

First Presbyterian Church
Cheyenne, WY
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Unsearchable Riches
Ephesians 3:1-12

There is indeed a great mystery of faith, not only for those who do not believe, but also for those of us who place our faith in Christ. It is a mystery which the apostles and Christians through the centuries have explored. It is a mystery that still eludes us from time to time. It is the great mystery of God and the rich life that he offers us.

The riches God offers us has nothing to do with earthly treasure, although some would lead you to believe that. The eastern sages who came to offer their gifts to a child in a home brought an earthly treasure to honor him. But they were seeking much more than an earthly treasure in return. They sought to honor a king.

As we come to our epistle lesson this morning, we find that we are dealing with that great mystery which the Apostle Paul also glories in. He also seeks to understand and tell others about the mystery which began at Bethlehem with the song of the angels to the shepherds, and the beauty of a huge star shedding its silver glory upon the waiting earth below, and all the marvel of that first Christmas Day when the wonder which had been secret for ages began to be unfolded -- the glory of what God had in mind for us.

Paul explores this mystery in the letter he wrote to Christians in the town of Ephesus, the capital city of Turkey (or Asia Minor as it was known back then). The letter is addressed to a group of believers, who are rich beyond measure in Jesus Christ. Yet they are living like they don't know Christ at all. These new Christians have been continuing to live just as they did before, settling for a shallow faith because they won't allow themselves to grow in their faith. Paul's prayer as he is writing is that they would know God on a deeper level. He wanted them to anticipate with hope the calling they have received to salvation and to

come to know that God has so much more to offer them than just the surface things.

As Paul is writing this letter, he is prisoner of the Roman Empire. But Paul declares, "I'm not a prisoner of Nero or Rome! I'm a prisoner of Jesus. It's all being used for the glory of God!" It is with that joy in suffering that he wanted those coming to know Christ to understand the glorious inheritance we have been given; and that we would know the incomparably great power of God. It is this great power of God that shows us the unsearchable riches being offered to us through Christ Jesus, if we will but give our hearts completely to him.

What about us? Do we look to God for the riches he offers us? Or do we settle for the minimum standard? Do we live our lives thinking that coming to church on Sunday morning should be enough for anybody? Or, how can I possibly understand God, after all, I'm not a pastor or a professor and I'm certainly not a theologian? Good questions, all. But depth of faith can only be obtained if we make the effort to keep learning about God. We have to keep digging down deep to find God's riches for us.

There was a man in California that staked a claim on an old gold mine. He was there to make it rich. He dug and he dug. He worked that mine day after day, week after week, month after month. He found a nugget here and there but never really hit the vein. It frustrated him and he often went into town to drink his worries away.

One day, he was so mad and so drunk, that he sold that claim to a guy for \$50. All those years of work just weren't worth it to him to keep trying in what he thought was an unobtainable result, so he simply gave up. The new guy went into the caves and began to dig, and dig, and dig. In just a few weeks, he hit the motherlode. It was just 2 feet beyond where the other guy ended. Just 2 feet!

Sometimes we stop too soon in our journey of faith. We find a few nuggets and because we don't get great riches immediately, we decide that we'll settle for picking up little spiritual nuggets here and there. Or worse, we stop trying altogether. We stop before we hit the motherlode of faith. We naively think that we aren't ever going to get there or that it

will always be beyond our reach. You have before you slivers of riches from Jesus, but there is still so much more you haven't found. His riches are unsearchable!

1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." God's riches are beyond our understanding. Paul's ministry was to preach about these unsearchable riches and help us to understand how we could begin to enjoy those great and glorious riches of God. He wants us to know that Jesus has so much available that it is beyond our ability to search it out for ourselves. There is so much more awaiting you in Jesus Christ than the best you've ever been in your relationship with Him! But we must be willing to keep digging, keep learning, keep seeking if you are going to become the deeply spiritual Christian you want to be. We must keep learning and trying and forgiving and hoping and striving. Only then can we even begin to understand how deep and how wide is the love of Christ for us all.

All the gracious offers of the gospel, and the joyful tidings it contains, come from the rich grace of God; it is the great means by which the Spirit works grace in the soul. It is the means by which we can understand God and live the rich full life he offers us; not according to the world's idea of success, but according to God's. The mystery is this: the secret, hidden purpose of salvation through Christ that has now been shown in full light to all the world through the birth of Jesus.

The riches of Christ have nothing to do with gold, frankincense, or myrrh. The eastern sages may have brought earthly wealth with them, but they left with of so much more. They left having knelt at the feet of the king; not the king of the Jews but the king of the universe. The riches of Christ have nothing to do with physical or financial gain. It has nothing to do with a big, fancy building. It has nothing to do with worldly success.

Rather the riches of Christ are found in the depths of love for God and the saving act of Christ on the cross. As Paul was writing his profound words to the church in Ephesus, he knew just how deep that love of Christ goes and just how far it reaches, and just how rich it truly

is.

People will always disappoint us. Families may desert us. The stock market may crash. Jobs may disappear. But Christ never will never fail us. The simple message of the gospel is this: We are saved by Christ and Christ alone. There is no other means of salvation. (*Acts 4:12; Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 10*)

And this means of salvation is available to everyone who will call upon the name of Christ. Perhaps Peter wrote it best in 2 Peter 3.9, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God wants to redeem us. He wants to forgive us. He wants to save us. He wants to give us the riches of salvation and reconciliation. And so he sent his Son, the only begotten of the Father, to become one of us.

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. And as heirs of God, we stand to inherit the great kingdom of the unsearchable riches of God. Amen.