

Exploring the Extraordinary

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[0:00] Before we go any further, I just want to read out a brief statement from the leadership. Dear Bethel family, because Jesus has just been telling us in Ephesians that you are blessed beyond belief, and since we've not just heard about your faith, but seen it in action, worked out day by day among all God's people, because all of that, we as a leadership have not stopped giving thanks for you.

We're remembering you in our prayers. We're not there yet, are we? But we see in you all of the blessings that Ephesians tell us that we have.

With love, the Bethel elders. Hopefully, you recognise from the wording that I used, that this is what Paul feels about the Ephesians in our passage.

And what I'm really trying to say is, we see in you what God says that he sees in us. In other words, we believe God's view of you, because we see it too, expressed in Ephesians.

And we just wanted to encourage you in that, and to say that we're so thankful for that, just like Paul was for the Ephesians. So, given all of that, what does God want for us?

[1:30] What does Paul want for the Ephesians? Now that we've been reminded that we have all of these wonderful things in Jesus. Well, he wants us to know Jesus more.

He wants us to explore and enjoy those blessings more. He wants us to know that every ordinary week, and there are plenty of them, aren't there, can be a week exploring the extraordinary Jesus. Exploring the extraordinary joys that are ours in Jesus. Isn't this amazing? An amazing place to start. God carried out his rescue plan.

He sent Jesus down to earth, this messy place that we inhabit. And he chose us in love before the beginning of the world. That's what the first part of Ephesians 1 tells us. Just so that we can spend eternity exploring who Jesus is, and all of the wonderful things that we have in him.

What does that look like? Well, that's what our passage today is about. It looks, first of all, like knowing Jesus.

[2:43] Let's just note, guys, that knowing Jesus and knowing about Jesus are two different things. It's a cafe I go to regularly, probably too regularly.

And the first time I went, well, you probably can guess what happened. I went in and they said, what can we get for you? What would you like? What's your order? And then as I came in more and more regularly, they started to say, will it be the usual today?

Because they got to know me a little bit. And then after a while, they just said, hi, Johan. And then they just gave me the usual. And then you start to talk about things and you have a conversation, sometimes about things that really matter.

And in the end, you get free drinks. That's pretty good. Knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus is the difference between believing that the customer exists out there somewhere, and recognizing the customer's face when he comes in, knowing what his normal order is, what's going on in his life, the circumstances that he walks in every day.

That's the difference. The difference between believing in a God and walking with my Lord. Okay, I'm going to need a volunteer here.

[4:08] I'm hoping one of the grid kids can do this. Can somebody just come and read out what's on this piece of paper? I promise it's nothing dangerous or difficult. Flory. Okay, come on then. Come and read this out for me.

We're going to use this microphone. Don't be scared of it. I was for a long time. To Papa, for Christmas, I would like four bags of sweets and a pony, two sets of new school clothes, not the horrible itchy tights, please, from Corey.

Okay. Well done, Flory. Thank you very much. Okay, so there's a note. Word processed. Signed from Corey. Is it genuine?

Well, it could be, wouldn't it? Couldn't it? Especially the bit about the horrible itchy tights. That kind of rings true. I'm just going to show you another note. Can you see that? Shall I read it out to you? You don't get a choice. I'm going to read it out to you. Two Papa slash pasta. Okay. For Christimus, I would like two ponies, three dogs, one tortoise, three quad bikes.

[5:22] I think she's confused me with Father Christmas. And another 150 rabbits. Love, Corey. P.S.

Three donuts. And then three kisses. Now, I know that's from Corey because I recognize her handwriting and because I recognize from what she says her way of being.

Do we recognize the handwriting of Jesus in the Bible when we read it? When the real voice of Jesus speaks, do you recognize it? Do you know it?

Do you love him? Because you can't really know somebody without loving him. Can you? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?

Do you know him? Or do you just know about him? Paul prays that we would know Jesus better.

[6:28] Some of you youngsters. Maybe some of us older ones. We know a lot about Jesus, don't we? We know lots about God.

You know all the answers in Sunday school by now? Maybe not so much now. You've moved up to the grid. I don't know. But we know a lot about God. And you probably snore through RE because you think, oh, I've heard all that church already.

Maybe you've even done a bit of pretend preaching from the pulpit here. Some of you kids. But do you know Jesus for yourself? That's the question.

Has God enlightened the eyes of your heart? Revealed himself to you by his spirit? Because if not, you are not yet blessed beyond belief.

You don't own the most precious pearl in the universe. You don't know the one who loves your soul more than anybody else. And why would you want to?

[7:30] Because the Lord Jesus is so incredibly, beautifully, inexhaustibly captivating in his love and his holiness that knowing him is an eternal well of blessing that will forever inspire and satisfy us.

And no toy and no career and no person that we love will ever do that. Do you want to expand your horizons?

