

Blessing #3 Revelation of the Mystery (Continued)

Ephesians 1:10

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 8, 2019

Good morning everyone. Before we get started in our sermon time this morning, I just want to echo what Dwayne said in the announcements. As you can tell by the decorations up here, the Christmas season is upon us. Ready or not, it is here with all the decorations and Christmas trees popping up around town. And it's kind of exciting for me because the holidays have a special fondness in my heart. One of my sons was born around Christmas time, so December reminds me of that.

I remember driving to pick up Jeremiah for the first time in the snow in Indiana. It was 20 degrees Fahrenheit outside. If you do the math, I think that's just cold. I don't know what that is in Celsius, but all the roads were iced over and it was snowing. Our internet was down at our house, but none of that could stop us. We were going to pick him up anyway.

And I remember that when we did that, we couldn't go into the building he was in until we signed some paperwork. That was just the arrangement we had with the agency. So we had to meet the lawyer first and sign paperwork. So we did that in the backseat of our car. That was the weirdest thing I've ever done. We sat in the backseat of the car and finalized the adoption because it was too cold. It felt kind of like we were doing something shady. I wanted to ask the guy, "Can you give me some ID? I don't know who you are." But that was all around Christmas time. I'll never forget that. That was six years ago.

Then we came to Chilliwack a few years later during Christmas time as well. That's another fond memory that we had. We came here, I moved here January 17th. But in the winter of 2016, we were packing up our bags, loading up the truck and trying to figure out all the passport/work permit details that have to come into moving to another country.

So all that to say the Christmas season has a special fondness in my heart. I get to put up my 10-foot blow up snowman this time of year. It keeps falling over with the wind.

But this is also a special time of year for our church as well. As you can tell, just looking in your bulletin, we get excited this time of year. There's all kinds of events that we have as a church family, and you'll want to kind of keep an eye out on the schedule for what's coming up. We have the "Women of Grace" Christmas Event on Tuesday. That'll be a special time. We have a Christmas dinner the 22nd, and then the Christmas Eve service as well, and you won't want to miss any of that.

And with that said, speaking of Christmas, speaking of the Saviour's birth and this type of theme, I want to invite you to a book that talks about some of that, talks about our salvation anyway. And that is the book of Ephesians. So if you would turn there with me in your Bibles

to the book of Ephesians. We are continuing our study of this book today. We're going to take another look at it.

As you're turning there, if you've been with us for a while, you'll know that the title of this series is the "All of God" series because that's what the book of Ephesians is about. It tells us that our salvation is all of God. All the blessings and riches and treasures of the Christian life come from Him and not from us. In other words, this is a gift. Salvation is a gift to you. That's what this book says. It is God's present to us.

This is our 10th sermon in the book so far. We've been in it for three months now, and we've learned so much. But it all goes back to this, this is the point of the whole thing: salvation is a gift from God. You don't earn it, you don't achieve it, you don't work for it. It comes entirely from His hand.

As one pastor put it, holiness does not lead you to Christ because it can't. You're too sinful for that, but Christ leads you to holiness. And it's the same way with this, it's the same way with your blessings and your salvation. Good works don't lead you there. A good reputation doesn't get you there. A good name doesn't do it because it can't. You're too sinful for that. It all comes from Christ. It's a gift, which is what Christmas is all about, right? That's what we learn about this time of the year. Jesus was God's gift to us. He was God's present.

I read this week that Canadians last year spent \$19 billion on Christmas, \$19 billion. And if you do the math, it comes out to \$643 per person. I don't know if some of you are skimping on gifts this year or not, but that's the national average. It's \$643 per person. And Paul says in this book, that's nothing compared to what God gave for you. That's nothing compared to what the Lord spent on your salvation because He gave us everything. He gave us all that He had in order to save you and tell you about Himself; which is what we're going to talk about this morning. That's the topic of our passage today.

And I want to introduce it like this, I want to begin our study this morning in this way - on December 17th, 1927, the USS S-4 submarine was running maneuvers off the coast of Massachusetts when it was accidentally hit by a Coast Guard destroyer, leaving a two-foot gash in the hole that couldn't be plugged. The hole could not be fixed. And so the submarine sank to the bottom of the ocean waiting to be rescued. It would stay there for several days. And while it was there, it's sent messages back and forth through other vessels in the area asking for help. And one of them said this, it was a very brief message, but it contained four words, four powerful words - and the submarine says this, "Is there any hope? Is there any hope? Will anyone come to rescue us? Will anyone come to save us from death?"

