

The Very Least of All Saints

Ephesians 3:8-13

Jeremy Cagle, May 10, 2020

Greetings and welcome to another live sermon here at our Grace Fellowship YouTube channel. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jeremy Cagle and the teaching pastor here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. We're a non-denominational Bible teaching church located in Chilliwack, British Columbia; and like it is for a lot of churches right now we have started recording our messages live or recording them online due to the Coronavirus, which has been an adventure for us. It's been challenging in some ways, but it's been exciting because we live in a very beautiful part of the world. As you can see behind me, we've got beautiful Mountain Cheam just in my rearview mirror here. And it's been really neat to see all the different beautiful spots here in Chilliwack, and this has allowed us an opportunity to do that. So we hope it's been a blessing to you. We hope this has been a joy for you to watch.

We also want to say Happy Mother's Day this morning to all the mothers in our country. It's unfortunate we can't say this to you face to face. But I think I speak for all the men among us when I say we really appreciate the moms in our church; we would not be who we are, if it were not for the women in our lives. Motherhood is a high calling. It's a tremendous calling because you get to shape the lives of your children for eternity. You get to shape them forever, and that's no small thing. It may seem small when you're changing diapers and doing housework all day. It may seem small when you're washing the dishes and folding laundry and doing those types of things. But we want you to know that it's not small to us. Motherhood is no small thing to God and we really, really appreciate what you do. So Happy Mother's Day today.

Well, I think it's safe to say there are very few times in your life when you're going to see the world stop turning. There are very few times when you're going to see all the changes that are going on right now due to the Coronavirus and like many of you, when all of this started happening, I was shocked. I've told you that before, but I can't say that enough. It was very surprising to see the borders closing and churches shutting down, and all of this happening, coming to a halt like this. Still not really over that, but when it first happened, it made me curious to know if this has happened before in history. I was interested to see if this is something that people had faced before.

And so I did some research on this and I came across the great influenza of 1918. It was also known as the Spanish Flu because they thought it came from Spain. It didn't; they were mistaken about that, but the name stuck. And the Spanish Flu was a contagious disease that made the lungs fill up with fluid, eventually leading to death by suffocation. When it was contracted, the victim's skin would turn blue, and they would get fever and chills; they would become very weak. They

would essentially cough and wheeze and gasp themselves to death. It was a horrible way to die; so to prevent that, everyone was asked to wear masks and practice social distancing. Does that sound familiar? Have you ever heard that before? They were asked to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth to spread this disease. Businesses were closed, churches were shut down, and government services were stopped all to prevent the spread of this infection. But the problem was they couldn't do that. The problem was they couldn't stop the spread of this because it occurred during World War One. They could not stop the spread of this because the world was at war, so it moves very quickly. From what I read the Great Influenza started on a US army base in Kansas. There I moved out east with the American troops. And from there, it just went everywhere, and I mean everywhere. It infected half a billion people in one year. At that time it infected a third of the earth's population, so one out of every three people carried the Spanish Flu. It was absolutely staggering. It eventually killed 100 million people and to put that in perspective, the total number of deaths in World War One was 40 million. So the great influenza, killed two times as many people as the war did. It was twice as deadly as World War One. But the greatest cause of it was that the people couldn't stay apart. Without modern technology, and inventions, like the internet, they couldn't stay at home and just turn on their computer and watch a sermon. They had to do it in person, and so it led to the terrible catastrophe. You know, we often don't think about this, but we're blessed to live in the time that we do.

We're privileged to live in 21st century because we can do things that people in the past only dreamed about. We can communicate in ways that were never heard of before; it can stop the spread of a disease and we need to be grateful for that. We need to be thankful that we can do things like this. I think when the Coronavirus first started, we were very grateful. From people I talked to, they were scared and frightened, but they were also thankful that we were able to do things like this. But as the pandemic continues, I just want to encourage you to continue that spirit of gratitude and continue that spirit of thankfulness. One scholar said this is one of the strangest times in church history because the entire church is online. We're not meeting in the sanctuary right now, or in the chapel; we're meeting in the living room, and on the couch. And that's the whole church worldwide. And we can do that because we are privileged to live in this day and age.

