

Our Unsearchable Riches

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 October 2003

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] It is a great experience to preach a sermon, and so I want this morning to share that experience with you and have you preach at least the first part of the sermon.

In order to do that, you will require opening your Bible at page 182 in preparation for preaching the sermon.

Have you got it? You're at Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 7. And I am going to represent the arrogant, cynical, depressed and discouraged person who perhaps doesn't want to be seen at church, but nevertheless finds themselves here.

And I'm going to ask some questions. Then I want, that's who I am, you see, that person. And I'm going to ask the questions. And I'm going to ask you to preach the sermon by reading to me the verses that appear in this passage, Ephesians 3, verses 7 to 21.

The way it will work is that I will make a statement. Then you will read the verse. And I will make another statement, and you will read the next verse.

[1 : 35] In that way, you will preach to me, at least for the beginning, and then we'll resort to my preaching to you again. Okay, are you ready for it? Your eyes are glued on verse 7 of Ephesians 3, and I make the statement, I'm not aware that God has ever given me anything.

And you say, of this gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

Verse 8, all I have, I have achieved by myself, and am in need of no other resources.

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.

And verse 9, for me, the whole of life is shrouded in meaningless mystery.

[2 : 45] And to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things. In my world, all the rulers and authorities live by their own ingenious wits.

That through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. And verse 11, the whole human enterprise lacks meaning and ultimate purpose.

According to the eternal purpose, which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord. I am traveling on a journey which I know can only end in oblivion.

In whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him. Human suffering makes a mockery of human meaning.

So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. I am myself the only fit object of my worship.

[4 : 21] For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. A fine thread of restrained hatred is all that holds humanity together.

From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. My whole inner being is a jungle of anxiety, conflicting passions, depression, and despair.

That according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man. My heart is an impenetrable castle of fear, guilt, arrogance, and deep distrust.

You may have power to be strengthened with might through his spirit. You may have power to be strengthened with might through his spirit. You may have power to be strengthened with might through his spirit. That you may be rooted and grounded in love. At the center of my life is a profound emptiness that can never be filled.

You may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth. You may have power to comprehend with might through his spirit.

[5 : 50] You may have power to comprehend with might through his spirit. Can I tap into a resource that can more than fill my emptiness?

And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge. You may have power to comprehend with might through his spirit. You may have power to comprehend with might through his spirit. You may be filled with all the fullness of God. All that I know and all that I could imagine must ultimately fail to meet all that I need.

Now to him, who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think. Yet I need to find the door by which I can escape the tyranny of the generation to which I belong.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations forever and ever. Now this gospel is what we have claimed for ourselves in repeating the vows of our baptism and in claiming the promises of baptism for these children.

We have claimed the gift of God's grace. We have claimed the inheritance of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[7 : 28] We have expected light on the hidden secret of the mystery that God hid in his creation.

That man should be saved through the crucifixion of Christ. We have claimed that each individual life is to be part of God's eternal purpose.

We have claimed that understanding life, not as an attempt to get along without God, but to experience God within.

So that they find, as we must find and continue to find, God as Father of their creation and redemption, Christ indwelling their hearts and strengthened through life by the Holy Spirit.

We have claimed for these children as for ourselves. Each life may reveal a new dimension of the love of Christ.

[8 : 58] We give thanks that this is available to every person in Christ. Now, to affirm what I've just said to you, I want you to look at several key words in this passage, to look at them and draw from them.

And the first key word found in verse 7 is the word grace. And what this word means is that the primary fact of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that our religion is based not on what we give to God, but God's gift of grace to us.

What we have learned to call amazing grace. And of which we constantly need to be reminded.

In verse 8, you will see the statement about all his saints.

That Paul claims to be the least of all the saints. I want to remind you about all the saints. That Paul is the least in his mind.

[10 : 41] Because his first encounter with the gospel was as a proud, arrogant, self-sufficient Pharisee seeking to terminate the followers of Jesus Christ.

And so it's not surprising that he thought of himself as the least of all the saints. But in what we've read this morning, what I remind you personally, is that in the kingdom of men, our ambition is to be the greatest of all.

In the kingdom of God, the honor goes to the least of all the saints. What a tremendous freedom that gives us.

In verse 8, again, you will see this word, the unsearchable, which means the inexhaustible.

And no matter how poor you may be, you are an inheritor of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[12 : 01] We live in a world of cosmic anxiety because we fear that we are running out of fresh water. We fear that we are running out of oil.

