

Refuge City Church — September 17, 2023
“The Unifying Measure of our Diversity” (Ephesians 3)

Introduction

- **Last time:** Once and for all, Jesus tore down the *wall of separation* between us and God. By His blood, we are free from the restraints and shame of who we once were. What a beautiful thing to know God and His incredible love for us.
 - However, many live with built up animosity and even hostility towards others. What must we do to give those differences over to the Lord and truly live in the unity?
 - **1 John 4:20**, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”
- **TODAY:** We are made one by the blood of Christ.
 - *Everyone* is welcome into a relationship with Jesus, offered salvation, and embraced into the church community.

“Mystery revealed” [Verses 1-6]

“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

- Paul reiterates “the mystery” revealed only to a few, has now come to pass.
 - Genesis 12:3 — Abraham was made a father to *all* nations.
 - Isaiah 42:6 — a prophetic word from Isaiah about Jesus, who would come to set *all* free from sin.
 - **Romans 9:25**, “[quoting Hosea] “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”
- As fellow heirs, we’ll lock arms in the church and stand shoulder to shoulder in glory.
 - **Galatians 3:28-29**, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

“Heavenly challenge extended” [Verses 7-10]

“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. 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 to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”

- The greatest apostle/evangelist proclaims what we all need to claim.
 - Everything that God does is by His grace. His strength through our weakness. His glory through our brokenness.
 - We get to be a part of, and see the beauty of God’s mercy, grace, and love for *everyone!!*
 - **QUOTE:** “The church as a multi-racial, multi-cultural community is like a beautiful tapestry. Its members come from a wide range of colourful backgrounds. No other human community resembles it. Its diversity and harmony are unique.” [John Stott]
 - **QUOTE:** “... the church is to be an audio-visual display of God’s reconciling work. In this primary way she testifies to God’s grace and wisdom.” [Darrell Bock]
- **[vs. 10] Wait. Hold. Pause...** Did we just read what I think we just read in Verse 10?!
- The angels are watching, listening, and learning from the Church???
- They are observing the church and how we respond to God’s wisdom and to each other.
- When we express our God-ordained unity, the angels learn of God’s wisdom!
 - **Luke 15:10**, “Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”
- However, do not discount the enemy and his demons. They are watching and listening as well.
 - **Ephesians 6:12**, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

“Boldness of faith” [Verses 11-13]

“This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.”

- We can talk about the blessings we receive, the beautiful complexity and diversity of the church, and even the spiritual realm... but *everything* points back to the ministry of Jesus. He made the way to unity possible.
 - Christ is the head of the church, and we are his house.
 - **Hebrews 4:16**, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

“Bow to elevate” [Verses 14-21]

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

1. First, we must *bow* before our Lord God. He rescued us from death, therefore we owe Him complete submission.
 - We need to recognize we were the one's in need of salvation, and daily submit our lives to Him!
 - **QUOTE:** "Posture affects the mind, and is not therefore unimportant." [Robert Jamieson]
 - **Remember:** "For you were bought at a price..."
 - Living your own way and will is not freedom. It's submission to self & sin, which leads to death.
 - Follow the example of Jesus who bowed down to His Father's will prior to His death on the cross and prayed, "...not my will, but your's be done."
 - By doing so, individually and collectively, we can be united under His leadership and authority.
 - We are family in Jesus name.
2. Understand and believe in your value *according to the riches of His glory!*
 - **Remember:** He desires to live and dwell with you... *you have value!*
 - We need to get rid of the notion of only *inviting* Jesus in when it's convenient, or only when you need things to be a little better.
 - Rather, we must allow Jesus to build a home and take residence in our heart!
 - This is the unifying measure in our diversity... the One person and Spirit of Jesus Christ dwelling in each of us.
 - **1 Corinthians 12:13**, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and all were made to drink of one Spirit."
 - His indwelling Spirit, our relationship with Jesus, is what allows us to fully experience relationships with each other built on faith and the love of Christ.
3. Are you feeding on His Word so that you are *rooted and grounded in Love?*
 - **Jeremiah 17:7-8**, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."
 - **Matthew 7:24-25**, "...be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been *founded* on the rock."
 - Our complete submission to God will produce, and let us remember the 1st fruit of the Spirit... LOVE.
 - **QUOTE:** "Being rooted and grounded in love is the result of Christ being at home in one's hearts by faith. It is not a result of just being a believer." [John Eadie]
 - Let us seek to understand, and live out, the unending agape love of Christ!
 - *Breadth* of His love
 - His love is all-encompassing, all inclusive.
 - **Romans 2:11**, "For God shows no partiality."
 - **James 2:1**, "My brothers, show no partiality."
 - If God doesn't show favoritism or discriminate, neither do we!

- *Length* of His love
 - From eternity to eternity! There is no limit to how far His love will go.
 - His love leaves the 99 to search out the 1... so should we.
- *Height* of His love
 - His love raises all of us to eternal glory!
 - Our responsibility is to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to whoever we can so they too have the hope of salvation.
- *Depth* of His love
 - He willingly left glory to lift us out of darkness and into His light.
 - His love knows no bounds... Neither should ours!
- **Romans 8:35-39**, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us...Nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Conclusion [Verses 20-21]

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

4. He wants to work in and through you “...far more abundantly than all we ask or think.” ... Beyond your wildest dreams!
 - The unity we’ve been addressing is something greater than we realize. It allows us to function in love & harmony.
 - **John 17:21**, “That they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
 - We are created for unity.
 - **I Corinthians 1:10**, “...that all of you agree, and that there be no division...”
 - We are to be of the same mind... submissive to the Lordship of Christ.
 - **Philippians 2:10-11**, “So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
 - We do it all for the glory of God!