

Ephesians 1:11–14

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Preacher: David Helm

- [0 : 00] When I was young, I recall taking in the majesty and the scope and the richness of the Grand Canyon for the first time in all of its fullness.
- And if you've never had that opportunity, you need to know that its grandeur can only be fully known by experiencing it from a variety of vantage points.
- The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, far beyond your own reach of sight. At its widest places, it's 18 miles wide, that river having cut down its way in between.
- At its depth, it's 3,500 feet deep if you want to reach the canyon floor. It is one of the great natural wonders of our country and something that everyone should put their eyes on at some point in time.
- And I've taken it in from the Northern Rim, the Western Rim, the Southern Rim. I remember my first experience as a boy, seeing it from the Western Rim and then later driving to Flagstaff, Arizona, and looking out over the Grand Canyon in the early morning light from the Southern Rim.
- [1 : 28] I remember sitting on a mule, yes, a mule, and winding our way down to the canyon floor where Phantom Ranch awaits you. And you can, from there and from only there, look up, not merely out at the Grand Canyon, and see those stratified lines that reach all the way from east to west, indicating all of the time and all of the years that it has taken for that to cut its way in.
- As Paul sat down and contemplated how to awaken the senses of the church to the hope of her calling and the grandeur of God's grace, he determined in this letter that it would require a variety of vantage points.
- One view cannot take in God's grace. Think of the vantage point of subject material that we have been looking at over the last three now weeks, verses 3 through 11, the subject of election and adoption, predestination, redemption, revelation, inheritance, and glory.
- Or take the idea of sequence, six steps, as it were, that secure your foundation and your faith, the acknowledgement that you've been elected and then you were adopted, but that was effectuated through his redemption and your reverence into it, indeed leading all the way to one day where you will be glorified with him, where you will share in all that is his, and then to learn that it comes all at the riches of his own grace, and it has to be repeated from every vantage point so that you can remember it, all according to the divine eternal purpose of his own will, to the praise of his own glories and his own grace, and so that when God calls Jesus forward one day and the reading of the will that outlines the inheritance that is his, we will be stunned to find ourselves at that same table and to receive in his fullness all that eternal fullness.
- When I begin to think of these verses that have been before us now three consecutive weeks, I am stunned. Think of it not from the vantage point of subject or sequence or theme or glory.
- [4 : 26] Think of it strictly in regard to what he had to put down in regard to time. It opened in verses four to six, looking back to eternity past, what God did from you before the foundation of the very world.

It looked then forward into the present last week, verses four to seven, that redemption is yours in the death of Christ, and now in these verses, it stretches your eyes to look beyond the furthest horizon you can see of all of his grace into a future, into an inheritance that will be yours, already now saved up for you in heaven.

And waiting. All of this is here. And get this. It is all accomplished by Paul in one stunning sentence that opened in verse three. It is as though he has flown over the canyon of God's grace and captured it in a moment, in a reading that could be taken in within 30 seconds.

I feel in these verses as though Paul is writing with all the wonder of a child.

A child that is bursting forth in continuous speech with one complex running sentence, failing even to take a breath until the full expression of his mind and heart has been completely exhausted in the joy, an exclamation of words of grace, all grace, all to the praise of his grace.

[6 : 09] There is not literature like this that you can read in any other volume. And we've been living in now these three glorious weeks.

So what is the vantage point of this concluding little unit, this third movement of his sentence?

What does he want you to see? What mule does he want you to ride on? What stratified lines of grace that extend as far as the east is to the west, does he want you to take in?

What sunrise does your heart need to be quickened and warmed to the glories of who he is?

Well, it's a future. It's a future inheritance. It's a future inheritance for all who are in him, namely Jesus.

[7 : 17] Look at verses 11 and 12. In him, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined, according to the purpose of him who works all things, according to the counsel of his will, so that we, who are the first to hope in Christ Jesus, might be to the praise of his glory.

Those two verses ask you to look beyond the furthest point on the horizon that your soul's eye can see to an inheritance that is yours, even though now yet unseen.

So, so what can I tell you about the inheritance which you cannot yet see? in the people of Israel, in the Old Testament scriptures, we have laid down by God a pattern that enables later readers to understand the spiritual inheritance that is theirs.

In the Old Testament, one's inheritance was fundamentally related to land. land. And land, then, would be the source by which you were able to generate income and wealth for the future.

And when God wanted to condescend in ways to show us the eternal land that will be ours with him, a place where God is with his people and his people are with God and they dwell together, he, he actually gave by lot to the various tribes, to the, to the fullness of God's family an inheritance, a place to live and dwell and be with God.

[9 : 13] They called it the promised land. for the Christian, what does the Bible then say we inherit? What are the great gifts that await those who are in Christ?