We fear that we are running out of arable land. Fear that we are running out of hydropower.

But you see, what this says, and it's totally contradictory to our cosmic anxiety, there is one thing of which we will never run out.

And that is, the inexhaustible, unsearchable riches of Christ. The next word that I want you to look at is in verse 9.

And verse 9, it talks about bringing to light the mystery hidden for ages. Now, this mystery is a wonderful mystery.

[13 : 18] It's a mystery that the world has never penetrated. The world continues to consider it a profound mystery which has ultimately no meaning.

but this mystery is in the heart of God's creation. The whole of the created order. At the heart of it, there is a mystery.

And the mystery is explained as something that God did before He created the world. He made provision before He created the world to redeem the world.

And that's why you get that mysterious and wonderful reference to the Lamb of God that was slain before the foundation of the earth.

This was the good news that carried away the disciples at the time of the resurrection because they saw the event of the resurrection not as a unique event but as pointing to an event that preceded the whole of creation.

[14 : 47] The crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world was the reality that underlies the whole of God's purpose in creation.

The mystery continues to be a stumbling block to the Jews. It continues to be foolishness to the Gentiles.

Jesus continues to be despised and rejected. And yet, He is the very source of our life.

If you look in verse 10, you'll see a reference to the church and what the function of the church is. And it's amazingly relevant for this week.

The purpose of the church is, as you see in verse 10, that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.

[16 : 08] the church is to be the means by which God makes known His manifold witness.

The picture the church has of itself at the moment over which it's having so much trouble is that the church considers itself to be the means by which the religiously inclined people of the world are to be brought up to date with the manifold wisdom of the world.

And that's exactly opposite to what the function of the church is. It is to make known to the world manifold wisdom of God. If you look in verses 14 and 15 you will see something which is I mean it's amazing if you stop to think about it.

That God does not relate to us merely as a creator to His creation. It's not how He looks at humanity.

He looks at humanity as a father to His family. Verses 16 and following you come across this paradox of human life and that is that man has such a high view of himself that he thinks the time has come within the span of history that we can now get along without God.

[18 : 05] That's the proud boast of our generation. And it's not a matter of getting along without God.

God what we are to experience is God within our person and God within our church and God within the world that He so loved.

We talk about it in these verses that God within is the one who strengthens us with His power by His Spirit in our innermost being.

That's how we are to have God within. He says that we may know that which surpasses knowledge. knowledge. You know, I mean, I think that's a wonderful statement. If you are an artist or if you are a musician or if you are a novelist or if you are just entranced by the awareness that beauty is something which you can't condense.

[19 : 32] that it's possible for human beings to know beyond their knowing. In our materialistic and scientific world, we have concluded that if we don't know it, it ain't.

But what the promise here is that there is an enormous reality which is beyond our knowing. before which we should stand in reverence. It says about God within us that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

You know, the sense of emptiness we have, the sense of emptiness should make us look for the fullness fullness which God wants within us.

Fullness of himself. And that we may experience an abundance beyond anything we could ask or imagine.

[20 : 44] the ultimate reality for the human being by reason of the unsearchable riches of Christ is something that we can't begin to imagine.

Something that if we were asked for whatever we wanted we wouldn't have the wit to ask for that. Something infinitely greater. what it means that God is within us.

Verse 21 concludes the passage by demonstrating that we are locked by time into our own generation.

And most of our understanding is the understanding of the generation to which we belong. but what God within does for us is to make us aware that through the church and through the person of our

Lord Jesus Christ we are able to glimpse the glory of God in we are able to glimpse the glory of God throughout the whole of history and in every generation.

Now I tell you all this in order that on this Thanksgiving weekend you may be extraordinarily thankful because you have an extraordinarily good reason to be thankful because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 39] Our world is very impressed at the moment with the religious fervor and dedication of the suicide bombers.

That's real religion. It's interesting that St. Paul dismisses it out of hand and says though I give my body to be burned but have not love I gain nothing.

Paul you see recognizes that there is a powerful inspiration which is created in our hearts by hate. but what he desires for us is that we should be willing to take the whole of our life and make the whole of our life into a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

As you were to in a sense to see our life as a great explosion of praise and thanksgiving which doesn't spread death which spreads life all who are blasted by that explosion.

[24 : 11] And that's why I want you to know I want you to understand that even in the midst of the confusion and difficulty of our time we must go on with the business of making our lives into sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Amen.