



Ephesians 3:1-12

Epiphany, January 11, 2026
Pastor Sam Rodebaugh

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles--² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.⁴

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

The great mystery that Paul writes about throughout our text just doesn't seem like that much of a mystery to us, does it? ***"The mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."*** "That's a mystery, Paul? Really? I've known that for some time!" No, I don't think any of us would consider it a mystery at all that Gentiles could be saved alongside Jews, through faith in Christ. That's not a mystery, to us.

But it *was* a mystery. It was a mystery, that Gentiles could be saved, so much so that long after Jesus had commissioned His disciples, ***"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth,"*** (Acts 1:8) they were reluctant to do so—to carry that message beyond the borders of the Jewish nation. It was such a mystery, that the apostles and other leaders of the early Christian church gathered together at a council in Jerusalem to determine if and how this could *possibly* be the case that Gentiles could be saved alongside Jews. (cf. Acts 15)

And you can hardly blame them. Afterall, in Bethlehem of Judea, when Christ was born, He was ***"born king of the Jews."*** (Matthew 2:2) And concerning that kingdom—His work, His mission, His ministry—Jesus at one time proclaimed, ***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** (Matthew 15:24) A Jewish King for Jewish people. It was supposed to be very exclusive, *wasn't* it?

But when His mission, His ministry, and His work is done—we look at His throne room, and this is what we see: ***"A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands."*** (Revelation 7:9)

The King of the Jews has a throne room that includes people of all nations and tribes and peoples and languages. The King of the Jews has a throne room in which there are *Gentiles*. And those Gentiles are ***"fellow heirs"*** together with those of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Those Gentiles are ***"members of the same body."*** Those Gentiles are ***"partakers of the promise."*** The King of the Jews has Gentile subjects. This is indeed a mystery!

But that mystery unfolds as the King of the Jews goes about His mission and His ministry and His work. He sets out and He goes straight to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And He calls Peter and Andrew and James and John and eight other of these lost sheep to be His chosen disciples. He finds them, and He calls them, and they receive Him. And then He continues that work to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He goes out and heals the sick and forgives sins and casts out demons and raises the dead, and His Kingdom is building and building and building with these wonderful Jewish people, these lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But not *all* the sheep wish to be found. He goes to His hometown synagogue. He gets up on the Sabbath day. He reads the Scriptures. He reads *this* Scripture: ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*** (Luke 4:18-19ff) And then He sits down and tells them, ***“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*** And the lost sheep of the house of Israel that hear this are amazed, they're impressed. ***“Is not this Joseph's son?”*** they ask.

And then Jesus continues speaking. He says, ***“No prophet is acceptable in his hometown.”*** And He *keeps* speaking. He says, “You know what folks, there were lots of widows in Israel, but Elijah was sent to the widow at Zarephath. There were lots of lepers in Israel, but Elisha healed Naaman, the Syrian leper.” And they pick up what He's laying down—*Jewish* prophets helping *Gentile* people. And they don't like *that* one bit. And they drive Him out of town, and they drive Him to the hill on which the town is built in an effort to throw Him off and be done with Him. But Jesus passes through their midst and goes on His way.

And *His* way is very much like that of Elijah and Elisha. Because Jesus goes and finds a Samaritan leper and He heals him. Jesus finds a Roman centurion whose servant is ill, and He heals him. A Canaanite woman complains that her daughter is severely oppressed by a demon, and Jesus casts that demon out. And then He goes to Jacob's Well and meets a Samaritan woman in broad daylight and tells her everything she has ever done. And she goes and finds her neighbors and tells them everything that Jesus said to her. And they come out, and *they* talk to Jesus. And when that conversation is over, these *Samaritans* proclaim Him to be the Savior of the world.