Well, for that, Jesus begins to define this for us. I mean, they're in our text, they are in him. We ought to let him tell us what they are. Matthew 5, 5, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the land.

And what is the nature of that new covenant land? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9 that those who are washed, those who are sanctified, those who are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God will inherit the kingdom of God.

The promised land is nothing other than the kingdom in which God dwells and we dwell with him. 1 Peter tags it that inheritance is that of blessing. Our own text says, not merely blessing but every spiritual blessing.

Matthew 29, Jesus says, and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

[10 : 32] Revelation 21, 6 says, it is done. I'm the alpha, the omega, the beginning and the end of the thirsty I will give from the spring of water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this inheritance.

I will be his God and he will be my son. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable but we shall be changed.

We shall inherit the imperishable as the mortal puts on immortality. We shall inherit incorruption. Revelation 8 simply puts the banner over all of it.

You inherit glory, glory, weight, stature, eminence, beauty, permanence of God. Tell me, is there anything in this world that you would rather have?

All this is ours according to this one sentence from before time. All this is ours according to the purpose of his will which cannot be thwarted. All this is ours by his son who acted out in accordance with God's will.

[11 : 41] We get the promised land. We get the kingdom of God. We get salvation. We get blessing. We get eternal life. We get everlasting water. We get incorruption.

We get glory. We get it all. All. You take it all with you. It's all following you.

I know you've heard. That you've never seen a hearse towing a U-Haul. But in Christ, you got you got every storage unit in the heavens.

It's not under lock and key and it doesn't have to be purchased. It's all yours in Christ. When I think of these verses, just even these four verses before us today, it is like looking, in one sense, through the lens of a kaleidoscope.

You know what a kaleidoscope does. It was it was invented, patented, I guess, in 1817. Three different words kind of form kaleidoscope.

[12 : 56] Beauty. forms or shape. Something to look at. A kaleidoscope is you looking at beautiful forms and shapes.

You're looking at one thing, but as it turns, there are two or more reflective surfaces. In our text, three lenses, the past, the present, and the future.

And depending upon the angle, it results, in a sense, in infinite symmetrical patterns that allow you to see beautiful forms. And what Paul is saying in this opening, if you look back upon an eternal past and turn the lens to the present and look to the inheritance in the future, it all explodes to the glories of the praises of the riches of His grace.

Does not your heart desire this? Is this not a great enough value add?

to replace everything else you've looked for in life? Would you not sell everything for this? Would you not venture on a journey fraught with immense dangers in order to attain this?

[14 : 11] Would you not give up the patterns of life that would keep you from this? Would you not set sail over seven seas to arrive where this is?

I'm going. Won't you come with me? Writers have tried to jolt the hardness of the human heart in ways that capture our imagination.

I remember as a child hearing my mother read to us those simple chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis and in one of them there's this little character named Repacheep.

He's a mouse and if you haven't read it just so you all know it didn't start with Ratatouille. This idea of bringing in these fictional characters that work with living people to create wonderful stories.

They had it down long before you came along. But Repacheep is on this dawn treader. Repacheep is in this vessel.

[15 : 33] Repacheep has set sail with these others who are headed to this promised lands. And this is what he says. My own plans are made. While I can I sail east in the dawn treader.

When she fails me I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer if I have not reached Aslan's country or shot over the edge of the world into some vast cataract I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise.

Setting course into the sun. And this is what he wants you to experience. He says in him we have attained this kind of inheritance.

That it's being fulfilled by the purposes of one who cannot be thwarted. so that we would be to the praise of his own glory.

But you don't have to die with your nose to the sunrise. Get this. Get this. The second two verses of the text take this future inheritance that is yours in Christ and indicate that it is already secure, already assured, already by way of down payment placed within your own breast and you carry it with you.

[17 : 17] In seed form, I'm there already. By faith, I taste the fruit of the promised land.

by holding on to Jesus, I experience all the treasures that are his. Though I have nothing here, I already have everything here.

Look at 13 and 14. In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

This inheritance in Christ is said to have already been sealed into us by the Holy Spirit when we believed in the word of truth, which is the gospel of salvation, which simply put, means that you confess yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his wrath, unless he was to have sovereign mercy upon you, and yet he gave to you his son, the son of God, Jesus, who is all of his complete sacrifice, makes absolutely perfect payment for your sin, where you can enter into God's presence, dance on his streets of gold, because when God looks at you, he looks at you through the lens of his son, and in the lens of his son, who he's given all things, why you're at that table and you get them too.

that's the gospel of salvation. It's sealed. It's already sealed. You don't hope to get there by the end of your life.

[19 : 09] You have the assurance that if you believe, that's the word there, if you believe in him, you are sealed. You are sanctified, past tense.

