

Ephesians 3:1-13 | Manifold Wisdom on Display

Understand God’s purpose to unite all peoples in one body through the gospel to display his manifold wisdom through the church.

This week, Pastor Lenard focused our attention on God’s purpose to display his *manifold, various, multi-colored, multi-faceted* wisdom through the church. As God brings together Jews and Gentiles, peoples of differing ethnicities, backgrounds, classes, etc. into one church, God is displaying his infinitely wise plan for everyone, including angelic and demonic beings, to see. The Apostle Paul and the other Apostles had a unique role, as God revealed the “mystery of Christ” to them for all. Now, we each have a role in serving others and the advance of the gospel.

v. 1: Paul’s perspective on his imprisonment

1) Understand God’s revealed plan: to unite all peoples in one church (2-7)

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”

Genesis 12:3: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Isaiah 49:6: God promised his Servant, the Messiah: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Isaiah 19:23-25: “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

Romans 8:17: “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ”

2) Perceive God’s purpose: to display his manifold wisdom through the church (8-11)

1 Peter 4:10-11: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

3) Know our privilege: to confidently approach God in Christ (12)

Hebrews 4:14-16: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

v. 13: Paul’s perspective on his suffering

2 Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”

Questions (choose a few to discuss and apply):

- Have you thought about the church as displaying the manifold wisdom of God for all to see? How does this change your perspective about the church (and Bethel Community Church in particular)?
- When you face suffering, what is your attitude and response? How does Paul's perspective on his imprisonment and sufferings challenge you? What step(s) can you take to have this perspective the next time you face difficulties and suffering?
- What does it mean when Paul says what he does in v. 13? How can suffering lead to glory for others?
- What is the "mystery of Christ" that Paul discusses in v. 6? What significance do these truths have for you and for the church?
- How do we display God's manifold wisdom through our Gather, Grow, Practice, and Go pathway? What step can you take this week to proclaim the truth of Jesus or help grow mature disciples?
- Why is understanding God's purpose for the church important for growing as a disciple of Jesus? What can happen if you don't properly understand God's purpose for the church?
- Read v. 12 again. What is the privilege we have? How do we have this privilege? Why is this such an amazing privilege?
- What does v. 12 look like in your own life? What does it look like in the life of Bethel Community Church?