I don't have to tell you that a lot of people are wondering that today, aren't they? A lot of people are asking that question - is there any hope? Is there anyone coming to save us? They feel like they're drowning, they feel like they're on the bottom of the ocean being covered in the waves, and they just want it to end. And so, they want to know is there any hope.

I don't know if you've ever run a race before, but you know if you've done that, you get a burst of energy toward the end, right? You get a flood of energy when you see the finish line.

Why? Because you know it's about to be over. You know the race is almost done. It's the same way with life, it's the same way with trials. You can get through them if you know they're going to be over soon, if you can see the finish line. And some people never see that. Some people never get to see the end in life, so they don't have any hope.

The famous atheist Marghanita Laski once said, "This is what I envy about you Christians, this is what makes me jealous; you have someone to forgive you, I have no one to forgive me," she said, "I don't have any hope. No one's telling me that life is going to get better." And I think a lot of people can identify with that.

I was talking with someone the other day who was going through a trial. They were going through a hard time in life and this is what they told me - they said, "It would be so much easier if I knew it would end. If I knew it was going to get better. There's no ship coming to rescue me, there's no one pulling me off the bottom."

It's been said life is hard but it's even harder if you have nothing to look forward to. And I think a lot of people would agree with that.

Another quote I came across this week is that, "Hope is believing that the light at the end of the tunnel is sunlight and not a train." Some of you will get that on your drive home and think, "That was really funny." But we all need to know that.

And that's what our passage is about this morning. This is what this text is about. What we're going to read about today or learn about today is the hope that you have in Christ. This passage says that the light coming at you is sunlight and not a train. You have something to look forward to this morning.

And I want to warn you at the front end of this passage, this is some tough stuff. This is not an easy text to understand. I spent a lot of time this week trying to wrap my mind around this, but I think it was worth it because this is something we all need to hear today. This is going to give us some hope. Let me read to you the chapter, Ephesians 1:1-10 says this;

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

Our focus for this morning is going to be on verse 10. But just to give you a review of this passage I told you before Paul starts off the book of Ephesians in an unusual way. He does something kind of strange because he begins by giving us the longest sentence in the Bible. It goes from verse 3 all the way down to verse 14 without a pause. It's been called the longest sentence in the Bible and the greatest sentence in the Bible, because every key doctrine of the Christian faith is found right here in Ephesians chapter 1. If you read this passage, you'll find that every key principle of our salvation is found right here.

Another way to say that is if you want to know what it means to be a Christian, read this. This is what the Christian life is all about. And verse 3 gives you the theme of it. It starts it off this way when it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." In other words, this whole chapter is about blessing. You see the word "blessing" repeated several times there for emphasis. This is all about the gifts God has given you.

If you're a Christian in the room this morning, I want to tell you, you are a Christian because of the gift of God. If you leave blessed today, I want to tell you, you leave blessed because of the grace of God. That's what Paul is talking about here.

And in verse 5, he starts mentioning the blessings one by one, he starts off with adoption. That's the first blessing in the list in verse 5. Which means God brings you into his family. That's what the word "adoption" means. He makes you one of His own.

And then he mentions the next one in verse 7. This is the blessing of redemption in verse 7. Which means God buys you back from sin. In order to adopt you and bring you into His family, God had to fix the broken relationship. And in order to do that, He redeemed you. Which means this is a personal thing for God. This is not an abstract salvation that you have. It required a personal commitment, personal sacrifice.

There's a theology out there called "deism" which says that the Lord created the earth and then He just let it go, kind of like a divine watchmaker. He wound up the watch and just set it loose. It's not what you read right here. God is personally invested in this world because He redeemed you.

And that leads to the next blessing which is found in verse 9, if you look in verses 7 through 9:

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will.

That's the next blessing in the list. That's the next one he mentions - the blessing of the mystery. Paul says, "You are blessed because you know a mystery. You are blessed because you know a secret, and the secret is that Jesus Christ has come."

