

The Word of God we'll consider today is the 2nd Lesson from Ephesians chapter 3. Let's begin with prayer.

Grant us grace to see you, Lord, mirrored in your holy Word. May our lives and all we do imitate and honor you that we all like you may be at your great epiphany and may praise you, ever blest, God in man-made manifest. Amen.

When I was a kid, I loved watching the *Indiana Jones* movies starring Harrison Ford as the adventure seeking archaeologist who was always on the hunt for some ancient artifact. And I especially liked the first and third movie which had Dr. Jones squaring off with the Nazis who wanted to capture the same thing Indi was looking for. In the movies the Nazis wanted these items because of the prestige and even power they thought might come from possessing them. But Indi believed they belonged in a museum where everyone could enjoy them.

And it was fun watching these stories unfold as Indiana Jones searched for things that seemed beyond reach. But ya know what...? If those movies had ended with Indi *not finding* the lost ark... or *not finding* the holy grail... well... let's be honest... they probably wouldn't be very memorable or enjoyable to watch in the first place. When you are searching for the unsearchable... the fun is not just in searching... but in finding!

Today we are celebrating the church festival of Epiphany. That name comes from a Greek word that means to "shine upon" something so that it is revealed. It has the sense of something appearing that was once hidden. And not just today, but throughout the entire church season of Epiphany, we focus on the appearance of our Lord Jesus as the Savior for the world. And many of you are maybe thinking, "Well, duh pastor! Of course, Jesus is the Savior of the world, we all know that!" Well... you may know (now)... but when Jesus came into this world on the first Christmas most people had no idea, he was the Savior. This good news was hidden... it was a mystery... but just like in those *Indiana Jones* movies, this treasure was not meant to stay hidden.

In the Gospel reading today we saw a mysterious group of men, called Magi (or Wise Men), who had traveled from a distant land to search out the unsearchable treasure: the newborn King of Israel. And after being given direction from God's Word they traveled to Bethlehem where they found him and gave him gifts fit for a King as they bowed down and worshipped him.

And that leads us to our sermon text for today from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And if you're wondering what a letter written by a missionary to some Christians living in a Greek city (some sixty years after the visit of the Magi by the way) has to do with Epiphany... well... let's look again. This letter really reveals the mystery of God's grace that we see in the Epiphany story.

Paul begins our section by writing: **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 men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.**

And what exactly is this big reveal, Paul? What was the mystery that God has revealed in Christ? Well, Paul doesn't keep us in suspense. **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.**

This was an amazing act of God's grace! But maybe some of you are scratching your heads a bit... "What's the big deal? Isn't that how it's always been?" It might not seem like much of a plot twist to us today, but to the people hearing Paul's letter in the 1st Century this would have been a jaw dropping revelation. Through Christ, the Gentiles – that means the non-Jews – were called to faith and were considered God's people just like ancient Israel had been. It was no longer just the Jews, but all people, who could view themselves as God's chosen people!

But perhaps some of you remember that even in the Old Testament there were many Gentiles who believed in the coming Savior. That's true, but as time went on that became the exception, not the norm. And even

when they did believe, it was typically only because they had some association with a Jewish person who had brought them into the fold. And so, for many Israelites the popular view of the Gentiles was that they were just foreign sinners who would never really be equal to them when it came to being God's people.

But that was simply not true. In the Old Testament God had preserved the Jewish nation as his chosen people not because they were better than the rest of the world, or because he didn't care about the rest of the world... no! God had chosen them to share his Word with the world and be the nation who would preserve and protect the line of the Savior. But once that Savior came, so did the reminder that he came for all.

This is why we see not only Jewish shepherds worshipping Jesus on Christmas, but also now Gentile Magi visiting him not long after his birth. Jesus was the Savior of both Jew and Gentile. What an amazing act of God's grace! And what an amazing mystery revealed to these 1st Century believers! Salvation was not just for some people... it was for all who looked to Christ in faith. And this hidden truth was found by searching in the unsearchable riches of Christ. And when you search there, you find the same treasure uncovered: Jesus came for you. Through faith in Jesus, you are a part of God's chosen and dearly loved family. No matter your ethnic background... no matter where you grew up... how much money you make... how old... how young... no matter your past sins or present struggles... **YOU BELONG TO JESUS!**

But there is one other amazing act of God's grace that we see when we search the unsearchable riches of Christ. Not only does God call us to faith and into his family... he also calls sinners like us to share this amazing gift with others. Paul understood this amazing grace in his own life. He wrote: **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 God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable 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.**

Paul understood that it was a gift of God's grace that not only was he called to faith in Christ through the gospel, but he was now calling others to faith in Christ through that same gospel. The mystery had been revealed to him and now he had the privilege of revealing it to others!

Ya know, I suppose when we think of revealing mysteries that it isn't always a good thing. I remember once in high school I was going to see a movie with my girlfriend (who's now my wife) and a couple friends of ours. And on the way to the theater one of our friends told us the entire plot of the movie we were going to see. We kindly thought he was just joking around... but sure enough as we watched the movie everything he told us happened just the way he said it would. There were no plot twists... no surprise ending... the mystery had been totally spoiled. I was pretty annoyed at the time too! That's not what you're supposed to do is it!? If someone has never watched a movie or read a book and we tell them how the story ends we have ruined it for them.

But when it comes to the gospel... to the good news about Jesus as our Savior... the exact opposite is true. We would be spoiling things terribly for others if we didn't tell them about Jesus... especially for those who have never heard the amazing details and plot twists of Scripture.

And you know what those are. You know them because you search the unsearchable riches of Christ regularly here in God's house and often in your homes. When you read and hear God's Word, he peels back the curtain on the great mysteries of life and our relationship with him. He tells us who we are: sinful people who deserve death and hell for a lifetime of failure before him and to others. But best of all he tells us who he is... and what he's done to save us from our sin and the hell we deserve because of it.

He is the God who is holy and just while also being merciful and loving. He is the God who punished sin by taking the punishment himself. He is the God who suffered our hell and gave us the heaven he earned for us. He is our Savior who rose victoriously from the grave to destroy the power of death for all his people. Yes he is our Jesus... our Savior who came for all people on earth... and who called me to be a part of his family of faith... who washed in baptism... who feeds me in his holy Supper... who strengthens me with his unfailing forgiveness and sends me out to reveal these unsearchable riches to the people he's placed in my life. To reveal this wisdom of God to everyone as Paul said: **according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Friends, whether Jew or Gentile, man or woman, young or old... bow your heart before Jesus today with the Wise Men of old. And remember as Paul concludes in our sermon text, that: **In [Jesus] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.** Keep on approaching him throughout this year brothers and sisters. Never stop bringing your gifts to him. Never stop searching in his Word for the unsearchable riches he offers. And as you do marvel at the hidden gems of his love that he will reveal to you... and share them with others who could use some spiritual enrichment in 2026. Search the unsearchable riches of Christ my friends! And like the Magi you'll find that the true joy of searching comes in finding Christ who came to seek and find you. Amen.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Amen.