



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Last week in the second half of Ephesians Chapter 2 we discovered how Paul painted a picture of a world in which Christ had demolished barriers between Jew and Gentile and between humanity and God, and how in us God is creating a new, multi-cultural human society which is both the family he loves and the temple in which he lives. At the beginning of Chapter 3 Paul turns attention to himself in prison in Rome (3:1) where he contemplates the 'mystery' of the outworking of God's purposes for the world. He does so not from the perspective of some incomprehensible, unfathomable philosophical conundrum but from someone who's eyes have literally been opened.

Years before, as a young man, Paul had encountered Christ on the road to Damascus – read Acts 9:1-9 – blinded by cultural and doctrinal prejudice he had been lost in a fruitless and increasingly bitter and dangerous search for meaning. On encountering Christ everything changed and everything connected. Ananias a disciple in Damascus prayed for Paul *"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."* Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He got up and was baptized and after taking some food he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked *"Isn't he the man who caused havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on his name. And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"* Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ!" Acts 9:17 -22.

And so after walking, talking, preaching and teaching throughout the Roman Empire - from his incarceration in Rome itself Paul writes the words from our passage today to the Christians in Ephesus– read Eph 3:2-6. It is Jesus Christ who connects everything up. It is God's Son who brings all things together for good. It is in the mystery of the person of Christ that meaning for the world, meaning for everyone in the world, is ultimately discovered.

Interesting to note that at the beginning of chapter three Paul had begun to pray for the Ephesians – see 3:1a but he gets so carried away with the power of the gospel that he digresses and doesn't get back to the prayer until verse 14! The power of his testimony is compelling read - 3:7-9.

Paul's mission was "To make plain the mystery". In other words to show the world the point at which God and the world he has created meets, to show the world the place where God can be seen in all his fullness, to show the world - Jesus - the person in whom God's very being connects with the world. This mystery is an 'open secret', an open secret that is not for the church who already know it!! , but for the world. It is an open secret that the Church must tell to the world – read v 10.

Blue plaques have been informing tourists and residents for over a century – revealing what was once secret - that someone famous once stayed there. The world in which we live and particularly the human race bears a similar sign – God once stayed here! The creator of time and space chose to make his home in the human race. The fact is that in Christ God lived as an ordinary human being and in so doing dignified and honoured human life. However the reality today is that humanity has chosen to ignore this and injustice, inequality poverty and oppression is rife. As his church entrusted with making the 'manifold wisdom' of the incarnation known we are commissioned to see his kingdom of righteousness and justice established here in the world. In her book 'Just Imagine' Danielle Strickland writes *"Just imagine a world where every Christian and the church as a whole are passionate to live justly. Where Christians toss and turn at night because children die due to a lack of clean water, or because other children step on landmines while they play; a world where the church is restless to do something about poverty, racism, malnutrition and environmental destruction; a world where Christians all have friends who are poor, friends of another skin colour and ethnicity and friends whose hope has been extinguished. A church where our commitment to God is measured not by how many love songs to Jesus we can sing in an hour, but by our actions to bring justice, mercy and faith to other people. Imagine such a world."*

Here at St Paul's God is renewing our vision of what it means to be church, to be a world church. As his Spirit empowers us this could be expressed in any number of ways from encouraging /sponsoring regular opportunities for church members and gap year students to serve abroad on short term mission teams - such as our Kenya mission Team, to each of us separately and together as church taking greater responsibility to address/campaign on issues of injustice as well as renewing our prayer and support of our Link Missionary partners and organisations.

Being a World Church is not a take it or leave it optional extra for a few keen individuals . It is God's intention that through His church his wisdom, his ways, his kingdom, and the riches of Christ should be made known in his world.



Witness: choose from these questions to discuss

1. 'God is creating a new, multi-cultural human society which is both the family he loves and the temple in which he lives' How does this description match yours/others experience of church?
2. Verses 10 -11 state that the church is to make known God's wisdom. How is God's wisdom being made known through our church/your small group?
3. *Being a World Church is not a take it or leave it optional extra for a few keen individuals . It is God's intention that through His church his wisdom, his ways, his kingdom, and the riches of Christ should be made known.*
 What do you think it means for us here at St Paul's to be a 'World Church?'
 What will a new vision for World Church look like? What do you think we/you should change? How can you get involved?
4. Read and reflect together on Danielle Strickland s comment 'Just imagine'