

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups Jan 6th 2008

Our Story – a mystery story Ephesians 3:1-12



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Recent research from the Theological think tank – Theos suggests that only 12% of adults and 7% of 18 -24yrs really know the story of Jesus' birth – each year the Christian story seems to become more of a 'mystery' for many here in the UK. The first part of this new year our focus is on '**our story**,' the story of faith that is at one and the same time a 'mystery' story, a story for everyone, a living story, a 'foolish' story, a story that is true and a story that needs to be told!

Over the first five weeks of 2008 Peter and Paul and take us back to re-engage with the meta-narrative that changes everything for everyone – the story of Jesus Christ. Our challenge is to discover afresh new ways to tell the story which is both his story and our story.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written from prison in Rome; thought to be more of a circular letter, the term 'mystery' features highly not just in Ephesians but in Paul's other letters too. The Greek word for mystery is used 28 times in the NT mostly by Paul and is key to our understanding of both Paul's mission then and our mission today.

Mystery – revealed to Paul What Paul meant by mystery was not so much something dark, secret and incomprehensible, as truths, though once hidden, now disclosed and freely available for all to discover. Truths disclosed through God's revelation in 'the mystery of Christ' v4. It was Christ who dramatically broke into Paul's life on the road to Damascus and it is Christ who empowers Paul to 'make plain the mystery' v9. Paul's motivation for mission was the personal revelation of Jesus Christ, nothing was the same after his encounter with Jesus.

Mystery – revealed for all Christianity is not some mystery cult or secret club for an exclusive minority – see v6. The Christian story is a story that must be made known and made plain to all. The Christian story is for Jew and Gentile. Christ is Christ for all, whether Muslim, Jew, Hindu or Atheist.

Mystery – revealed by us At the heart of this passage is v10 which is one of the NT's most powerful texts for the continuing existence of the Church. Rulers and authorities in the heavenly (and earthly) realms must be confronted with the good news of God's story – the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church is God's story teller in every age.

"There is nothing like the local church when it is working right. Its beauty is indescribable. Its power is breathtaking. Its potential is unlimited. It comforts the grieving and heals the broken in the context of community. It builds bridges to seekers and offers truth to the confused. It provides resources for those in need and opens its arms to the forgotten, the downtrodden, and the disillusioned. It breaks the chains of addictions, frees the oppressed, and offers belonging to the marginalised. ---The potential of the local church is almost more than I can grasp."

Bill Hybels Pastor of Willow Creek Church

As we embrace our vision here at St Paul's to love God, love one another and to love all in God's world the challenge for us is to be the story tellers of our time, to tell out the story of faith through word and spirit, through faith and action, through tears and laughter, through heart and mind, and through love and prayer.



Witness: Questions to discuss

- 1 Do you agree with Theos that each year the Christian story seems to become more of a 'mystery' for many here in the UK?
- 2 Can you remember what it was that prevented you from knowing Christ?
- 3 In what ways has Christ broken into your life?
- 3 Paul's challenge was to bring a Jewish Messiah to the Gentile world. Our challenge is to bring Jesus to a multicultural and secular society. How can we tell the Muslim that Jesus is his Saviour?
- 4 What new ways do we - the church - need to discover /rediscover to tell the story of Christ afresh?
- 5 Can you share a story of faith to build up and encourage others – in your small group/our services?