And with that said, speaking of technology, we want to take advantage of the technology this morning and open our Bibles together to the book of Ephesians. So if you would take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Ephesians. That's the book we're in this morning. And that's what we're going to be studying and to continue our online ministry together, we're going to look at Ephesians chapter three. And as you're turning there, I just want to read this to you. So if you would read Ephesians three starting in verse one with me. There it says,

For this reason I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for

you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his Holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me, according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

If you notice as you read, that the sounds mysterious, doesn't it? It sounds very strange. And that's because Paul makes a digression in this chapter; he kind of goes off on a tangent because if you read chapters one through two in Ephesians, you'll notice that the thought is very clear. The logic flows from point to point to point, but that changes here. Paul writes in a different way, and it seems to be because he gets emotional. It's like he gets a little choked up. If you look back in verse one, you'll notice he says, "For this reason I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles," which means that Paul was in prison as he wrote this. He wasn't sitting in an ivory tower, he wasn't sitting on a soft, comfortable couch, he was in jail, which means that this must have been a very hard thing to talk about. This must have been a very difficult passage to write. And so, he writes it in an awkward way, but the theme is very clear. The main idea is clear, and it's found in verse four, which says, "When you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known...to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs." That's the theme of the passage. That's the main idea here. Paul is telling us that the Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews.

People like you and me can go into heaven, right alongside the people of Israel. The word "mystery" appears four times in this passage, and it refers to something that was hidden in ages past, but it has been made known now. It was a secret before, but it's a secret no longer. Because for centuries, God cared about the Jews. For millennia, he cared about the people of Israel. Now he cares about Jew and Gentile both.

Paul says now that's changed and the Gentiles are coming into the church as well. As a Jew himself before he was saved, Paul didn't know that. That was a mystery to him, but now he does

know, and it's changed everything for him. In fact, it's very ironic because when the church first started, Acts 8:3 says that Paul began ravaging the church, entering house after house and dragging off men and women and putting them in prison. And the word "ravaging" there is the same word for ravaging like a dog. Ravaging like a wild animal because Paul hated the church that much, he despised it so much, that he treated it like an animal. The thought of bringing Jew and Gentile together was repulsive to him, so he would do anything to stop it. And now Paul says, in verse three, that a revelation came to him and it changed all that and now he's in jail for the church. Now he's in prison. Verse one says, "For the sake of you Gentiles," which means he was doing all of this for you. Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

And when he goes on to say in this passage is that God has called him to continue preaching. God has called him to continue bringing the Gospel to the lost. Now, last year, I was asked to do a podcast for Back to the Bible, Canada, and I was asked the question, "Why is preaching so important for the church? Why do we still need to preach today? Is this something that's just outdated?" And I said, "No, it's not because Jesus was a preacher." This is not an outdated thing because Paul was a preacher. All the disciples were. When they came into a town, they didn't sing and dance. They didn't do a skit or a play. They preached. They stood up and spoke the Word of God to people, so when we do that, we're just following their example. When we do that today we are standing on the shoulders of giants. I was also asked, "Is preaching a priority for the church? Can we just read our Bibles and stay home and that's it?" And I said, "No, because you need someone to explain it to you. You need someone to show you what the Scriptures say. And even more than that, you need to realize that Jesus was so serious about this, that He died for it. And Paul was so serious about it, that He died for it." They didn't arrest Paul just because he was quiet. They didn't arrest Paul because he was minding his own business and staying silent. They arrested him because he was preaching. They arrested him because he wouldn't stay silent. And if it meant that much to him, it should mean that much to us today. If he thought it was worth dying for, we should do the same right now.