Set your heart on knowing the infinite God. Do you want to develop a greater empathy and love for those around you? Set your heart on knowing the God who loved people before they were born.

Do you want to be intellectually stretched? Set your heart on knowing the unfathomable God.

Do you want to be healed? Do you want peace for your heart? Then set your heart on knowing the great physician.

[8:37] Do you want to dig further into the wonder and the beauty and the complexity around you? Get to know the God who made it. Paul says in Philippians 3.8, I consider all things rubbish for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

So easy, isn't it, to just settle for knowing God superficially, knowing about him. You become opta experts or experts at World War II.

Maybe you've learned the lyrics to every Olivia Rodrigo song or you're an expert in coffee tasting.

But you never see how good God is. You never taste and see what it is to know God for yourself.

We need to know him and know him better. That's Paul's prayer. Verse 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.

Let's just pick up on the reference to the spirit there. There's a lot said and written about the role of the Holy Spirit. Isn't there? Are we missing the big point of him? Should we be separately baptized in the Holy Spirit?

[9:53] Clear from here, the role of the spirit of revelation is not primarily to give us new supernatural experiences every week or to move mountains or to do miracles through us, although he may.

The spirit fills us primarily, continually, so that we can know Jesus better. You know, John 14, verse 6, Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. And then a little later, in John chapter 16, verse 13, he says this, talking about the spirit. When he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

Jesus says, I am the truth. The spirit will guide you into all truth. You put these two things together and it's the same as what we're reading here, isn't it? The spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we will know Christ Jesus better.

So don't lose sight of that and go looking for some new zing in your Christian life when things seem a bit ordinary. Okay? Ask the spirit to show you more of who Jesus is.

[11:14] We need to know Jesus for ourselves. Secondly though, knowing Jesus means we get to explore the blessings that we have in him.

Let's read verse 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 the saints and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Are you guys familiar with the Harry Potter films? Order of the Phoenix? Or maybe you've played Hogwarts Legacy, the computer game that goes with it. Can I show you a picture? Pop quiz.

See if you can identify this room. Anybody? Anybody? Oh, Thomas has got his hand up. What is it? No, it's not the Great Hall. Come on.

What is it? Shall I put you out of your misery? This is the room of requirement. The room of requirement.

[12:31] Is that the most controversial thing I've said all morning? It's the room of requirement. For those of you who are all at sea because you don't like Harry Potter or you haven't watched the films or, you know, whatever.

What is the room of requirement? It is a room that isn't always there. The door to it appears when someone genuinely needs it. And when you go inside, it has exactly what you need for that moment.

Harry Potter finds it when he concentrates intensely on finding a safe place. I think this is the closest that J.K. Rowling gets to prayer in these books.

He walks three times concentrating intensely on finding a safe place. Now, if you know the stories, you know some difficult things happen in the room of requirement. It's not like some hidden paradise where there's no problems.

But it offers riches and respite which just aren't available in any other way. See where I'm going with this?

[13:34] In Jesus, in his blessings, we have the room of requirement and all we need. It's like Paul is praying that our eyes will be open to see that we're standing in the room of requirement.

And all that we need is already around us. If you know Jesus, you trust his work on the cross, his words in the Bible, then you have those blessings.

And you have access to them. What are those blessings? Back to verse 18 to 21. Let's start with that hope.

It's our hope that's anchored in the calling that we read about in the first half of this chapter. The hope of being saved from our mess, from our sins, which is founded in the fact that he called you already before time began in love.

And Romans chapter 8, verse 3 expands that. For those he predestined, he called. For those he called, he justified. For those he justified, he sanctified. For those he sanctified, he will also glorify.

[14:52] What a chain of blessing to explore. The hope that we have, that we were called to. Second, the riches of our inheritance in the saints.

What is that? It's a bit confusing, that phrase, isn't it? I think it means this. I think it means the riches of the fact that we in the future, let me just look to the past, are the inheritance of Jesus.

It's us that he is going to keep and enjoy forever. And that's good. And it's not just good for Jesus, it's good for us now.

Because we have that inheritance. Because it's us. In other words, you're sitting next to the inheritance of Jesus. If you're sitting next to a Christian today.

And we can enjoy that now. The ordinary person in the chair next to you is the extraordinary blessing of Jesus Christ for you. That's unbelievable, isn't it?

[15:57] Thirdly, his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him

at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority, power and dominion over every name that can be invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

The power that raised Jesus to life despite the opposition of the devil and everything evil in this world against the tide of a world that rejected him, against even the power of the sin in my own heart, the power that raised Jesus despite all of that, that is the power that is at work in the heart of a Christian today.

And Jesus says through Paul that nothing can overcome that power at work in your life because it has already defeated and been set above every other power.

Those are the blessings that he invites us to know as we step into his presence. Thirdly, we need to know that he is king for us.