The King of the Jews now has Gentile subjects. This is an incredible mystery! But, like I said, this is not an incredible mystery to *us*. This is something we have known for a long time. This is old news. And that's because of what Paul describes here: ***“When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”*** This mystery had been revealed to Paul, and now Paul was revealing this same mystery to the Ephesians. It *was* news to them, a new and wonderful revelation! That's how the Ephesians came to be God's people. That was also how Paul came to be sitting in a prison, because he had been sharing this grace of God with the Gentiles, and the Jews did not like that one bit. So, he was imprisoned, but it was all worth it, in Paul's opinion.

Now, all of that was a long time ago. The distinction between Jews and Gentiles, the problems that Paul had to face, those are a long time in the past. This insight is no longer new. For a lot of us, the

wonderful fact that Gentiles are welcomed into the kingdom of the King of the Jews—the wonder of that is just basically forgotten. But just because it is no longer *new* does not mean it is no longer *good*. Because that insight was first shared by Paul, and that mystery was perpetuated—continued to be shared—and it worked its way down through the ages until that Gospel was preached to you, that good news was made known to you. The mystery found its way to you, and that’s how *you* got here.

And this mystery that found its way into our hearts was that God loved the *world* and so sent His Son into it. He sent Him in to be sure to seek after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He did not stop there because His *love* did not stop there. His love was extended to all of creation, to all the nations, all the peoples, all the tribes, all the languages. God’s love extends as far as the east is from the west, as far as one hand of Christ to the other hand, pierced through on the cross of Calvary. And there upon that cross, Jesus died for the sins of the *world*. And that includes you and me.

And in that death, Jesus is the propitiation not just for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. The blood of Christ drips down from the cross and cleanses us of all our sins. And so, Paul’s whole message here, what He is trying to impress upon us, is that no one is excluded from this love of God in Christ Jesus. No one is excluded from His death upon the cross or His resurrection on the third day and what He achieved by it.

No one is excluded. And that is truly wonderful news. Because if that mystery had not been made known to me, had not been perpetuated from Paul to me, then I could think of one person whom I would naturally assume would be *totally* excluded—not an heir, no membership in the body, no promise. I can think of one person in *particular* that I would never imagine could have a part in the unsearchable riches in Christ. And that person is me.

Because I know my sins far more than I know any of yours; from *my* perspective, I’m the *chief* of sinners. And if this mystery had not been made known, then I could *only* assume that I would remain ***“separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and [a] stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*** (Ephesians 2:12) I would have no business approaching God in prayer, expecting forgiveness, or standing in this pulpit.

Thankfully, I have a lot in common with the Apostle Paul, and you do too. Paul writes, ***“Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given...”*** Paul knew where He should have stood before the Lord, reflecting on his former life of sin—public enemy number one, persecutor of the Church of God. And yet by God’s grace, the mystery of the good news in Christ had been revealed to him—he who did not deserve any love from God at all yet had received grace upon grace upon grace. And so, he knew truly what this all meant—*no one* is excluded.

And as Paul had been let in on this mystery, he could not then keep the mystery to himself. And so, he shared it. He shared it and he shared it and he shared it until *we* received it. Until we could hear and believe that even Gentile sinners like us could become partakers of the promises of the gospel of Christ Jesus. And the promise is this: You have a place in His Kingdom. You will be before Him in a white robe, with a palm branch in your hand, along with all the Jews of the lost sheep of the house of Israel who have received Him by faith, along with all the nations and people and languages and tribes

that have received Him by faith. You will stand there in a resurrected and glorified body, enjoining your voice with the whole company of heaven, crying out, ***“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*** (Revelations 7:10)

So, now that we are here, now that we are God’s people, now that we are fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the promise—what now? Well, let’s put it this way: there are a lot of people that you know for whom this mystery remains *entirely* mysterious. And if the mystery has been revealed to you so often and so long ago that this is all *old news* to you, well, then, I think it’s safe to say that you know all this well enough to reveal this mystery to others. May God help us in this, may God help us to *be* an epiphany. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Amen.