Verse 10 mentions the summing up of all things in Christ. That's what this is talking about here. Jesus has come into the world to sum it up, put everything in the proper place and you know it. God has revealed it to you, which is amazing, if you think about that.

I mean the people for thousands of years in the Old Testament had no idea this was going to happen. They had some sort of a taste of it, but they didn't know. They had prophecies, they had some visions, but they didn't have the full revelation because Jesus hadn't come yet. You've seen that. You know that.

In Greek it means the unveiling of something or the revealing of it. The idea is that there's been a curtain over this for thousands of years, and God has pulled the curtain back and let you look inside. It doesn't refer to something that is still a mystery but to something that was a mystery and is no longer. This has been revealed, it has been explained.

And I can't emphasize this enough, how huge this is because there are billions of people looking for this today. There are billions looking for a Saviour, searching for someone to forgive them as Marghanita Laski said.

I told you last week that 84% of the world's population is religious. You hear a lot of stuff on the news today about atheists and agnostics, but if you do the math, there's not that many of them. And if you add it all up, there are about 4,000 different religions to accommodate that. There are 4,000 different ideas about how to be saved. But you know the right one, isn't that amazing? God has revealed it to you, not because you're better than all those other people, but because God has blessed you. That's the point here.

This is not because you're special or more wonderful, but because He is gracious and kind to you, which is what gives you hope. This is what you have to look forward to. When it comes to going to heaven, you're not stumbling in the darkness. God has shown you how to be saved through Jesus Christ.

Adrian Rogers, the pastor in Memphis, Tennessee, passed away years ago - said this, he said, "Jesus came the first time to die. He's coming again to raise the dead." Ain't that amazing? When He came the first time, they questioned whether He was a king, the next time the world will know it. The first time He wore a crown of thorns, the next time He will be wearing a crown of glory. The first time He came in poverty, the next time He's coming in power. The first time He had an escort of angels, the next time He will come with 10 thousands of His saints. The first time He came in meekness, when He returns, He will come again in majesty.

And that's where your hope lies this morning. That's where your joy is found - the Lord is coming back in majesty. He's coming back to sum it all up, and which is what we're going to talk about today.

So if you're taking notes, in Ephesians 1:10, we're going to look at three more parts to the mystery of His will. So if you're writing down the outline, this is the outline for today. This is what we're going to talk about; three more parts to the mystery of His will.

As you know, we talked about this last week, but we ran out of time. There wasn't enough time to get to the whole passage. We looked at verse 9 and talked about what's going on there, but we couldn't get to verse 10. But we're going to do that today with three more parts to the mystery of His will.

The first one is the administration of it. The first part to the mystery of His will that we'll look at today, is the administration of the mystery. Now, this may be some deep stuff we're swimming in this morning, but we're talking about a mystery. So this is a little mysterious as to how it's worded here.

Someone in my care group last week read this passage when we were doing discussion time, and they said, "What are you going to do with that?" I said, "I don't know, it's a mystery. You tell me." But there's some clarity to this. We can know what it's talking about. But in verse 9, Paul tells us that the mystery has been revealed. It has been explained to people like you and me. But now, Paul's going talk about how God administers that to us.

And if you read in verses 7 through 10, it says,

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration.

It's a little hard to read, but if you look at the key phrases and keywords here, it does help you to understand what Paul is saying. Phrases like "made known" in verse 9. Paul says, "God made known the mystery to us. He revealed it to us." He says, "According to the kind intention of His will," which means God did this in kindness. Again, you did not earn this, you don't deserve this. This is done in kindness, in mercy.

Administration comes from the word "*oikos*" or "*house*." It referred to the slave who took care of the house, the servant who managed it. Over time, the word referred to management in general or any kind of administration.

And the idea here is that God has run His house in different ways in history. He has administered the world in different ways, and now in the days of the church, He does it like this. Now in the days you live in, he reveals the mystery to you. That's the meaning of the passage here. He didn't do this before, He didn't tell the people in times past about Jesus, they didn't know this. But now, you do because you're living in this day and age. You live under this administration.

