at one time. His physical resurrection is well attested to.

God's mighty power achieved that.

**It is important that we know that. That is God's story.**

(2) Paul points to his **authority over all evil powers**.

In his earthly ministry there were continual clashes with demons and evil spirits.

It starts with the temptation in the wilderness. It happens as soon as he begins ministry in Capernaum. It happens in the region of Galilee at Gaderea. It happens as he comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration. And each time the demons lost.

God's mighty power was clearly working in Jesus. He has authority over evil powers.

**It is important that we know that. That is God's story.**

(3) Paul points to the fact that God has made **Jesus head of the church**.

What he says is that God made him head over everything – which would include the church for the church (in Col 1:18 he says it explicitly) – but the words he uses here is that he was made head over everything for the church.

I won't try and unpack the Greek syntax and look at the various ways commentators have understood this – you can look at John Stott's commentary if you want to dig deeper.

The point is that this authority and power that Jesus has is something that Paul wants us to grasp and understand in our inner being in our souls - because while this is God's story it is our story too.

*Eph 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

It is for the church – the church, you and me followers of Jesus, are described as his body, as his fullness ...

His authority over everything is for us. As we are the church the company of faithful believers – it is for us too.

Paul wants us to find ourselves in this story. He wants us to find our story in God's story.

And in that we do – we have that same power working in us.

*Eph 1:18 I pray 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 his people,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

## Conclusion

Now for us to us into this we need to move into the light. We need to go to the window.

I spoke last week about us needing **to recognise the lies** we have believed - to recognise the deception.

To **repent** – to turn away from the sin of believing lies.

I want to add this. There is a **spiritual battle** going on. The enemy is trying to get in and disrupt things. He is out to deflect us. To deceive us and throw shadows across the path.

But remember that Jesus has authority over him. And as we are in Christ we have authority in his name. So we can say, “Get behind me Satan.”

We can **renounce the devil** and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God. (Those are words taken directly from the baptism and confirmation service.)

**Receive** God’s forgiveness and grace and infilling of the Spirit that will enlighten the eyes of our hearts.

**Replace** lies with truths. Declare the truths of who God is.