You know, in Paul's day, this was important, the act of preaching and teaching the Bible was important because a lot of things had to be explained in the early church. They needed clarity on a lot of issues. There were things that had to be explained such as the relationship between Jew and Gentile. Everybody wanted to know, "what does that look like, Paul? I mean, how does this work? Do the Gentiles have to be circumcised or not? Do they have to keep the Sabbath or not? What about the food laws? What about the cleanliness laws? What about the law? Do the Gentiles have to keep that?" Then they wanted to know, "What about the Jews? What do the Jews have to do? Do they keep the commandments? And if so, Which ones? I mean, does the Old Testament still apply to them?" And Paul says it was his job as a preacher to explain that. It was his job to stand up and say, "You know, you call yourself a Christian, and this is what that looks like. Here's how you do this."

And I would say that's still the job of preachers today. That's still the job of a pastor. That's the reason why in the midst of the coronavirus we're continuing to preach. Worldwide, pastors are doing that. It doesn't stop. The clarity needs to continue. Matter of fact, we could say we need clarity more today than ever. Amen? We live in a very confusing world; the world's very unsettling, and so men need to step up and explain things to us. They need to step up and say this is what the Bible says about our world.

G. Campbell Morgan, the great preacher who preceded Martin Lloyd Jones in London, once said that, "There are three great essentials for preaching – truth, clarity, and passion." And you have to have all three. You have to have all three components in order to make a good sermon because if it isn't clear, it doesn't help anybody. If it isn't clear, the people don't understand it, and it does them no good. People are confused enough as it is. You don't want to make that worse. You have to be clear. The Puritans used to say, "That was a plain sermon." And by that they meant everyone could understand it. That was a compliment. It was not an insult. They actually said the plainer, the better, the clearer, the better. Because we want to know what God's word says to us. That's the job of a pastor. That's the job of any man of God. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning, because that's what Paul does here.

With this said, this morning, if you're taking notes, in Ephesians 3, we're going to see three tasks that a preacher is called to do in the church. And that's our outline for this morning that that's what this is about. If you're taking notes in Ephesians 3:8-13, we're going to see three tasks that a preacher should do in the church, and these are all taken from the life of Paul. These are all taken from the life of the man who wrote this book. And I can't say enough about this. I really can't say enough about the importance of it because we've all heard a lot of sermons, haven't we? I mean, if you've been in church for just a few years you've heard hundreds of sermons because you hear one every Sunday. You hear a preaching every week. And it can be easy to forget what this is all about. We're here to explain the Bible to you.

That's what a preacher does. He's here to exposit it, which means to expose the meaning of the text. This is also important because we all have a responsibility in this, we all have an obligation because a preacher needs to explain the Word to you, but you need to hear it. A pastor needs to stand up and say this is what the Bible says and make it plain, make it simple. But you have the responsibility to listen, we all have a part to play in this. And we have to take that very seriously. And this is what Paul talks about here.

So as he describes his ministry, Paul gives us three tasks that a preacher should do in the church. And the first one is to be humble. The first task that a preacher should do in the church is to be humble, which means that he should be low to the ground because it's not about him, it's about Christ. He should be a modest and a meek man because it's not his own opinions; this is about the Bible. It's been said every preacher should be a lion in the pulpit and a lamb in the pew. And

that's what you read in verse eight. If you look back in your Bibles again, in Ephesians 3:8, Paul writes and he says,

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

Just to say a few words about that, but after describing the mystery of the church in verses one through six and how amazing that was, Paul says it was his job to teach it. It was his job to preach the mystery. Verse seven actually says this, "Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power." So Paul was a minister, that was a calling in his life; that means he was a servant of the church. And just to show you why this was, to show you why God made him a minister, Paul says, "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given." In other words, God didn't choose Paul because he was a great man. God chose Paul because he was a little man. God didn't choose Paul because he was high in his own eyes. God chose Paul because he was low. Very low.

In fact, the phrase, "the very least" it's one word in Greek. It's the word, elachistoteros which is an unusual word because this is the only time it appears in the Bible. It's found nowhere else, and that's because it didn't exist in the Greek language. Paul just made this word up. To show you how small he was in his own eyes and show you how little he was, he just invented a word; and the word means the very least of all the saints or less than the least in some of your translations. We could call this the leastest; the smallest person around. Some think this may have been a play on Paul's name because his name meant little; the name Paul meant small. And here Paul says, "Not only am I small, but I'm the smallest one of all. Not only am I little, but I'm the littlest one of the saints. I'm the least of all the saints. In fact, Paul says, "If you want to know what's less than the least, I am." I am less than the least.

