

Sunday Sermon October 18
Something You Should Know
Ephesians 1:15-23

All of our ears perk up when we hear someone say, “There is something that you absolutely should know!” We can’t wait to pass on this new tidbit of knowledge with the same intriguing words, “There is something that you absolutely should know!” Well that is precisely what Paul is doing in this passage. Having revealed the spell bounding, extravagant blessings that we have received as a result of our salvation - our adoption into a new family by God the Father, our redemption through the death and resurrection of God the Son, and our sealing by the indwelling Holy Spirit – **Paul prays that they would appreciate and appropriate these good things in their own lives.** Paul moves from an outburst of praise in the beginning of the chapter to earnest intercession in prayer as he closes the chapter. In this he illustrates that Christian praise and Christian prayer go together. You show me a man that is lacking in prayer and I will show you a man that is lacking in praise. You show me a woman that is lacking in praise and I will show you a woman that is lacking in prayer. Where there is no prayer there will be no praise and where there is no praise there will be no prayer!

What prompts Paul to launch into prayer is the good news that he has heard about this church. He says, “*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*” (Ephesians 1:15-16). You are the real deal! These blessings I have spoken of are assuredly yours. You have a faith in which you have received Jesus as your Lord. You demonstrate that faith by love for other believers. After all, genuine faith always produces genuine love. And this love they had was not just for those Christians that had a certain personality, a certain economic income, a certain ethnicity or a certain status in society. This was a love that knew no bigotry, and excluded no one – Jew or Gentile.

Okay Paul, we hear you, but what is it that you want us to know? In what way do you want us to become more intimate - to become closer

friends with God? In what way do you want us to have a complete experiential knowledge and not just an abstract knowledge of God, or even facts about God? Certainly we would agree that the Christian life could be described as getting to know God better every day - to experience a friendship which grows closer with the years.

But before we go on, it is not that we seek or pray to experience a second, third, or fourth new blessing, but rather that we appreciate to the fullest possible extent the implications of the blessings that we have already received. What does it mean to me each day to be adopted, to be redeemed, to be sealed, to be predestined? How does that impact my daily life? When we are saved, God does not give us some of himself, but all of himself. He does not hold some blessings in reserve to be parceled out to those who meet certain extra requirements. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that God has already given you *every spiritual blessing*. Second Peter 1:3 says that God “has granted to us *all things* that pertain to life and godliness.” *So Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit may enlighten us as Christians so that we may know both in our minds and in our experience three wonderful realities:*

I. You Have the Hope of God’s Calling (1: 18a).

“Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you”

Paul has told these Christians that before God created a planet or a galaxy he chose them and called them. And because of that calling they, and we, can enjoy certain expectations: 1) We can thank God every day that we belong to Jesus Christ and have entered into the family (the body) of Christ. Our eternity with Christ is sure! 2) Our calling is a holy calling which means that we are forever liberated from filling the requirements of God’s law. Jesus fulfilled the law for us. Therefore we need never lapse into the slavery of rule-keeping for salvation. 3) We’ve been called to harmonious relationships with other believers across the barriers of race and class. We need never bow to bigotry or an attitude of elitism again. Peace with each other and the euphoria of comradeship is ours! 4) We have been called to the privilege of sharing in Christ’s sufferings – to undergo unjust accusations and persecutions because we are His. All this is the hope of future glory and future triumph.

The Chicago Cubs' Man Cave of Hope

The Chicago Cubs have not won the World Series for 107 years. For a Chicagoan like me that fosters a malaise of Cub Despair. But at least one Cub fan, Stew McVicar, has built what he calls "a man cave of hope" for his favorite team. "Hope is a treasured commodity," the article begins—and indeed it is. "Through hosting fundraisers at a unique Cubs-themed basement in his home, the McHenry County man has parlayed his passion for the Chicago Cubs into offering help—and hope—for countless others." Specifically, Stew has turned his basement into a fantastic man cave dedicated to Cub lore and Cub fanaticism he calls "Club 400." The article explains: "Game-used bats and authentic jerseys frame the wall. A theater features bricks from Wrigley Field, and a 2012 game-used Wrigley Field home plate is embedded in the floor. Pictures of Stew with Cubs favorites Mark Grace, Ryne Sandberg, Ron Santo, Harry Caray, and many others are framed along a hallway." Okay, I'm Cub's fan, too; I also agree that "hope is a treasured commodity"; and I love Stew's enthusiasm for his team, but there's a much better hope waiting for all of us—the "hope that does not disappoint"

II You Will Experience the Glory of God's Inheritance (1:18b)!

