

“When You Know What the World Doesn’t Know”

Ephesians 1:15-23

6 in our series on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians

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Introduction

Stand up wherever you are and find a partner. Face your partner, close your eyes, and do not open them. Now, as a symbol of your faith and Christian love with this brother or sister in the Lord, give them a high five. If you failed at giving them a high five, keep your eyes closed and try harder. If it didn’t work the second time, try harder. Try harder! Now open your eyes. (If you did that correctly, there was probably some wounding going on.) Now with your eyes open, give them a high five.

This is my point: Maybe our faith isn’t a matter of trying harder but about seeing better. Maybe love isn’t about trying harder but seeing better. And if we try harder without seeing better, we don’t love better; we hate better. That explains a lot of church fights—a bunch of people trying so hard to love each other but only wounding each other.

Prayer

Father, we ask that you would help us to see the way you see. Help us to know the way you know. Open the eyes of our hearts, God, and use this sermon through the power of your Spirit to help in that process. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Sermon

On February 3, 1969, Al and his family boarded Eastern Airlines flight #7 in Newark, New Jersey, bound for Miami, Florida. About an hour into the flight, Al heard murmurings behind him in the cabin. They were subdued, yet intense and anxious, as if other passengers were becoming aware of something sinister. Moments later, a flight attendant came down the aisle, right past Al, cautiously working her way toward the cockpit. Immediately behind her was a man with a seven-inch knife pressed against her throat.

Al and his wife were stunned. They could feel the terror and hushed anxiety of the other passengers. Soon Al heard the captain’s voice over the intercom. “There is a man on board who wants to fly to Havana, Cuba. We had better go his way. Don’t worry. Everything is okay.”

As Al quietly reassured his family and squeezed his wife’s trembling hand, silence and fear like a blanket of death fell across those passengers of Eastern Airlines flight #7.

But what happened next took Al and his family completely by surprise. A man began to snicker and laugh, then another until one by one all 90-some passengers, except for Al and his family, were laughing and talking. It felt like a party. The laughter was so loud and hilarious that the hijacker leaned out of the cockpit door to see what was going on. When he did, the passengers applauded. Already confused by American culture, the hijacker began to yell, “Why are you laughing? Why are you laughing?” But the more he yelled, the louder they laughed.

Al begged a priest to calm the passengers down. And the priest just laughed at Al. The plane was a party, the hijacker was terrified, and the passengers laughed all the way to Havana and back to Miami.

The passengers saw something the hijacker couldn’t see. They knew something the hijacker didn’t know. Someone had recognized Al. In 1968, Al was an American icon. Someone had

seen Al and informed the others of his presence. Al's full name was Alan Funt, the host of *Candid Camera*. So they all smiled, they all laughed, because they figured Al was in charge, and the whole thing was his show.

That's the way it is when you know something others don't know. But ironically, Al knew something those passengers didn't know. He knew that what they thought they knew, they *didn't* know, you know? It was a real hijacker.

Everyone on the plane encountered the same set of circumstances—same things, same people, same situation, yet each had a radically different experience dependent on what they knew or *thought* they knew.

Imagine yourself in a Roman prison cell in Philippi along about 50 AD. People are beaten, chained in stocks...some awaiting death...everyone terrified...except these two men. Blood runs down their backs, their legs are in irons, but they're singing—even laughing!—and rejoicing. Their names are Paul and Silas. Surely you'd think to yourself, "They know something I don't know. They see something or someone I don't see."

Imagine you're in a prison cell in Rome, and this fellow writes letters stating, "This has turned out for my advantage. Rejoice in the Lord always! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

You would think he was mentally ill...until you got to know him, and then you'd think, "Maybe he knows something I don't know. Maybe he sees something or someone I don't see. Maybe he sees with the eyes of his heart."

We've spent five weeks looking at the second sentence of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, most likely written from a prison in Rome. Ephesians 1:3-14 is one, long sentence that just tells us the way things are. No practical application points; nothing to do. Later, Paul talks about things to do, but only after he tells us the way things are: "He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world....He unites all things in him...accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will...."

In this next sentence (almost as long as the second), he prays for the church, and we're the church. He prays not that we'd try harder, not that we'd be more responsible and disciplined, but that we'd see something and know something.

