

## Ephesians Series: What is Your Life Mission? #16 “The Church is a Treasure House of Wisdom”

Message Notes, March 12, 2023

**Ephesians 3:8-11 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Today we will examine the church, which, according to Paul, is a “treasure house of wisdom.”

✧ In our church’s Class 1, we begin by asking, “What kind of place do you think church is/should be?”

- Answers include: a place to worship, a place to study the Bible, a place to encourage one another, a place to be energized, a place to serve, etc.
  - Many people understand the church to be a place to get help, but that is only half of what the Bible teaches.
- Verse 10 says that the church is like a school (a comprehensive university) that offers “wisdom” in all areas of the world? How can a church function like a university?

✧ Today we will learn about the mission given to the church and how to accomplish it.

### 1. Awareness of being “the least”

- The principle is that God’s grace and power act upon the humble  
**Psalms 138:6 (NIV)** Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar.
- The term “the very least” was coined by Paul in the original language as the superlative of “small” plus the comparative form. It means less than the least.
- Paul’s self-evaluation (rigorous self-awareness) increased over time.
  - Years before the time of writing this letter: “the least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9)
  - Now: “The least of the saints” (Ephesians 3:8)
  - 2-3 years later: not limited to just Christians, “head of sinners” among all people (1 Timothy 1:15)
- God uses people who are characterized by humility: Moses, the humblest man on earth (Numbers 12:3), Jesus, the humility of Christ (Philippians 2).  
**Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!
- This self-evaluation does not result from comparison with others. Rather, it is a consciousness that strengthens each time we stand before God’s grace, the gratitude that results from being loved and cared for so much.
  - This grace is that of forgiveness, and it is experienced in the thankfulness one feels in being used in God’s great work despite one’s impurity and filthiness.

✧ Have you ever been moved by the Lord’s continued forgiveness, encouragement, and ongoing use of you despite your own foolishness and inadequacies? The gratitude that comes from this realization motivates us to serve God joyfully and willingly.

✚ John Bunyan was greatly used by God because of the humility that came from his awareness of sin (**Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners**)

## 2. Life is a journey in search of “inexhaustible wealth.”

- Paul previously used the expression “the riches of God’s grace” (Ephesians 1:7) to describe the “wealth” that transcend earthly “riches.” Here, Paul adds the descriptor “unsearchable.”
- The word “unsearchable” means “unmeasurable” or “unknowable,” so rich that it cannot be measured according to human capacity. The richness of the gospel (God’s love) cannot be fully comprehended even over an entire lifetime. The Christian life means continuing to receive this inexhaustible grace.

**John 1:16 (ESV)** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

- The word “wealth” *ploutos* comes from to fill, to make whole (*pimplemi*), and it is also used in the passage when Jesus called His first disciples, with so many fish that their two boats nearly sank because they were “filled to the brim” (Luke 5:7).
  - Peter and the others were seeking the riches of the world, but Jesus said he would make them “fishers of men,” referring to an inexhaustible, transcendent wealth. They did not understand what he meant at that time, but later experienced it and were satisfied.
- ✧ Have you begun to live the journey of unlocking the unsearchable riches that God has in store for you, rather than earthly wealth? Are you spending each day looking forward to the riches God offers?
- ✧ After living a life of faith for a number of years, you may assume that you have achieved a degree of understanding about God’s love and plan, but that would be a great misconception. Every day is an adventure (watchful waiting) with God. There is so much more that we do not yet know.

## 3. The manifold wisdom of God

- The word translated manifold *polypoikilos* is a poetic expression that describes many colors (variegated), as well as intricate and beautiful fabrics. It is related to the fact that we are created as “masterpieces” (*poieima*>poem) in Ephesians 2:10.
- When we live the life God intended for us, it becomes one beautiful color and thread in a great tapestry that allows us to share with people the rich gospel (the grace of the Kingdom of God) that God is making. At the same time, we become not just a component, but a specialized wisdom that the world needs.
- ✧ Thus, the church (you) is a place that can offer the world<sup>1</sup> not only religious activities, but also testimonies (wisdom) in various fields, therefore a treasure house or department store of wisdom.
- ✧ You have a message or task that you were created to contribute to the world. The church provides various kinds of training so that each person can be fully prepared to accomplish that purpose. The church is where you discover your SHAPE (mission) and find co-laborers and partners. You have a mission to help the saved become formed as the Kingdom of God (God’s family) and to share the saving message of the cross of Christ.
- What is your mission? We are told that it is “according to God’s eternal purpose” (v. 11). Just as the salvation of the Gentiles was not God’s Plan B after Israel failed, you were known to God from eternity past and chosen to be a member of the starting line up in His plan. Do you believe that?

**Ephesians 1:4 (NIV)** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

**Psalms 139:16 (NIV)** Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

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<sup>1</sup> There are various opinions on the interpretation of the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (10), but I interpret it as the church’s mission to establish (witness to) justice in wisdom and love as God’s agent, even against the supernatural forces (including the forces of darkness) that influence the world.