I think we do this here in Canada, but in the States, when you have a president, you refer to his administration, and it just means anything that takes place in the time he's in office. You have the Reagan administration, the Bush administration, the Clinton administration, that kind of talk. That's sort of the idea that's being used here. God has always been on the throne, He's always been the King, but there has been different ways He has run the universe.

Some have said this is the most important verse in the book of Ephesians. This is the key to the whole thing. The fact that you live under this administration, you live in the time of the mystery. We don't think this way today because we're not Jewish, but as a Jew, this would have shocked Paul. The fact that this would be revealed to you; the fact that the Messiah would be revealed to non-Jews, to Gentiles.

The Jews had a pretty rough word for the Gentiles, a rough nickname - it was the word "goyim," which meant "dogs." And for a Jew to write a book like this to the Ephesians and say, "You know this" would have shocked them to pieces.

To explain this a little bit, the full passage says, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which he purposed in Him with a view to an administration." Some of your translations don't use the word "view" there. They just use the word "plan." The King James says "dispensation," which conveys the same idea. But the point is that God did this with a view to something better for you. He revealed His Son with a view to something even bigger, which we'll talk about in a minute.

I did some study on this this week, just out of curiosity, and I found there's been several different administrations in history, several different ways God has run the universe in Bible times. For example, one would be the administration of Adam, right? The first man who ever lived. God did things with Adam that He's not doing today. I don't know that any of you walk with God and talk to Him face to face like Adam did. I don't know if any of you talk to snakes. If you do, please come see me afterwards, we need some counseling. So it all happened in the days of the first man. And then Adam sinned, Adam broke fellowship with God.

And then you come to the times of Noah. And then God did things with Noah that He never did again in history. Had Noah built an Ark of wood, had him save all the animals, made the covenant of the rainbow, promising never to flood the earth again. All that happened in the days of Noah. That was an administration going on then.

Then you have the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the fathers of Israel. Then you have the time of Moses and the Exodus. Then you have the time of the Judges. Those Judges were rough characters. There's a lot of blood in the book of Judges. I'm thankful I don't live in that administration. I don't think I would live very long. Can you imagine living next door to Samson? You know, come, knock on your door, beat the whole door down.

Well, go on to the time of the Kings, go on to the time of the Exile, Jesus and the apostles. But what Paul is saying here is in each of these, God was doing something different. In each of these, He was running the world in a unique way. And with you, Paul says, "You Ephesians, He's revealing His Son." That's what God is doing with you. He is teaching you about Jesus Christ because you live under this administration. You live in the time of the church; which is where your hope lies.

During the reign of Queen Victoria in England, a Christian woman was asked, "Does the queen ever visit you here?" And she said, "Sometimes she does, but not very often." And she

was asked, "Does the king visit you?" And she said, "Oh no, He lives here. He lives in my heart. Jesus lives in my heart."

See, you live in the time when the Lord Jesus lives like that inside of you. Adam didn't get to experience that. He saw some wonderful things, but he didn't see that. Noah didn't experience that. Moses didn't get this, but you do, which should blow you away.

I told you last week, if you looked around the room in here, what would you see? You would see ordinary people, right? I'm not going to burst anybody's bubble here, but that's what you would see. And if you went to the church up the road and you visited there, what would you see there? You would see normal people, ordinary people. If you went to the church up the road, what would you see there? Normal people. If you went to the church in another country, you'd see normal people. And the point is God is revealing this to normal people. He's revealing something extraordinary to nobodies, Gentiles, *goyim* - dogs.

Remember, this is not about you, this is about Him. This is not about how great you are, this is about how gracious God is. This is all about the King. It's what makes the church so special. Anybody can come in. You don't have to change races, you don't have to change nations. You don't have to change the colour of your skin. You come in through Jesus Christ. Anybody can come. As a matter of fact, if you're messed up and you're a sinner, then you just belong right in this room, amen? Come on guys.

They told us in Hebrew class, "I know you come in here with a sense of victory and go out with a sense of defeat." Your sin needs to come in here the same way and your pride needs to be defeated this morning when you read a passage like this.