It's interesting because in 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul calls himself the chief of all sinners, which means that Paul says "If you want to know what I'm great at, if you want to know what I'm the chief at, It's sinning. I'm the best sinner around," he says, to his shame, but he says, "If you want to know what I'm the least at, it's being a saint." Man, the way some Christians act, they flip it around, don't they? The way some Christians act, they want to say they're the best saint around, and they're the least sinner. Paul says it the other way. And this is an amazing passage to read. It's shocking because we hold Paul in such high esteem. We put him on such a pedestal, but it's important to remember Paul didn't do that. Paul never put himself on a pedestal because he looked at himself like this.

And you can really see this if you look at all the titles Paul gives himself in this passage. If you look back in chapter 3, you notice that he just keeps getting lower and lower as he goes. He keeps getting smaller and smaller. In verse one, he says he's a prisoner. He's just a common

criminal for Christ. In verse two, he's a steward, which is another word for slave; someone who's owned by another. And now here in verse eight, he's less than the least of all the saints. I mean, now he's dwindled down to nothing because that's what a preacher does. That's how he's supposed to look at himself. He sees himself as nothing. He's at the bottom of the food chain, not at the top. He's the lowest person in the kingdom.

One commentator said, "This is the way it's supposed to be because the closer you draw to Jesus, the more you realize how small you are." The closer you draw to the mountain, the more you feel your own insignificance. You stand at the bottom of Mount Cheam, you feel really small. And if you stand face to face with Christ, you feel the same way. And we might add, this is not the only time Paul does this in the Bible.

This is important. This is not the only time Paul sees himself this way. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 15:9 he says, "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." There Paul says, "I'm the least of the apostles. I mean, not only am I the least of the saints, but I'm the least of the apostles as well, because I attacked the church like a wild dog. God forgave me for it; if it were not for His grace, I would not be called at all." Then in 2 Corinthians 12 he says, "If I have to boast, I will boast of my weakness," and he goes on in that chapter to list them. If you've read Second Corinthians 11 through 12, it's just one weakness after another – beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks – all to express this idea. Acts 20:24 he says, "I do not consider myself my life of any account," but the point is that this is how Paul looked at himself. This is how he saw himself, as the very least of all the things which leads to a couple of applications here.

It leads to some ways that we can apply this and one is very simple. This means we should be humble. I mean, one simple way to apply this, is this means we should all look at ourselves as the least of all the saints because if the man writing Scripture could say that, then it has to be said of all of us. If the man who was called to lead the Church, and plant it and get it started would write a passage like this, that means surely the rest of us have to be this way.

We need to be humble. We should be low in our own eyes because we're all sinners. To say it another way, you can't put a proud man in the ministry, can you? You can't put a proud man in the pulpit because he's gonna ruin everything. He's gonna destroy everything, and so he has to be humble. So does anybody in the church; you can't let a proud man do anything in the church. If he serves on the worship team, he needs to serve to the glory of God. If he stacks chairs in the gym after service, he needs to stack chairs to the glory of God. Serves in the nursery, you do it with a low estimate of yourself because this is all about Christ. This is all about His glory and not ours. Our pride has to die in the church. I love it when people come to me and they say, "I'm just here to serve, I don't care what I do. I don't care how small it is. I'm just here to be useful for Christ." I love that because that's the kind of person God can use. That's the kind of person He's

looking for. God is looking for servants like that. I also love it when people say, “You know, I don't have to be the one in charge. It doesn't have to be about me” because that's the kind of person God can use as well.