Ephesians 1:15-18:

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation [The Spirit, The Holy Spirit] in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know....

That you may *see* and *know*. But we don't always like to see and to know, because we like the illusion that we're in control.

[Movie clip from *The Matrix*]

Morpheus: *Do you want to know what it is? The matrix is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.*

Neo: *What truth?*

Morpheus: *That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind. Unfortunately, no one can be told what the matrix is. You have to see it for yourself. This is your last chance. After this there is no turning back. If you take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.*

Neo Anderson, which means New Son of Man, takes the red pill. When he does, he begins to see that the whole world is in bondage to a lie told by malevolent forces that feed off human energy. But when Neo sees the truth with the eyes of his heart, when he trusts the truth, when he has faith, evil loses its power. He's no longer enslaved to the matrix of this world.

Well, St. Paul has a red pill for all of us to swallow, and it takes us even deeper into Wonderland. In Ephesians, he'll reveal that the whole world really is in bondage to a lie told by malevolent forces, and yet the malevolent forces (the principalities and powers) have already been defeated by the Creator through the Son of Man, who is The Truth.

In other words, a terrorist has hijacked this world and is flying it to Hell. But someone else is on the plane. And He's far more powerful than Alan Funt. If you see Him, your circumstances may stay the same, or even get worse, and yet your experience of this trip will be radically altered. He wants you to see Him, and He has made Himself your red pill. His Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation. So Paul prays:

Ephesians 1:17-23:

May [God] give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened and that we'd know three things.

1. The hope to which He has called us.

Hope. I don't know about you, but I find hope to be incredibly painful. I want to see my hopes fulfilled, or I want God to take the hope away. In other words, I get exhausted with hope, and I'm tempted to give up hope. Paul wrote, "Hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

I have a friend who went through a painful divorce and was tempted to give up hope. One day in church she prayed what she thought was a very noble prayer. She prayed, "God, I'm willing to feel unloved." And she heard God answer, "Don't you dare. Don't you dare."

To stop hoping for "the good" is to consign yourself to Hell. But to live in Hell and hope for Heaven *hurts*. So I think we turn hope into this nebulous, ethereal thing, like *nothing*, and call it "hoping in God." Hoping in God is good, but God is not nothing. We are to hope in God, yet we just read that God will unite all things in Christ and fill all things with Himself. So Ephesians 5:20 says we're to "give thanks always and for all things." Jesus said, "God alone is good." So God must be "the good" in all things.

You know, in the Garden, Adam and Eve had "all good things" except "the knowledge of the good," which is in all things. In other words, they had all good things except faith in God, who is the good. Well, knowledge of the good (the fruit on the tree) is good, but taking it in the wrong way is evil. Sin is taking the good in the wrong way, taking things, taking people, taking control in the wrong way.

In Romans 5:5, Paul writes that hope will not disappoint us. He doesn't say, "Certain hopes will not disappoint us." Maybe it's impossible to hope for anything *but* the good. However, we can fail to wait for the good...then we're not hoping. Rather than hoping for the good, we seize the good and crucify the Good, and then give up on the hope and give up on the good, which is evil. But the Good doesn't give up on us. Paul wrote, "Love hopes all things."

Well, I'm just saying that maybe there's nothing that we can hope for that will ultimately disappoint us. But if we hope for it, we wait for it with patience. And that's faith. That's the eyes of the heart enlightened to this astounding fact that, in Paul's words in I Cor. 3, "All things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

So if you're tempted with sexual sins, you need to know that masculinity is yours. Christ is yours. And femininity is yours. The Bride is yours. You will not be disappointed with the intimate communion in the Kingdom of God. If you're tempted with drugs and alcohol, the wine of the kingdom is yours. You will not be disappointed. If you're tempted with covetousness and greed, all things are yours. And you will walk on streets of gold. Even now they're yours, writes Paul.

I read about a little boy at the Washington Monument. He walked up to a security guard and said, "I'd like to buy it." The guard said, "Well, how much do you have?" The little boy pulled out \$.34. The guard looked down and said, "You need to understand three things:

1. \$.34 is not enough money to buy the Washington Monument.
2. The Washington Monument is not for sale.
3. If you're an American citizen, it's already yours."