If you follow the news this past year, you'll know there's been a lot of persecution in the country of China. The government's really cracking down on Christians there. A friend of mine was a missionary there - met at Shepherd's Conference, and he had to actually leave the mission field because he said, "If I go back, they might put me in prison." And in honour of this persecution and to get some support and prayer for this, Christianity Today did an article on one of their leaders. They did an article on one of the pastors of the underground church there. And it said this:

As we remember our brothers and sisters around the world today, on the day of prayer for the persecuted church, I want to share about one special man I met in China. His name is Pastor Lamb and he's well known for being a leader in the Chinese church. He has been threatened, beaten, and tortured for sharing the Gospel and endured 21 years in prison, all because he refused to register his church with the government.

I travel to Guangzhou to meet him, a city of more than 3 million people, where he lived in a tiny apartment under house arrest. When I arrived at his home for the first time, I noticed that Pastor Lamb was short and he did not look very impressive. (I love it when short people are written about in the news).

But with a contagious smile, he invited me to come in. The first thing I remember seeing was a long table with about 20 Chinese young people writing very feverously.

Nearly all of Pastor Lamb's congregation was comprised of young people who were hungry for the Word of God. And I asked him what they were doing. He said they were making handwritten copies of the Gospel of John to give to their friends at school tomorrow. He said, "We only have one Bible at this time, so they are making copies for their friends.

And the author went on to say, "As I stood there, I could not help but think how simple it was and how extraordinary."

Why are they doing that? Why go through so much trouble? I mean, they're being tortured and imprisoned and living under house arrest, why? Because they know a secret. They know the mystery, and the mystery is that the King is here. The mystery is that salvation has come and they want to tell everybody. Why are they a threat to the government? Why are they being persecuted in the first place? The guy said, the pastor is short, the church is made up of young people, what's the danger? The danger is that they know a secret. And that the true King is here. And you know that as well. It's Paul's point here. You live in the time of the church.

Which brings us to something else we want to talk about today, another part to this mystery. The first one is the administration of it or how it has been revealed to us. There's been several administrations in history, several different ways the Lord has shown Himself to His people. But this is when you live - you live in the time of the church.

I've heard some people say, "Boy, wouldn't it be great to live in Bible times?" And I often want to say, "Have you read the Bible? Have you seen all the crazy stuff that went on in the Bible times?" You get to live in this administration and it's such a blessing.

Bringing it to the next point to look at this morning, the next part to this mystery, and that is the timing of it. We've looked at the administration of the mystery. Now, we need to look at the timing of it. In order to find the proper administration, God had to find the right time. He had to pick the right moment in history to send His Son into the world, which He does. If you read on in the passage, in verse 9, it says,

In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the time.

That phrase "fullness of the time" is another way of saying "the right time" or "when the time was full." We've all seen the picture of an hourglass being filled up with sand. That's what this is referring to here. When the glass was full, when the time was right, God sent His Son into the world and He brought in this administration.

Earlier in verse 8, it says, "In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will." It's another way of saying the same thing: in all wisdom and insight, at the proper time, God did this. He didn't do it in the days of Adam because that wasn't the proper time. And He didn't do it in the days of Noah or Abraham or any of those guys because the time wasn't full, but it was full now.

If you think about the craziest plan to start the church, it's picking those 12 disciples and sending them out, right? It's a crazy plan, but it worked because the time was right. You can see what this means when you look at the other administrations that we talked about and how they're all fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus fulfilled everything that was written about Him in the Old Testament. That's what this passage refers to.

Matthew 5:17, Jesus says, "Do not think I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill them." There's something like 300 or more prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament. He fulfilled them all. Every sacrifice, every act of the priest in the temple, Christ fulfilled all of that.

You can also see what this means when you consider what was going on in the world at the time Jesus came. I told you last week that if He would've come a few years before Israel would have been at war with Rome and that would have messed up the whole plan. If He would've come a few years after, they would have been at war again. He came in the right moment of peace. The world was under one ruler, spoke one language, and that's when God sent His Son.

And if you read on in this passage, the idea here is that if He did it once, God can do it again. If God sent Him at the right time before, He can send Him at the right time in the future. The way this is worded here, there's kind of a mystery to it. It makes it sound like this refers to Jesus first and His second coming.

It says, "To an administration suitable to the fullness of the time, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." We'll talk about this in a moment. But that phrase: "the summing up of all things in Christ," it hasn't happened yet. That is yet to come. So this is a reference to the time the Lord will come back again. But Paul is saying, "If God picked the right time before, He'll do it again."