This leads to another application we see in this text; another way to apply this to our lives. And that is if you want to receive God's grace, if you want to receive His blessing, then you're going to have to be humble as well. If you want to experience God's grace the way Paul did, you're going to have to see yourself as the least of all the saints. If you look back in verse eight, that's what it says. It says, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given,” and if you notice, there's a connection here. There's a progression of thought in the text, and that is because Paul sees himself as humble, he receives grace. Because he sees himself as nothing, as the least of all the saints, God shows him mercy. That's the way God operates. That's the way He does things. If you're humble, He will give you grace, but not until then. You don't get it until you see yourself that way. The Bible says God exalts the humble, but He lowers the proud. Again, that's another opposite thing of what we see in the world today.

The famous missionary Hudson Taylor was one speaking at a conference in Australia when the host introduced him as “our illustrious guest.” And it kind of caught Hudson Taylor by surprise for a moment. And he said, “My dear friends, I'm not an illustrious guest. I'm the small servant of an illustrious master.” Friends, he said that because that's the kind of man God can use. He said that because that's the kind of person who will receive His grace; you'll receive it when you're humble. They say that the only way to get high is to get low. The only way to reach up to heaven is to reach down to the earth and put your head in the ground. We need to see ourselves this way today.

Jonathan Edwards once said this, he said, “The greatest disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ is pride because it turns us into foolish, silly, miserable, blind and deceitful worms who cannot see anything but ourselves.” And I think he's right. That's what pride does, that's what our selfishness does. It turns us into worms. It turns us into fools, and we need to repent of it this morning.

Leads us to another point to talk about today, leads us to another task a preacher should do. The first one is to be humble. The first task a preacher is called to be, he is to see himself as the very least of all the saints. He is to be a lion in the pulpit but a lamb in the pew. He needs to see himself the way God does, which is nothing. He is nothing because it's not about him it's about Christ.

Brings us to another thing to talk about, another task that a preacher should do and that is to bring the truth to light. A second task that a preacher is to do is to bring the truth to light which

means it's his job to explain it. It's his job to stand up and tell the people that this is what the Bible says in a clear and plain way. And if you look back in verses eight through nine, it says,

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things.

You know, just to walk you through that, after saying that God's grace was given to him because he was the least of all the saints, Paul tells us why that happened. He tells us why God's grace was given, and he says it was “to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light the mystery.” which are two ways of saying the same thing. These are two ways of referring to the same event and that is to preach.

Like we said earlier, Paul was a preacher. He was called to stand up and explain the Word of God to people. And he says this in two different ways. First, he says he was to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ, which could be translated the unsearchable riches or the incomprehensible riches. In other words, think about this. It was Paul's job to teach the incomprehensible. It was his job to preach the unsearchable, which means it was a never-ending thing for Paul. This was a task that was never over because the more he preached, the more was he had left to preach. The more he explained, the more he had left to explain. It was like standing at the bottom of a mountain, you can never get to the top.

And the second phrase Paul mentions here is that he is to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery. And that phrase “bring to light” means to illuminate something or to clarify it, because that's what light does. Light clarifies things; it shows you what's there. It doesn't put something there, it just shows you that it is there. So when you turn on the light in a room, you don't put all the furniture in there; it's just already there. You don't put the lamps and the tables and things in there. The light just shows you that they are there, so you don't bump into them. And Paul says it's the job of the preacher to do that with the Bible. It's our job to open it up and show you what is in there like a light. In his words, he is to bring to light the administration of the mystery, which is another way of saying the church. It is his job to explain what God is doing through his people. You know, I don't know about you, but I love to hear sermons that make me say, “I've never seen that before. I didn't know that was in the Bible.” I love that. That's what this is referring to here. It's like a light bulb goes off above your head, right? And I also love to hear sermons that make me say, “Aha, I get it now. I've been reading that passage for years. I never knew that was in there.” That's what this is referring to as well. It's what a pastor does; that's his job. He is to bring the truth to light and as the Puritans say, “the plainer the better.” The best light is the plainest light. The best light is the most unobstructed light

That's the goal of a pastor when he steps into the pulpit, which leads to a couple of applications here, there's some ways we can apply this to our lives. For one thing, this means that we need to listen. It's obvious, isn't it? But we need to come to church ready to listen. It's the preacher's job to preach the Bible, but it's our job to listen and see it for yourself. And we both have a role in this. We both have a responsibility, which means you don't come to church to be entertained or visit your friends. You don't come to church just to meet people and hang out and have a good time, you come to hear the Word of God. You come to see what it says, which also means you need to be teachable in order to do that. You need to have a soft and humble heart like we just mentioned. On the one hand, the preacher needs to tell you something that's important. But on the other hand, you have to be humble enough to receive it. Which is something the Bible says a lot about, by the way.