"what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints"

Just as we look back to God's calling, we now look forward to God's inheritance. This is an inheritance which is *imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for us* (First Peter 1:4). This inheritance cannot rust, decay, or be taken away. This is an inheritance which is untainted by the effects of sin. This is an inheritance so immense and so marvelous that our joy and gratitude for it will grow greater and greater throughout all eternity. Indeed, when we begin to understand how incredible and fantastic our future is, then our hearts will explode with gratitude and obedience in the here and now. Every thought, every plan, every relationship will be controlled by a love for God and a desire to see many others joining us in receiving such a glorious inheritance. And what is even more amazing is that we have already received part of the inheritance now. When we look at the glory of creation we long for the new creation that is coming. When we see the

unity of the body, we long for the perfect unity that is coming. When we feel the surge of the Spirit's power in our being we long for the perfection of that power in the future. We have been given a taste of the glory now which causes us to salivate for the full reception of that glory in the future.

Imagine you're a billionaire, and you have three ten-dollar bills in your wallet. You get out of a cab, and you hand the driver one of the bills for an eight-dollar fare. Later in the day you look in and find out there's only one ten-dollar bill there, and you say, "Either I dropped a ten-dollar bill somewhere, or I gave the taxi driver two bills." What are you going to do? Are you going to get all upset? Are you going to the police and demand they search the city for the cabdriver? No, you are going to shrug. You're a billionaire. You lost ten dollars. So what? You are too rich to be concerned about that kind of loss. This week, somebody criticized you. Something you bought or invested in turned out to be less valuable than you thought. Something you wanted to happen didn't go the way you wanted it to—these are real losses. But what are you going to do, if you're a Christian? Will this setback disrupt your contentment with life? Will you shake your fist at God? Toss and turn at night? If so, I submit that it's because you don't know how truly rich you are. If you're that upset about your status with other people, if you're constantly lashing out at people for hurting your feelings, you might call it a lack of self-control or a lack of self-esteem, and it is. But more fundamentally, you have totally lost touch with your identity. As a Christian, you're a spiritual billionaire and you're wringing your hands over ten dollars.

“The Mystery of the Missing Owner” read the headline on an unusual section of the *Chicago Tribune* on Sunday, February 6, 2005. The supplement was actually a legal notice published by the Illinois State Treasurer's Office seeking to give money away to rightful owners - the contents of abandoned safe deposit boxes, forgotten bank accounts, security deposit checks, uncashed paychecks, and dividend checks.

More than a billion dollars is owed to nearly five million people and businesses that the Treasurer's Office could not trace. The front page of the supplement listed the names and last known addresses of 10 individuals or couples each owed over \$100,000. And what followed were 116 pages packed tightly with names from Lucilee Aakeberg to Leonard E. Zyzda with 113,000 names of people all owed more than \$100 in cash and/or stock! It seems like such a shame that people could be unaware of their rightful treasures. Yet that is precisely the condition of many Christians who live without taking advantage of God's promises of peace, strength, comfort, wisdom, love and many other spiritual treasures to which all the heirs of God are entitled. What treasures might God be holding in trust for you to claim?

III. You are the Recipient of the Greatness of God's Power (1:19-23)

"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.

God's call looks back primarily to the beginning. God's inheritance primarily looks on to the end. God's power spans the interim in between. And all of these things are God's gift to every believer. So we immediately ask how we will come to know the surpassing greatness, the immensity of God's power. Paul gives us three successive events that are demonstrations of it. And in them we discover what it is like:

1) Because of Christ's resurrection, you have power over death.

Note that Paul did not pray for us to be given power but that we might understand the power that we have been given. How could you possibly have more than what you already have? You already have the

power to evangelize, to live a faithful life, to endure suffering, to do God's will. But you have even more than that!

When God raised Jesus from the dead he arrested the natural process of decay refusing to allow Jesus body to see corruption in any way. But he did not just reverse the process of death, restoring the dead Jesus to life, but he transcended death. God raise Jesus to an altogether new life – a new glorified resurrection body! The empty tomb and the resurrection appearances were the evidence that God did the impossible. Christ had defeated death forever. So when you see a fellow believer or an animal die you know that there will come a day when the ones you love and the pets you love will never die in the new heavens and new earth.

