

Joke: A man goes into a second hand store and finds a used football that he wanted for his son.

He picks it up and takes it to the counter.

"How much is this?" He asked

"That'll be \$5" said the owner. "Would you like me to pump it up for you?"

"That would be great, thank you" he replied.

So, the owner got a small pump from under the counter and in a few seconds the ball was as good as new.

"Here you go. That'll be \$10 please".

"\$10!!!??!!" "But you said it was \$5".

He looked up and said "Sorry. Inflation".

Have you ever seen the *Duck Tales* cartoon? If you have, then you may have the theme song running through your head about now, and for that I'm sorry. And maybe you're thinking back to the intro video where the duck family goes swimming through the vault of gold coins amassed by their patriarch, Scrooge McDuck. His fictional net worth is estimated to be in the trillions of dollars, and in

a head to head fictional comparison, Scrooge is wealthier than Tony Stark and Bruce Wayne.

But when I think about the innumerable riches of God's grace, which the book of Ephesians says He "*lavished upon us*," I cannot help but think that God's riches far exceeds the made up bank rolls of Tony Stark, Bruce Wayne, and Scrooge McDuck. Even our fictional characters don't hold a candle compared to our God. His riches are inexhaustible.

And, as we'll see today, in Ephesians 3, the mystery entrusted to the Apostle Paul was that God opened up the vault of His inexhaustible grace to all people - Jews and Gentiles - the latter of which Paul was specifically called to and appointed to be the chief ambassador and missionary.

Ephesians 3:1–13 (NIV): For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches

of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

In this portion of Scripture, we hear the word *mystery* used over and over again. Paul specifically writes, *“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”*

And to the early church that was radical news - it was contrary to what had been taught and believed for generations. Jews and Gentiles just didn't fellowship together.

But because of what Christ did we have become heirs, joint heirs adopted into the family.

Romans 9:23–26 (NIV): What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—24 even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 25 As he says in Hosea: “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,” 26 and, “In the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’ ”

And in Galatians we read. . .

Galatians 3:26–29 (NLT): For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

As so, Paul refers to his calling as a *steward of God's grace for the Gentiles*. Despite his past as a persecutor of the Church, God revealed to him the mystery of Christ, a mystery hidden for ages but now was being disclosed.

So, the apostle passionately embraced his mission to proclaim this mystery to the Gentiles — the message that through Christ, they are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise.

And listen Paul could have chosen to be a prisoner of his past, thinking he had done way to much wrong to be used by God, but instead he understands that he is a new creation and can be a participant in the life that God had called him to. . .So, in Paul, we can see the riches of God's grace at work.

Think about it he led persecutions of those followers of the way. He saw fit to in prison believers, even had a part in killing some. As a matter of fact when some disciples heard Paul was coming fear stuck their heart because Paul's reputation had proceeded him.

Acts 9:19–28 (NLT): Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. 20 And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!” 21 All who heard him were amazed. “Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?” they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?” 22 Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. 23 After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. 24 They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. 25 So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall. 26 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! 27 Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus. 28 So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.

And Peter he too had a revelation in the form of a dream. He’s praying and a sheet with animals, and reptiles comes down and Peter hears a voice that tells him to slay and eat but Peter said no Lord I would never eat anything unclean. To which again the voice says, don’t call unclean what I have called clean.

And that's the boundless riches of Christ they are not exclusive to any particular group they were in the Old Covenant but in the New they are poured out to all who believe.

Ephesians 1:7–8 (NIV): In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,

Webster's dictionary says to lavish is, *to bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities on.*

God didn't hold back, he opened up the vault and shared the riches of his grace with not just the Jews but to all people that includes you and I.

Revelation 7:9–10 (TPT): After this I looked, and behold, right in front of me I saw a vast multitude of people—an enormous multitude so huge that no one could count—made up of victorious ones from every nation, tribe, people group, and language. They were all in glistening white robes, standing before the throne and before the Lamb with palm branches in their hands. 10 And they shouted out with a passionate voice: “Salvation belongs to our God seated on the throne and to the Lamb!”