St. Paul writes to the citizens of the kingdom saying, "All things are yours." Even now, in some amazing way, they're yours. But what turns them into sin is the way you take them...in hopelessness, faithlessness, lovelessness, possessiveness, insecurity, and fear. But if the eyes of your heart were opened, maybe you wouldn't be addicted to things—attached to things, but you'd thank God in all things. He is the Good in all things.

Maybe you'd know the Good without crucifying the Good. And God is Good.

Maybe you'd know the glory without trying to possess the glory, and then you'd just receive the glory as grace. And the glory is grace.

Maybe if you hoped for the good in all things, you wouldn't be addicted to anything. And you'd thank God for everything.

In Colossians 1:27, Paul refers to "Christ in you" as "the hope of glory." Christ in you is hope in you. Don't give up on hope. Hope is Christ in you! Christ in you, hoping in you, for the good. God His Father *is* the Good...in all things.

In Romans 8:31, Paul writes, "He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?"

God is showing us His heart; that is, Jesus from the bosom of the Father, the heart of God. Once we see our Father's heart, once we see the Good, we can receive all things as good. So hope, and hope will not disappoint you. Paul prays:

1. May you know the hope to which He has called you.
2. May you know the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.

Paul's not talking about *our* inheritance; he's talking about *God's* inheritance. So what is God's glorious inheritance? The saints! And who are the saints? Us!

God the Father reminds me of Dad my father. He was always trying to get my sisters and me to see the riches of his glory in each other. I remember it was almost like a wound in his soul. "Peter, I want you to see Rachael and Lydia the way I see Rachel and Lydia, the way I see you. If you would see them, then you'd love them." The problem with Rachel and Lydia was that they usually wouldn't do what I wanted them to do. So I just had to "let them be." I had to forgive them, or I couldn't enjoy them, and I didn't see them.

Do you realize that the people around you are God's glorious inheritance? His sanctuary? Filled and to be filled with His glory? When I try to seize control and can't forgive them, they feel like Hell. But when I let them be, they are a party. And I begin to see the glory. God's glory is grace.

Maybe if I saw that I am God's glorious inheritance and they are God's glorious inheritance:

- I wouldn't be so desperate to make them my glorious inheritance.
- I wouldn't be attached to them in fear.
- I wouldn't be addicted to them or their approval.
- I wouldn't need them to be my savior.
- I wouldn't need to be their savior, their creator, their master.

They are God's glorious inheritance, and yet they become my glorious inheritance by grace.

Do you remember what Paul wrote to Philemon when Onesimus his slave ran away? He wrote, "Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever—no longer as a slave but a beloved brother."

And maybe that's why people are parted from you for a while, that "you might have them back forever."

- No longer as a codependent, emotional slave but as a brother or sister.
- No longer as a trophy but as a bride.
- No longer as a servant to your ego but as a son, a daughter.
- No longer as an object in the kingdom of yourself but as the glorious sanctuary of the living God in the kingdom of God.

He's in them, and He's in you, and He is love. We are a great banquet about to happen, a party about to happen. If only we could see.

So Paul prays for the Spirit of revelation to open the eyes of our hearts so we would know:

1. The hope to which He has called us.
2. The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints
3. The immeasurable greatness of His power in us [toward us] who believe.

Paul is praying about *hyperballon megathes dunameos*: hyper mega dynamite power! God is sovereign over all things, all people, and all situations. God's power is all around us, and God's power is in us as faith. Faith in us is Christ in us, Christ rising in us, the Son of Man in us.

In *The Matrix* when Neo Anderson believes that principalities and powers can't stop him, he becomes this apocalyptic, bad-ass kickboxer. And in the spiritual realm, that is who we are. I know the demons are far more terrified of the power in you who believe than you could ever be of them. You have mega dynamite power. But it's not just mega dynamite power. Paul goes on to say, "...the great might that God worked in Christ when he raised Him from the dead." Christ is the ultimate, mega, dynamite, apocalyptic kickboxer. Yet Christ emptied Himself and became a slave. He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross. And so God highly exalted Him. Not John Rambo. Not Albert Einstein. Not Ronald Reagan. Not Billy Graham. God exalted *Him*: the most humble, the most emptied of all men who have ever lived, Jesus the slaughtered Lamb.