You are justified. It is all done, yet being worked out. This idea of sealed, I'm just thinking of the various angles on it to help you appreciate it.

A seal is what makes something genuine, authentic. When I was young, there was only one basketball shoe.

It was the platonic shoe in the sky. It was the basketball shoe from which all basketball shoes are made. It was the Chuck Taylor Converse All-Star. And you wanted it in high tops because you wanted to show off that Chuck Taylor seal, that star.

You were authentic. You were genuine. You were the real deal. You were a hoopster before they said we were hoopsters. If you were sealed with the Holy Spirit, that means that God has put his stamp of approval on you.

[20 : 22] You genuinely are who he says you are regardless of what you say about who you are. That's the kind of seal I need.

Not only that, but to seal something in the ancient world particularly meant that it was your possession. You can think of it in the American West with the branding iron and the possession of the insignia of who you belong to, but when you think about the Holy Spirit, he's basically saying in a world where we all gave ourselves over to our own ways, God in the Holy Spirit says he's mine.

He's mine. He's the father's. She's the son's. The little one, the mouths of infants, they're mine. Faith, they're mine.

They're mine in faith. They're my possession. They're people for me. They're my bride. They're my family.

And it didn't matter here whether it was we, Paul, who believed first, verse 11 or 12, or you, Gentiles, or even the Ephesians who believed later, whoever it is, no matter when it came to you, no matter who you are, no matter what your ethnicity is, you can enter into that which was theirs and is now yours because it's indiscriminate.

[21 : 42] It's democratic in all of its universal ways. It is yours. Sealed. Possession. God. God owns me. It's authentic, it's possessive, and it's secure.

That's what a seal does. Why do you put something valuable in the mail? I don't know about you, but I'm always worried when I put it in the mail. But I make sure that things have been licked well and stamped down.

And then you get some of those, you're like the glue's going to come off of this. And I go and get my, my, what do you call it, scotch tape. And I seal that more. Why? Because I want the double seal because what's in there is so valuable.

I want it secure. And that's what he's saying. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, God is like sealed in you.

And you in him. The gates of hell. can't pull this thing off. No letter opener. Going to take you from the hand of God.

[22 : 49] Not one person will be lost who he places under this seal. It is genuine. It is possessive. It is secure. And notice it's already until we acquire possession of him.

now what is the effect on your soul? I don't know. I hope I'm, as my friends would say, I hope I'm helping someone today. For me, it is overwhelmingly beautiful.

It's beautiful. For me, these truths are like colored lights that dance upon my soul. they're like stained glass domes that have been penetrated by glory.

I don't know how else to explain it. I do know this. I do know what Paul's intended outcome for this opening sentence was.

And I do know what the takeaway is for the vision God has for Christ and his church. Before you and I charge ahead as Christ Church Chicago with a stated vision, before you and I get all tangled up on what we're to be on about and how we tend to accomplish it, Paul wants us to sit, and we have sat for three weeks, to know this, why we exist.

[24 : 46] This is why we exist. Look all the way back at verse six. He did all this redemption to the praise of his glorious grace.

look at our own text again in verse 12, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. Look at the very end of verse 14, that this inheritance which is ours, which is sealed by the spirit, is to the praise of his glory.

This is why we exist. think about organizational management books.

I don't think about them often, so let's do it just for a moment. It is common for people in this field to separate out a purpose statement from a vision statement and a vision statement from a mission statement.

I know, stay with me. A purpose statement signifies why we exist. A vision statement says what we hope to accomplish.

[25 : 59] A mission statement details how we plan to achieve it. I know you're lost. I was too when I read it. Think of Uber. It started here in Chicago as well as San Francisco.

Uber started by writing a purpose statement. Here's what it was. Evolve the way the world moves. That purpose statement led to a vision statement to acquire 40% share for paid rides.

That vision statement led to a mission statement by seamlessly connecting riders through apps. They moved from a purpose to be engaged in evolving the way the world moves to a vision to acquire a certain per share of people that are moving around the world to a vision or a mission that actually said by doing it in this way.

Christ Church Chicago, the book of Ephesians, the opening book in this facility, our purpose is now clear at the end of verse 14. And this is what you ought to be talking about in your community groups.

This is why we exist. We exist to praise the everlasting, inexhaustible, boundless, and permanent glories of God's grace that are ours in Christ. Oh, I like the way that sounds, and I'm going to say it again.

[27 : 19] We exist, and I'm going to do it with superlatives because Ephesians keeps superlatives moving because it can't capture it all. We exist to praise the everlasting, inexhaustible, boundless, and permanent glories of God's grace that are ours in Christ, and we get to do it together.

This is why the Westminster Catechism opens up by saying, all you good Presbyterians of your youth, what is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. Man, let me hear that again.