This is a subject that's talked about a lot in Scripture. If you do a study on this, you'll see that it tells us over and over again to listen to the Word of God. For example, you see that in the Old Testament, right at the beginning. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One." That's actually called the Great Shema, or the great hearing passage. Because right before the law is written, right before Moses goes into all the detail, he says, "This is what you need to do with it. This is what you need to do with the law, you need to hear it." The law won't do you any good if you don't pay attention to it. The Word of God won't do you any good, if you don't hear it, so you need to do that.

Then when you come to the New Testament, Romans 10:17, takes it one step further. And it says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ," which means if you want to be saved, if you want to go to heaven, have faith, it starts with this. You need to hear. We've all known people and we've all witnessed to people that you talk to them about the truth; and it's like it just bounces off of them like a stone. Well, the way to be saved is to stop doing that and to hear it. Hear the truth. Jesus had a phrase he used a lot in his ministry. He said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And what did He mean by that? Well, what He meant by that was if you have ears, you need to use them. If you have ears, you need to open them up so you can take in Word of God. Don't be like those who let it bounce off of them like a brick, don't let it fall flat. Let it penetrate your heart.

Leads to another application here, another way to apply this to our lives and that is that there's no reason to be poor in the Christian life. There's no reason to be weak and discouraged if you listen to the Word of God, if you take it in; because what we see in this text is that you can have the riches of Christ. If you listen to the Word, if you are humble and all these things, teachable and all of this stuff, you can have the wealth of Christ.

In one of the preaching magazines that I read, the story is told of a man who went to a baseball game with a wealthy friend of his who had great seats. He had tickets in a section known as the

Gold Zone which came with free parking and all the frills, and the man said when he got there, when he got to the ballgame, he went to the concession stand to get a hot dog, and he waited in line for half an hour. He paid 15 bucks for this hot dog and when he got back to his seat, his friend informed him that that wasn't necessary because the food was free as well. His friend said you didn't have to do that because you could have all the hot dogs and hamburgers and pizza you want for free. And this man went on to say this, he said a lot of Christians are doing that today. A lot of believers are doing that because they have all the riches they need. They have all the treasure they could want in Christ, but they won't receive it. They won't bring it in because they won't listen to the Word of God. They won't listen to the Bible. They want to weep and wail, and mourn and say, "Oh no, my life is so hard. What do I do?" They want to stand in line for hours crying out to the Lord, to give them something that they already have. You already have riches if you're in Christ. You already have wealth, all that you need.

This passage calls them His unfathomable riches. And the word means riches that cannot be mapped out by human footprints, or riches that can't be calculated by human mind, because there's too many of them. It's like the sand in the seashore. It's like the stars in the sky. That's the kind of wealth Jesus has, and He's given that to you if you believe in Him. You don't have to earn it. You already have it. So if you need help with your sin, you can have it; you go to Jesus and He'll give you all the help you need. If you need help with your marriage, go to Him as well. He'll help you with that too. He'll turn your marriage upside down, or at least He'll turn you upside down in your marriage. If you need help with your family, help with your attitude, help with your sanity in this time of the Coronavirus, help with your anxiety, You can have all of that if you come to Christ. Because He's rich. He has all the treasure that you need.

