

Ephesians Study 5

Prayer: Strengthen me in my deepest heart so I can know your love and be it in this world.

Reading and Reflection

Read Ephesians 3:1- 13

In Chapter 3, Paul slows down his narrative a little bit and tells of his own story and how he has witnessed what God is doing.

Chapter 3: 1-6, Paul talks about his insight into the mystery of Christ.

What is **your** insight into the mystery of Christ. What has God revealed to you, what do you know or have learned about who Jesus is?

How does that part of God's story enter the lives of others?

In **3:6-13**, Paul talks about how he was given understanding so he could preach God's mystery.

What is the mystery? And how was God going to "administer" it. What is God's big reveal that Paul understood?

What do those familiar words mean to you today?

Eugene Peterson on Chapter 3:10

"Many things about the church can be defined and described: creed and leaders, conflicts and persecutions, architecture and politics. But the pieces don't add up to church.

This complex interior heart of church is captured in the phrase "that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known" (3:10) "Manifold" has a picture in it: an intricately embroidered pattern in a tapestry. And wisdom carries the sense of lived knowledge, or the revelation of God as lived. (Wisdom is the embodied knowledge of God within individuals bringing themselves to the whole –my words). Wisdom is knowledge in action, embodied in the life of the church. Wisdom is the practice of resurrection.

Church is where this wisdom, this embodiment of the knowledge and revelation of God, takes place, where the resurrection is practiced. Church is the workshop for turning knowledge into wisdom, becoming what we know."

NT Wright on Eph. 3:10

“It is precisely this many-sided, many-colored, many-splendored identity of the church that makes the point. God’s wisdom, Paul is saying, is like that too: like a many-faceted diamond which twinkles and sparkles with all the colors of the rainbow. The “rulers and authorities” however – both earthly authorities and their heavenly counterparts—always tend to create societies and social structures in their own flat, boring image, monochrome, uniform and one-dimensional. Worse: they tend to marginalize or kill people or groups who don’t fit their narrow band of acceptability. The church is to be, by the very fact of its existence, a warning to them that their time is up, and an announcement to the world that there is a different way to be human.”

How does the church embody the many layered, multi-faceted wisdom of God?

How is church the workshop for turning knowledge into real-life wisdom? How could the church help you learn what it means to be resurrected and raised with Jesus?

What sorts of wisdoms do you see in our church?

What does this plan of God’s tell you about God’s character? What kind of God wants diverse, many-faceted wisdom?

How does just existing as a diverse and multi-faceted church challenge the authorities of this world?

Connecting back to first question in this study, what is your part of the wisdom? What is your insight into the mystery, into the big story?

It might “feel” small, local, unspiritual, but it is so important to the Big Story.

Responding to the Text

We are part of the plan because of Jesus, Ephesian 3:16 tell us. We are confident and free to approach God within this plan. Each one of us has an insight that is important and needed to the whole because each one of us is God’s child.

Make Ephesians 3:14-21 your prayer. Read it aloud.