Maybe we got some more Presbyterians in here than I thought we did. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. That's why we exist. They've said it in just those few words, and they've captured the fullness of what is inexhaustible.

For some of you, this might be the first day in your life that you know why you were born. I know everybody asks you, what are you going to do with your life?

What are you going to make of yourself? What's your, oh, I hated this growing up, what's your passion? My youngest daughter hated that immensely.

[28 : 36] All the way through college, people asking her, what's your passion? She finally came up with only one answer. My passion is trying to discover my passion. But what is your purpose?

Not what are you going to do, but why do you exist to do anything? You now know it. You walked into Christ's church this morning wondering what you're going to do with your life, and you're going to walk out knowing why you're here.

You exist. You were born. You were intended by God from eternity past according to the counsel of his own mysterious will to praise the everlasting, inexhaustible, boundless, permanent glories of his grace that are yours in Christ.

And you get to do it in family with one another. We exist for God.

We exist this ought to be a big God church. We ought to be confronted every week with his grandeur.

[29 : 53] We live in a day when the church is big on itself. We need to be big on God. The purposes of God for Christ Church Chicago are nothing short of an unknown to us everlasting proportion of grace.

We should not have a five-year plan. You can't capture the inexhaustible purposes of God in a three-year campaign.

Daniel Burnham laid out a hundred-year plan called the Chicago plan, and that is a drop in the bucket to what God is doing. We like to say that we're still carrying out the vision that Daniel Burnham put on the paper a hundred years ago.

Guess what? The church is carrying out the vision that God put on paper in his mind from before time began. and will extend in purpose to eternity future.

If today you became a Christian, if you said, this is the strangest thing I can believe happening to me, God is speaking to me, and I believe I now know why I exist, and I know that I need to trust in Christ in order to walk into those purposes so that what I do is actually in line with who I am, then you have now entered into, in the last few minutes, something that will have everlasting influence on your life, because you are everlasting.

[31 : 40] You are going to go beyond the furthest horizon of the Grand Canyon into the presence of the eternal glories that are in Christ. You matter because you are in motion, under the eternal, merciful, gracious plan of God, all done in him, all done in him, eight times in him, in him, in him, from him, through him, to him, this is the one who was, this is the one who is, this is the one who is to come, it's all there, and it's all yours.

You got to be a nut case to not go out of here, Christian. I pray that the Holy Spirit, it's the Holy Spirit that would seal us. I pray that even in this moment, you would find yourself believing.

Just as members in our own church have told me of their own conversion story, how they came down to the front one day and believed, and as they were walking down the aisle to confess for the first time in their adult life, I'm a Christian now, they kept saying to themselves, this better not be a fad, this better not be a fad, this better not be a fad.

And it isn't. Because by the Holy Spirit, you're sealed. By the Holy Spirit, you're His. By the Holy Spirit, you're secure. By the Holy Spirit, you're authentic.

You're genuine. You know why you're here. Oh my gosh, to know why you are here. What a day. Oh, happy day. Happy day.

[33 : 22] Yeah, yeah. I don't want, I could go. When Jesus was, when He was, my sins away.

I have a confession to make. I have led this church over the last three years under the assumption that we are laboring on a 50-year vision.

It's too short-sighted. It's too small. The vision that God has for Christ Church Chicago will extend beyond time.

through you. Can we please get this right before we move upstairs into the big house?

Can we please know why we exist? We get the privilege of making God known to this world and to a world unseen. We get to give expression to the heights and the depths and the lengths of His grace.

[34 : 38] We get to stand, as it were, over the southern rim of His matchless glories and shout out praise to you, O God. And we get to do it on concrete before we arrive in gold.

Our voices are to echo across the great expanse of His grace, even to be heard by seen and unseen voices. our city ought to hear the resounds of the praises which come forth from our own lips.

Something ought to be heard from you, from the depths of your own soul, as you stand today looking up from the canyon floor of His stratified glories.

You ought to be singing to His matchless power. You ought to be speaking of the endless lines of His mercy.

You ought to be conforming your patterns to that which is going to be worthy only in His presence. And you ought to do it with one another.

[36 : 02] And everything else should recede from view. All the last years of sniping being buried today.

You know what my wife likes to call the last two years? Oh, well, I guess we're all toddlers now. Oh, my, does she have it right.

We're all toddlers now because we forgot who we are. We forgot why we exist. we forgot that it extends to all peoples.

Christ Church of Chicago, we exist to praise the glories of His grace.

May we never forget it. our heavenly father, like that little reaper cheap in that book, may we near our way to heaven's shores by seeing the sun rise in the east and may our little bark that holds us one day run aground where we leap from it in all the all the all the happiness of standing with you.

[38 : 00] Lord, change our life according to the riches we understand in your word. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.