In his book, *The Body of Divinity*, Thomas Watson says that Jesus is a King. He's a Lord and as such, He has treasure; He has wealth beyond our wildest dreams. He says that Jesus doesn't need subjects because He already has them. He doesn't need servants because he has myriads of them, infinite number of servants. But in His grace, He's chosen you. In His mercy, He has saved you. And He's made you His servant so you can enjoy His treasure. He's made you part of His kingdom, so you can enjoy His wealth. This may be one of the greatest doctrines in the Bible. This may be one of the most important things you could ever read about in the Christian life. You serve a King who is rich. And not rich in the material things, and not rich in money, things like that. That doesn't matter to God. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He's rich in the spiritual things. He's rich in the things of eternity, and you can be as well if you trust in Him. This is why listening is so important; it's why it's so serious because if you don't listen, you miss out on all that.

Which brings us to one more point to consider this morning; brings us to one more task for a preacher to do. This is a rich passage isn't it? There's a lot to look at here. But to review these other ones, the first task for the preacher to do is to be humble. Which means he should be low to

the ground because it's not about him, it's about Christ. The focus is on Christ. Second, he should bring the truth to light, which means he should explain it. That's his job as well. God has called him to show people the riches of Christ so they can enjoy them. My job as a preacher is kind of like I'm throwing money out to you, spiritual money, important money. So you can receive that.

It brings us to a final thing to talk about this morning. A third and a final task for a preacher to do, and that is to display the wisdom of God. A third task for the preacher to do is to display the manifold wisdom of God, which means that it's his job to display God's greatness; like we just said it's his job to put Christ on display. And if you read in verses 8 through 10, it says this, Paul says,

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

As you read that, you can tell there's some more deep stuff in here. I mean, Paul, lays it on pretty thick, but the word “manifold” here tells us a lot. It's the word *polypoikilos* in Greek. It means diverse or multifaceted. It's from a word that means many colors, many sides. In the Greek language it was used to describe a piece of cloth with many patterns or shapes to it. And Paul says that's what he's doing now. He's showing people the many shapes of God's wisdom, the many sides of it; it's like a diamond, you can turn over a million times; and that's what he's doing here. He says, “so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.” That last phrase there means the rulers and the authorities, it means the angels. The rulers in heaven.

The idea here, it's a pretty powerful image, but the idea is that it's the preachers job to preach the Bible. It's the people's job to listen. And as they do that, the angels watch in heaven. As the preacher stands up every Sunday and opens the Word of God to you, and as you soak it in, the angels look on in amazement because they can't believe what they're seeing. They can't believe God would save sinners like us. I mean, they don't know that's like, I mean angels cannot experience God's forgiveness because when they sin, it's over for them. When they sin, they're cast into hell and judged immediately; so when they watch us and see us sin and be forgiven, it blows their mind. It shows them the manifold wisdom of God. That's the idea here. It shows them the many sides of God's wisdom that they'd never seen before. Verses 11 through 13 go on to say this.

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

And that last sentence there takes us back to where we started this chapter. It takes us back to Paul's imprisonment in verse one. In fact, verses 2 to 13 are one long sentence in Greek, and the idea is that this is what I'm in prison for. This is what I'm suffering for. I'm doing it for the church, which verse 11 says was in accordance with the eternal purpose. So Paul says, "Don't worry about me. I'll be fine because God has this planned out from the beginning." This was in accordance to His eternal purpose. And even more than that, Paul says the angels are watching. Even more than that, the rulers and powers in the heavenly places are looking on.

You know, that was quite a thing to say in prison. That was quite a claim to make in jail. You know, if you're in a really nice place, you might think the angels are watching you. If you're out on the oceans, maybe somewhere on Vancouver Island in a very beautiful location, you look up into heaven and say, "Praise the Lord. I hear angels singing." Paul's in jail. I mean, Paul's in the most miserable place imaginable and he's saying this; and his point here is that if God could take care of him there, He could take care of him anywhere. If the angels could watch him in prison, they could watch him at any time. We should be encouraged by that. We should take heart at a passage like this. This is one of the most beautiful things in this book, and it's written in one of the most ugly places to show us how far God's power can reach. It can reach even into a jail cell.