And let me just say here, this is important because I hear a lot of Christians saying today (and maybe some of you have said this), "What's going to happen to the world? How's it all going to end?" I mean they watch the news, they read their Facebook feeds or whatever the thing going on in the phone, and they bite their nails and they wring their hands and say, "This world is going to hell in a handbasket, what are we going to do?"

Well, let me tell you what we're going to do. Let me answer that question for you, looking at this passage. We're going to do the same thing the church has done for centuries. We're going to do the same thing that Christians have done for years. We are going to trust in the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen? That's what we're going to do.

They see the things happening in China. They see the Christians being persecuted there, and they ask, "When is that coming to Canada? When is that coming here? And when it does, what are we going to do?" I'll tell you what we'll do - we'll do the same thing that they're doing now in China. We'll trust in the Lord Jesus. Plans don't change.

My friend who recently left the country in China there as a missionary, he said, "You know what we're going to do now? We're going to go back to a country nearby and the Chinese

pastors are going to meet us and we're going to train them that way." He's not stopping. Plans don't change. You don't need to be afraid, you don't need to worry, you trust in Jesus Christ.

Parents in this room, parents worry about this. "The world keeps getting worse, what are my kids going to do?" They're going to do the same thing. "What are my grandkids going to do?" They're going to do the same thing. They're going to trust in Christ, and they're going to trust knowing that He's going to bring everything to a good and perfect end. He'll sum up all things.

I can get through anything if I know it's going to end, right? I can sit through anything if I know it's going to be over soon; a bad meal, a bad visit, another bad Tennessee football game where they lose again. You guys know what I'm talking about? Okay, nobody's tracking. I was going to make it a matter of prayer in the bulletin, but my wife stopped me. They had a terrible season this year.

But you can make it through anything knowing it won't last forever. Paul says, "This world won't last forever. It will come to an end. That is where your hope lies. That's where your joy is found," which means you should be an optimist this morning. You should be a hopeful person. You have no reason to be down all the time. Christ is going to take care of your problems.

I was counseling someone who was going through a trial and I said, "Do you believe that God is still on the throne?" They said, "Yes, yes I do." I said, "Do you think God still loves you?" And they said, "Absolutely, I know He does." I said, "Do you think He's still all knowing, all powerful and all wise? Do you think He's still merciful, just and good? And do you believe He's coming back again to fix this broken world?" And they said, "Yes" to all of that. I said, "Then what's the problem? I mean at the end of the day, what do you have to worry about?" He may not be coming back today, but He's coming back someday. He may not be coming back on your time table, but He's coming back on His and you need to trust in that.

J.C. Ryle says, "Nothing would ever, whether great or small can happen to a Christian without God's ordering and permission. There is no such thing as chance, luck or accident in the universe and in the Christians' journey through the world. All is arranged and appointed by God and all things work together for our good."

And it leads to one more point to consider this morning, one more part to this mystery. The first one is the administration of it. Paul tells us how the mystery has been administered to us, how it's been revealed through the church. God chooses to reveal this to ordinary people like you and me. It brings us to a second part to the mystery. That is the timing of it. In order to do that, God had to pick the right time, and He did that as well. He sent Jesus in the fullness of time, at the perfect time to remind us that He can do it again. If He sent Him at the right time once, He can send Him at the right time in the future.

And that brings us to a third and final part to the mystery, and that is the summing up of it. The third part to the mystery of God's will is the summing up of it. Which refers to the time

the mystery will be fully revealed to us. It refers to the time Jesus will come back and reveal everything. As I said earlier, God has already revealed this mystery to us. We already know who Christ is. But it goes without saying, we don't know everything. There's so much we don't know, but a day is coming when the Lord will fill in the pieces and explain the whole mystery.

And if you look in verses 9 through 10, it says,

9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

As you read this passage, you can tell it gets deeper as you go, as Paul explains the mystery. It doesn't lighten up until you get to about verse 11. But after studying it, the point here is that the deep things will be revealed to us someday. As Paul is closing this out, he seems to realize this is hard to understand. It's hard to get our minds around what he's saying here, but he's saying it won't always be that way. A day is coming when Christ will make everything clear. He will sum it up for us.