And because God exalts Him, I don't have to exalt myself. I don't have to promote myself. So I'm no longer addicted to myself. When the eyes of my heart are enlightened:

I'm no longer addicted to things but can hope all things.
I'm no longer addicted to people but can love all people.
I'm no longer addicted to myself but can sacrifice myself, my control.

That's faith. Then I'm free.

Faith, hope, and love in me is Jesus in me, and He is free. When you know what the world does not know, you're free from the world—not addicted to the world, so you can love the world as God so loved the world. All things, all people, in all situations. God so loved the world...with Jesus.

Faith, hope, love in me is the Spirit of Jesus in me, and I am His Body in this world.

Ephesians 1:22:

[God] put all things under his feet and made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

That slaughtered Lamb is the boss of all things *for* the Church, which is us. That means that at any moment, the best possible thing that could happen to you *is* happening to you. And once you see it, you'll be like a Neo Anderson: apocalyptic, bad-Ass kickboxer in the heavenly places.

But in this world of men, once the eyes of your heart are enlightened, I suspect you'll look more like a happy fool on a mission from God.

[Movie clips from *The Blues Brothers*]

[Scene with Jake and Elwood standing in the back of a noisy, charismatic church.]

Jake: *The band! The band!*

Preacher preaching: *Do you see the light?*

Jake: *The band!*

Preacher: *Do you see the light?*

Elwood: *What light?*

Preacher: *Have you seen the light?*

Jake: *Yes! Yes! I have seen the light!*

[Jake and Elwood begin dancing in the aisles as the people sing, clap, and dance.]

Jake: *The band, Elwood! The band!*

Elwood: *The band? The band. The band? The band!*

Preacher: *Praise God!*

Elwood: *And God bless the United States of America!*

[Scene in a car]

Elwood: *They're not going to catch us. We're on a mission from God.*

[Scene in a lounge]

Jake: *Me and the Lord, we got an understanding.*

Elwood: *We're on a mission from God.*

[Scene in a restaurant]

Jake: *Ma'am, would it make you feel any better if you knew that what we're asking Matt here to do is a holy thing?*

Elwood: *You see, we're on a mission from God.*

[Scene in a steam room]

Jake: *Maury, we need this gig.*

Elwood: *We're on a mission from God.*

Jake and Elwood Blues were orphans who felt called to save their former orphanage from bankruptcy, but they don't know how. At the Triple Rock Church, they receive a revelation: Put the band back together, raise \$5,000, and save the orphanage. Even though all odds are against them; rednecks, the state police, the National Guard, and the Illinois Chapter of the Nazis are all set against them, they know they can't fail...because they're on a mission from God.

[Movie clip from *The Blues Brothers*. The brothers are arrested. Their band plays and sings "Jailhouse Rock" for the inmates in jail. The crowd cheers.]

Well, they don't fail. But they do suffer. Yet with the eyes of their hearts enlightened, the party never stops. Even in prison, they keep singing.

Like Paul in prison in Philippi singing songs and hymns with Silas, all before the jailhouse began to rock. The quaking earth blew the jailhouse doors wide open, and the Gospel invaded Europe.

Like Paul in prison in Rome writing to the Ephesians and the surrounding churches in Asia Minor.

Like Paul saying, “He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And I don’t cease to remember you in my prayers, that the Father of Jesus [Father of glory] would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” Revelation, *apokalyptseos*, “apocalypse in the knowledge of Him.”

Ephesians 1:15-23 is a prayer for a revelation. And the book we call The Revelation is at least partly an answer to that prayer. It’s titled, “The Revelation of Jesus,” literally “apocalypse in the knowledge of Him.” We could easily preach a year on Ephesians 1:15-23, because once I did preach a year on The Revelation. I wrote a book on The Revelation. The Revelation was received on the prison island of Patmos about 40 years after Paul wrote Ephesians. It was received by John, who then sent the revelation to Ephesus and the six surrounding churches—the seven churches—probably the same churches to whom Paul wrote. The second and third chapters of The Revelation are addressed to the angel or the spirit in each church, describing what needs to be done. It’s the spirit’s job. But the vision—the apocalypse—the unveiling—the revelation is for the people in those churches and for us. It describes what needs to be seen, that is, the hope to which He has called us, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe.