You know, it's been said that nothing is greater than an angel. And nothing is greater than being watched by one. You get to experience that. If you're part of the church, if you're part of Christ, you get to know what this is like. I mean, not only do you get Christ's riches, but the angels are watching over you. This should be an encouragement to you today. It means that the things you do matter in this life, the simple things that we take for granted. Getting up in the morning and having your quiet time, reading your Bible, listening to the Word of God, taking care of your children like we talked about on Mother's Day, being a stay at home mom, being a dad, being a brother, a sister in Christ, whatever you're doing, if you're doing it for the Lord, it matters. It matters for eternity.

Which leads me to ask, do you get that today? Do you believe that the things that you do matter? Do you believe someone is watching you? Do you believe the angels are watching, the Lord is watching you? And is it helping you to change? Is it helping you to take in and grow in all these areas that we're talking about this morning? I mean, do you get to the end of this passage, and you're even more humble than you were at the beginning? To ask this another way, you know, if the angels watched you for a day, what would they see? If they watched you respond to the Bible, respond to preaching. If they saw your humility, would they be impressed? Would they see the manifold wisdom of God displayed in your life? And if not, why not?

Listen, friends, we're not judged for a lot of things in Scripture. We're not condemned by a lot of things. But we are condemned by whether we listen or not. We are judged by whether we take in the Word of God. That's actually an encouraging thing because anybody can listen. Young, old, rich, poor, black, white, male, female, anybody can hear the Word of God. You don't need a PhD to listen. And you don't need to be the strongest person on the planet. We all need to grow in this. I have a responsibility every week to bring the Word of God to you; preachers do that.

I have a responsibility to listen to it throughout the week in my own heart, and then present it to you; and I have to take that seriously. But you have a responsibility to hear it, and you have to take that seriously as well. Your soul depends on that. This is a very serious thing.

You know, a famous pastor from Ireland once preached on the subject of Judgement Day from the passage that says that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And an old lady said to him afterwards, "But pastor, that doesn't apply to me because I don't have any teeth." To which he said, "Dear woman, teeth will be provided." And he's right. You'll have a resurrected body on judgment day teeth will be provided for you. But in a sense, ears won't be. I mean, in a sense, the one thing that won't be provided for you is the ability to listen and be saved. Because the time to do that is now; the time to do that is this moment. You don't get a second chance to do that once you die, so will you do that today? Will you make it a point to listen to the Word of God? I pray that's an encouragement to you because we can all hear and obey what God has written to us in Scripture.

Let me pray for you now as we as we all grow in this area. Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Father as we close our time out this morning, we're closing a very powerful portion of Your Word, a very humbling portion. There are so many wonderful truths that are found in the book of Ephesians, and especially in chapter 3; and I feel like we've just kind of skimmed the surface of them. We've just kind of swam on top of the waters when we could have gone down even deeper. Lord, we thank You for what You've provided for us in Your Word. We thank You for the clear instructions and a clear example of the life of Paul, this humble man, this godly man who clung to Your riches even when he was in prison.

Lord, thank You for what we've heard today, and I pray that my friends would be encouraged. Lord, I pray that their hearts would be made even more open to the truth. We live in a day and age where the truth is shrouded in many lies. The light is covered in a lot of darkness. We need to have discernment in these things. But I pray, Lord for our people, that their hearts would be made wide open to the truth and shut to the lies. I pray that their eyes will be open to see Your word as it's clearly presented here in this book in the Bible. And I pray that their eyes would be

closed to the darkness around them. God make us wise in these things; help us to be like the noble Bereans that search the Scriptures. Help us to take in the Word of God more every day.

And Lord, would you go with us throughout this week in these very curious times of the Coronavirus. May Christ be glorified. May we as a church and may the churches all around us that are standing for truth, may we stand up in this time and stand out for Your glory among a dying world. We pray this all in Christ's name for His glory. Amen.

Well, if you would like to see more resources from us, please go on our website gracefellowshipchilliwack.com; or look us up on our YouTube channel, just type in Grace Fellowship Chilliwack and catch what we're doing there. May the Lord bless you and have a great Sunday.