This is the revealed mystery to which Paul has been commissioned. And as co-heirs to the promise, it's now our mission as well to continue sharing this radical truth with the world. To be the ambassador for Christ that He has called us to be.

Paul acknowledges and understands the privilege given to him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. His ministry was not

based on his own merits but on the grace of God. . .Paul even tells us in verse 8 that he is *“less than the least of all God’s people.”*

And hear this church it wasn’t that Paul was uneducated Paul had the equivalent of like 7 PHD’s but look what he decided to do. . .

1 Corinthians 2:2 (NIV): For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

He’s saying all my education. Everything I learned it I choose to but all that aside and I resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And it’s for that reason he could write to the Philippians. . .

Philippians 3:12–14 (NIV): Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Moving onto verse 10 of Ephesians chapter 3 we discover another truth — the wisdom of God is made known through the Church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

This diverse, unified body of believers called the church, the Body of Christ, becomes a living testimony to God's wisdom and grace.

Together, Jew and Gentile, we are salt and light. Together we shine the light of Christ in a darkened world. Together we live as strangers and aliens in a land not our own, as this is not our home.

In the final verses of our passage, Paul emphasizes the central role of Christ in providing access to God. Through faith in Christ, we have boldness and confident access to God, not by our own righteousness but through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

The barrier between Jew and Gentile has been broken, the veil has been torn, each one of us can approach the Father with assurance.

This access to God is a manifestation of the boundless riches of Christ, as all believers, regardless of their heritage, upbringing, or their past, share in the inheritance and blessings made available through Him.

The book of Hebrews says it this way;

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV): Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Or how about this one. . .

Hebrews 10:19–25 (NLT): And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. 20 By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. 21 And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, 22 let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. 24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us

not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

We can go before the throne room of God with boldness and confidence because we are co-heirs and beneficiaries of the boundless riches of Christ. And I love in this passage from Hebrews how we are called to respond to Christ.

But let me share one point about the high priest mentioned in this Scripture that I will get much more into after our Easter series which will begin next week. Is that Ok. It's exciting.

To often churches including some of what I have taught as well and have mingled the Old and New covenant together.

So, quickly two points. First point according to the Law the priests had to be from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was not yet He is called our High Priest. This happens because Jesus brought in the New Covenant of grace and because He became our sacrificial Lamb and died on the cross we now are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Dying for our sins once and for all. And Scriptures tell us He remembers our sin no more. . .so let me ask you a question why is it that we focus so much on what God has chosen to forget?

When Jesus rose from the dead are New Covenant was brought in and in the New we are released from every law that they tried to live up to in the Old. And now we have freedom in Christ because as they had to offer a sacrifice once a year to atone for their sins we

in the New have because of the blood of Christ had them removed no longer remembered once and for all.

Let me try to close out today going back to Hebrews 10 we have invitations to respond. Let us. . .

- Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.
- Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.
- Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds
- Let us not give up meeting together
- Let us encourage one another

And church we don't do these to earn points with God. We do these so that we can encourage and support one another.

Church, let us respond to the boundless riches of God's grace with the level of gratitude, confidence, and boldness that it calls us to. If God be for us, and with us, and in us, then who can stand against us?

Let me wrap up by sharing a parable told by Jesus in the book of Matthew. This is the parable of the hidden treasure;

Matthew 13:44 (NIV): 44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

His response was joy at finding a hidden treasure in a field. . .

And Paul writes, “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

We have found a treasure in the grace, mercy, and the life we have in Christ.

Yet so many are not willing to sell everything they have. And church I’m not talking about our houses, or cars, or material things we possess. I’m talking about. . .

Romans 12:2 (NLT): Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Let me make one point here as well. If you excepted Jesus, truly excepted Jesus you are new the old has passed. Grace gives you the power to live righteously. Not because of the law that is no longer our measuring stick because frankly we could have never measured up. But it’s because we are led by the spirit of God who dwells in us and never leaves us. And we no longer feel comfortable doing the things that God has shown us not to do.

I can only imagine the sheer joy and elation felt by those first non-Jewish believers who received this life-altering revelation. Salvation was theirs through Christ.

Like the man who found hidden treasure, let us tell the world of the treasure we found.