The Revelation isn’t a little map to the End Times. The Revelation is the revelation of Jesus, the Lord of all time. It describes principalities and powers, the Dragon, the Beast, the Great Harlot, kings and empires, and how they are all conquered by the slaughtered Lamb and those who are “with Him”...people like those seemingly foolish believers in those seven, little churches...people like you.

The whole thing is actually a musical (like *The Blues Brothers*). And in the end, there is a party—the Wedding Supper of the Lamb in a New Jerusalem in a new heaven and new earth, where we know the good and have the good, and the good has us. God is the Good, and we are His inheritance.

That’s the end...but not just the end.

In 90 A.D., John wrote, “I see the New Jerusalem coming down.” In 30 A.D., Jesus said, “The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Maybe it’s always “at hand.” But until we see the glory of God crucified on the tree, until we see that the heart of our Father is good, until we have faith in the Good, we can’t enjoy the Good and join His party.

This week at staff meeting, Angie our Children’s Minister said, “Hey, this reminds me of the story of the prodigal son.”

You’ll remember that at the start of that story told by Jesus, the younger of two sons comes to his father and asks for the “share of the inheritance that falls to him.” In that culture, this request meant, “Dad, I want your stuff, and I wish you were dead.” Miraculously, the father gives the son his wish. The son journeys to a far country and squanders his inheritance on loose living. Destitute, he decides to return as an employee so he can earn his father’s stuff. But he still doesn’t want his father; just his stuff. The father meets him on the road and showers him with grace, which melts the boy’s heart. It opens the eyes of his heart, he sees his father’s heart, and he longs to be his son.

The father throws a “lavish party,” because his son “was lost and now is found.” The older brother gets angry at this brother, so he leaves the party, goes out to a field, and pouts in the dark. It’s his own far country. The father finds him and says, “All that is mine is yours.” And we’re left wondering if that self-righteous, older brother will ever join the party.

And this was Angie's observation: The party was there all along. "All that is mine is yours." All things, all people, all space and time. The party was there all along, but the eyes of their hearts were not open. All things had always been theirs. What those boys did not see was that the heart of their father had always been theirs as well.

He was their inheritance.

They were his inheritance.

They were each other's inheritance.

The kingdom was at hand.

The party was just waiting to happen, waiting for a revelation.

Our Father in heaven is even sovereign over the revelation. Actually...

He uses the far land of the prodigal.

He uses the dark field of the self-righteous older brother.

He uses this fallen world to reveal His heart.

He uses our sin to reveal His grace.

You see, our inheritance is all things and all people and all space and time *filled* with grace. And God is Grace. It's all an economy of grace. And it begins right here and right now.

Communion

For on the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat." And in the same manner after supper, He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Take, eat, and drink."

We invite you to come forward for communion. But I warn you: This is the red pill. It breaks your illusions. It's the judgment of God, and then it sets you free. So yes, there is a terrorist flying the plane. But Jesus is also on the plane, and His Father controls all things. It's His show, and He will reveal His glory. But even now, He'd like you to join His party.

Prayer

Father, I realize that I'm preaching on a prayer. So, Lord, what I'm preaching about I cannot do. A mere sermon cannot do it. Bread and wine cannot do it. We need your Holy Spirit, Lord God, to do it. So Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we agree with the prayer of Paul. And we ask, Holy Spirit, that you would come to us and give us the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation; open the eyes of our hearts that we would know the hope to which you have called us, the riches of your glorious inheritance in our brothers and sisters, and the surpassing greatness of your power in us who believe, according to your might that raised Jesus from the dead and made Him head over all things for us, the Church, His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Come, Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Benediction

God is so great, that if you would see Him without a deep knowledge of His mercy and love, you would be destroyed on the spot, with the knowledge of the fact that He is in absolute control, and you're not. That's how great He is.

So this is what I would suggest to you: Go back and look at Ephesians 1, read over it, and then I dare you to pray that prayer with Paul. The one who is in control is Absolute Love. So, in Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.