Probably recognise the folks on the screen or at least one of them is Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert often went back to Balmoral which the late Queen did as well, didn't she? [17:29] And the reason that they would go is because they want to come away from the stress and pressures of the ordinary royal life. And while they were there, you probably know this story, Victoria would make a point of dressing in ordinary clothes and going into the village and visiting the people who live there in their homes and making friends with their kids.

Can you imagine that, kids, if the Queen knocks on your door and says, hi, can I come play with you? Well, not if they're in ordinary clothes but we know because we know the story, don't we, Hamish? That is something, isn't it?

She was Queen of the whole of England but she was Queen of that little village of Balmoral in a different way, wasn't she? That is Jesus and us.

Let's read verse 22, 23. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

This is amazing, isn't it? Jesus is the highest power there is. appointed over every other power on earth. His resurrection and his coronation signals the defeat of death and the devil and everything else that is wrong with our world.

[18:53] And he is also specially given to us to be the head of the church, to be our leader at Bethel, to be our pastor. that's God's plan for us.

That's his blessing to us. The king of the universe is your pastor, not me for the avoidance of doubt. Jesus is your pastor by God's design.

God's design. That means he isn't just a figure in history who sacrificed his life to be our saviour back then. That means he's given to us today to be our loving Lord.

If you're paying attention in verse 23 you'll see that Jesus thinks that the church is the best thing on earth. Well, it's hard to believe sometimes, isn't it? Looking around us. But he says that he's willing to die to ensure that this family of his will outlive everything else on earth.

And it's in and through his church that he's going to colour in the outline of all of his promises and purposes and plan. It's through the church that he will fulfil his plan to restore and redeem and make right everything on earth.

[20:13] That's what verse 23 is saying. Can you guess what the application is, folks? The church is where we should explore Jesus' blessings.

The church, the people, the church is where we should expect to see God fulfilling his promises and purposes. So if you're a Christian be with the church because that's where King Jesus who is the source and centre of all our happiness is at work.

And if you're not a Christian join the church. Be part of his family because this collection of ordinary people with extraordinary blessings is the special delight and inheritance of Jesus and is how he is going to bring the earth back to where it ought to be.

So say you're there and you're thinking yes. You trusted in Jesus in his death, his resurrection.

You've been restored in your relationship with God so you can know Jesus personally. You believe that you are blessed beyond belief. You know Jesus loves his church. How do we access this?

[21:34] We pray. We pray for ourselves. We pray for each other the same way that Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

If you look back to verse 16 verse 17 I have not stopped giving thanks for you remembering you in my prayers. Verse 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ will enable us to know Jesus better.

exploring the extraordinary Jesus and all his blessings looks like praying. It's how we get to know God by coming into his presence. It makes sense doesn't it?

By his spirit. Some of you might know that my family in the Netherlands runs a company and that company makes coffee machines and I get to sit in on the management meetings sometimes and believe it or not that's not so that I can tell them where they're going wrong.

Correct all their objectives. It's not so that I can get a free coffee machine although I have thought about asking if I'm honest. Actually it's so that I can be let in on the leadership's plans and as a member of the family I can be a visible support to those plans.

[22 : 48] That's why I'm invited to sit in on that and it's the same thing when we pray friends. God's not really inviting us to criticise his management strategy when he invites us to pray.

He invites us to come into his presence and sit and understand all the good that he has already achieved for us in Jesus and all the good that he is doing today and all the good that he has planned to carry out in the future so that we can understand.

So that as a member of his family we can be a visible supporter of all of the good that he is doing. You might be thinking oh isn't that a bit simplistic you know in an age of anxiety and complex psychological problems you're saying the answer is pray.

Well not really. It's saying that our personal problems our wants our needs that the answer to all of that is to be with a person.

the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not a theory or a therapy or a particular thing that we haven't got or a particular thing that we need to get rid of.

[23 : 59] That is not the answer. God's answer to our fears and sorrows and hurts is himself and his promises. And prayer is meant to bring us closer to him.

I think if I'm honest I tend to pray mostly for God to change my circumstances or to fix my problems not to give me a better understanding of how wonderful Jesus is and how rich my inheritance is in his glorious promises.

Paul says our main prayer should be to know Jesus better and all that we have in him. I'm not saying don't pray about those other things because Jesus loves it when we pray when we ask him when we come to him when we share with him.

But our main prayer should be Lord let me know you more. I want you to imagine just for a moment that we were all praying that for ourselves and for each other as the main prayer that we prayed.

Just imagine that for a moment. What difference would that make do you think? From what Paul is saying in Ephesians. I'm just going to put a prayer up in the screen.

[25 : 25] I'm going to pray it. Invite you to make it your prayer this week. And if you want to join in then just say amen at the end. Jesus, I want to know you more.

And I want to see more clearly with the eyes of my heart all the blessings that are mine in you.

Thank you that you are king for us.

Please fulfill all your promises in and through me. Amen. Amen.