Which means "to gather" or "unite all things together." It's actually an accounting term which referred to the practice of counting up all the numbers on a page and putting the total at the top.

When we count up our numbers, we always put them at the bottom, right? You can do an Excel spreadsheet, numbers go at the bottom. I can't figure out those Excel spreadsheets. They drive me crazy, but that's the idea anyway; numbers go at the bottom. But the first century, they would put them at the top. And if you look through a Roman accounting ledger, at the top of every page, you would see number after number, total after total. And Paul says, "Jesus will do this when He comes back. He will do this with the world, He will sum it all up. He will write the answer across the sky, He will explain everything in plain language."

And just to show you the extent of this, Paul says that Christ will do this for all things or for everything. Everything will be accounted for, everything will be revealed. He says, "Things in the heavens and things on the earth" to show you the scope of it. Nothing will be left out of this mystery. It will all be summed up for us.

One commentator said this about this passage, they said;

This is not a doctrine of universalism or the idea that all people everywhere will be saved. Rather, this is the doctrine that all things will be subjected to Christ. Every knee will bow before His throne. And when that happens, He will explain all the mysteries to us.

Which means if you look at the world right now and say, "This doesn't make sense, I don't get it," rest assured, a day will come when you will get it. A day will come when everything will make sense to you. The Lord will see to it.

If you look at the things like the persecutions in China or the bad things happening all over the world to Christians, and you wonder why doesn't God stop it? Rest assured a day will come when He will stop it. And that day will be when Jesus returns.

Which leads me to ask, do you believe this this morning? Do you believe that the Lord will return? Do you believe He will take care of all this mess? Do you believe he will stop all the horrors one day? Does that give you hope?

Listen, I hope you understand the Christian life is not about hoping in this world, it's about hoping in the next world. Amen? It's not about thinking that everything here is going to get better. It might get better, it might not. Our hope is that things in the next life will be better. That's where our hope is.

Do you believe He's going to reveal the mysteries? Write them across the sky? This is what this passage is about. And here's the biggest point of the whole chapter - does it make you feel blessed that you get to know this? To know that you live under this administration, you live on this side of the cross.

Listen, friends, this is the top of Ephesians 1, this is the apex of it. This chapter reads like a staircase where you go higher and higher until you come to this point. Until you come to this realization, you get to know the mystery. You Gentiles, you Ephesians, God has told you the secrets of the universe and do you feel blessed over them?

The story is told of a pastor who was running to catch a flight out of Chicago, only to find that there was a malfunction on the plane and it crashed shortly after taking off, killing him instantly with everyone on board. And a bystander who saw the whole thing happen told reporters, that as she saw the man running, the pastor running toward the plane, all she could think about afterwards is that he was running to eternity. He was running to meet God.

Friends, I want to remind you, we're all doing that today. We're all running to eternity. Whether you feel like it or not, you're all running to meet God. The question is, are you ready? Are you prepared? And the way you get ready is this, the way you prepare for eternity is this- you need to trust in Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the Son of God who came to die on a cross and to forgive you of your sins and to sum all things up for you, if you trust in Him. Will you do that today? If you have not, will you believe in Him? That's why He has revealed Himself. Let me pray for you this morning that you would trust in Christ if you haven't yet.

Father, we do thank you Lord, for the deep things in Your Word. Father, we thank you for the mysteries and for passages like this that kind of make us put our hands on our mouth and say we know so little. And yet Lord, there's enough in here to give hope to any Christian. There is enough in here to give hope to any believer. And I pray for my friends this morning that they would walk out of this room with hope. I pray they would walk out with the blessing that's mentioned in this passage, that You are coming again to explain all things to us.

Lord, I pray if there's any here who don't know Christ, and they're running toward eternity, but they're running toward a Christ-less eternity, that You would draw them to the Saviour

this morning, You would open their eyes to their need of forgiveness and their need of salvation.

Thank you Lord that this is offered full and free. Thank you Lord, this is offered to anyone. We live in a time when all we need to do is bow the knee before You and we'll be saved. So I pray that all would do that this morning. Thank you Lord for the Christmas season that reminds us of Christ. May He be glorified as we go out today into the world, and we pray this in Jesus name, amen.