2) Because of Christ's enthronement you have power over evil.

When Christ sat down on the throne beside the Father, he was given absolute power and absolute authority over every conceivable intelligent being including all humans and all the angelic hosts - every natural and every supernatural being. The cosmic war between God and evil has already been won and we are simply awaiting the already determined outcome. All things are now under his feet meaning that even the creation will eventually be brought into full subjection to him. Paradise lost will be Paradise regained!

This means that you as a believer can have victory over every enemy of God. As a part of Christ's family, you have been delivered from your old master the devil. You need not fear possession or enslavement to any demonic force. You are no longer held captive by your old sin nature. If you resist the devil he will flee from you every single time. God provides a way of escape to every temptation to do evil. You have the power to overcome every sinful habit and every sinful addiction.

3) Because of Christ's headship over the church you go forth in his power.

Christ has been given authority and rule over his church. We can overcome all opposition because our leader is Lord of all. Our Lord and Christ fills his church through the power of the Holy Spirit so that it is enabled with all the power needed to take on his character and proclaim

his message of salvation. As you witness, you know that the power has been giving you to clearly present your story and the teaching of the gospel. As you witness, you know that the Holy Spirit will convict and convince the person that you are working with and you need no longer worry about it. As you live your life you can know that Christ, as head of the church, is your intercessor before God himself praying for your every need. Just as physically the head controls the body and keeps the body functioning properly, Christ controls the body and keeps the body functioning properly.

J. Wallace Hamilton (a famous preacher from the mid-20th century) used to tell about a mother cat, with a baby kitten in her mouth, trying unsuccessfully to get across a busy New York City intersection. She would meander timidly out into the traffic and then dart back to the curb when nearly hit by a passing car. A traffic policeman in the center of the intersection, seeing her plight, thrust up his hands to stop traffic in both directions. The anxious cat scampered across to the other side and disappeared down an alley. Hamilton pointed out that the cat had no idea that the authority of the New York City Police Department had been called upon to enable her to get safely across the street. Then he added, "I wonder how many times the mighty hand of God goes up to get us safely to where he wants us to be and we're not even aware of it."

Conclusion:

To put it simply God wants you to know him. He wants you to experience him. That is, to not only discover facts about him, but to communicate with and commune with him. And as you do, you will discover the hand of God working in every aspect and at every moment in your life.

In his book titled *The Gospel According to Jesus*, Chris Seay shares the following story: "One week I was preaching in our church about the kingdom that is coming, and on the way out a young man grabbed me. He said, Pastor, the kingdom [of God] is already here. Every Sunday I used to be in the same neighborhood. I used to come down here to a bar

called Emo's, and I'd start every night with a drop of ecstasy on my tongue and wash it down with Bicardi 151. That's what I did Sunday after Sunday. Now I come [to a worship service] instead, and I finish the evening with the body of Christ on my tongue, and I wash it down with the blood of Christ. This is the kingdom of God." Chris Seay adds, "This man is experiencing the kingdom; he lives in its presence. We may not recognize it, we don't often see it, but it is right here, and we long to get past the mundane existence of religion and get a taste of the kingdom."

[In January 1956, Martin Luther King Jr.] returned home around midnight after a long day of organizational meetings. His wife and young daughter were already in bed, and King was eager to join them. But a threatening call—the kind of call he was getting as many as 30 to 40 times a day—interrupted his attempt to get some much-needed rest. When he tried to go back to bed, he could not shake the menacing voice that kept repeating the hateful words in his head. King got up, made a pot of coffee, and sat down at his kitchen table. With his head buried in his hands, he cried out to God. There in his kitchen in the middle of the night, when he had come to the end of strength, King met the living Christ in an experience that would carry him through the remainder of his life. "I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on," King later recalled. "He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone ... He promised never to leave me, no never alone." In the stillness of the Alabama night, the voice of Jesus proved more convincing than the threatening voice of the anonymous caller. The voice of Jesus gave him the courage to press through the tumultuous year of 1956 to the victorious end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. More than that, it gave him a vision for ministry that would drive him for the rest of his life.

***** Why not make it your passion to live every day making full use of your resources in Christ and looking for the hand of God as it touches every moment of every minute of your life, O that I might know him...**