

Welcome and Introduction - Andrea Moises

Hello and welcome to our praise and worship service. May the grace, love, peace and joy of the Lord embrace you wherever you are. Today is the official beginning of spring here in the UK and it's so beautiful to see the flowers blossoming everywhere we go. It's also Newroz, which is New Year in the Persian world and in Kurdistan, where we used to live in the North of Iraq, so I would like to wish our friends a Happy Newroz with God's grace and protection. We have lovely memories of our trips to the mountains every year where we would spend the day having a picnic and enjoying the lovely spring weather with our friends. Speaking of mountains, there's a Kurdish proverb that says: "we have no friends, but the mountains" and that makes me remember of a Psalm 121 that says: ***"I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore."***

Let's pray...

Lord God, we want to exalt you and give you thanks for every single blessing in our lives, since the moment the sun rises till the moment it sets. Thank you for being our faithful Father and for providing all our needs, from the air we breathe to the food we eat. You indeed are our protection and comfort in times of trouble and we praise your name, worshipping you as our everlasting God. Take this time as a token of our love and adoration as we sing and praise you dear Lord, In Jesus' name, amen.

Song 1 – I Lift My Eyes Up (Psalm 121) Brian Doerksen

<https://youtu.be/ZqpHAIpuaF8> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*I lift my eyes up, to the mountains
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from You
Maker of heaven, Creator of the earth*

*Oh how I need you Lord
You are my only hope
You're my only prayer
So I will wait for you
To come and rescue me
Come and give me life*

Song 2 – King of My Heart – Bethel Music

https://youtu.be/MUyR069j_Ws Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

Let the King of my heart be the mountain where I run
The fountain I drink from, oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart be the shadow where I hide
The ransom for my life oh, He is my song

'Cause You are good, You are good, oh oh

And let the King of my heart be the wind inside my sails
The anchor in the waves oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart be the fire inside my veins
The echo of my days oh, He is my song

You're never gonna let me down

Message:

Series on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians – Ephesians 3:1-21
Immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine!

God's Eternal Purpose for Humanity

Introduction

We've been reading Paul's letter to the Ephesians and today we are going to be looking briefly at chapter 3. Last week we learned how the barrier of hostility and division was demolished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jews and Gentiles became one in Christ. The veil that used to separate us from the presence of God was torn from top to bottom. Jesus made a way possible for all humanity to come to the presence of God. Jesus' blood cleanses us from our sins reconciling us with God and with one another. Jesus is our peace! God's eternal purpose from the beginning was to reveal Himself to us and to save all humanity. His desire is that no one should perish but have eternal life. ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16*** And the church is made up of people from every tribe, language and nation. A diverse body, but united in Christ Jesus! The apostle Paul in Romans 1:16 says: ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”***

Let us read **Ephesians 3:1-21**

1 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. 14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

I – Prisoner of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

“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, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.” Ephesians 3:8-9

Paul writes from jail and the reason of his imprisonment is for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which radically transformed his life. He had a powerful encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus. Paul was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of Judaism. He persecuted the church, ravaging against the believers in Jesus dragging them from house to house and putting them in jail. However we read in Acts 9 about his conversion. What a shift of events in his life! From someone who was radically against Jesus to someone radically in love with Jesus and ready to die for the cause of the Gospel. Jesus had saved him by His grace and had set him apart to preach the Gospel among the nations. The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the church was a mystery hidden from many of the Jewish and religious leaders of his time and even today the majority of the Jewish people still don't believe in Jesus as their Messiah. The mystery has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. **“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.” v.6** From both Jew and Gentile God created a new family. **“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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:10-12** If we think about the city of Ephesus, which was under the Roman Empire as well under spiritual powers of darkness that was operating through the unseen world. Paul was reminding them that Jesus Christ is Lord! Lord above all powers of the seeing or unseeing world. He is the King above all kings and His name is above all names. He was above and superior in power and majesty compared to goddess Artemis, the Diana of Ephesians. The believers in Ephesus had been set free by power of the Lord. In Jesus, they had received a new identity and as children of God, they were now seated above with

Jesus! Paul was set free, the Ephesians was set free and we can also be set free by the power of the Lord. Let's then approach God with freedom and confidence.

II – Praying for Inner Power and Strength

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Ephesians 3:16-17a Paul now finds himself on his knees pleading to the Father in a position of humility and dependence for the people he loved dearly. ***“For this reason I kneel before the Father,” v.14*** In a secular world, our biggest problem today is our independent thinking and self sufficiency. We often think we can go on with our lives without God. When was the last time you prayed a prayer like this? I am not a naturally gifted preacher, but one thing I have been doing since coming to serve here at Buckminster Road is praying. I am in constant prayer for you. Just as Paul prayed that according to His ***“glorious riches”***, the God, who is the creator of everything, the ruler of the universe, may be strengthening you with His power in your inner being. This is the prayer we should be praying for one another in our church. Not a prayer for so and so to stop drinking, or to stop smoking, or for that lady to stop gossiping, or for those young people to stop going after the wrong things. But pray that may we all have a powerful encounter with Jesus, so that Jesus can dwell in our hearts as Lord and that our lives would be filled with the Holy Spirit. ***“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Ezekiel 36:26-27*** There was a prophet in the Bible, in the Old Testament called Ezekiel that was taken by God, through a vision, to the middle of a valley full of dry bones. In that valley God asked the prophet ***“Son of man, can these bones live?”*** God commanded him to prophesy over the dry bones and he did. And after a loud noise and shaking, the bones came together, bone by bone and skin and flesh covered them. Then God breathed on them and they became alive. God has power to bring the dead to life and he wants to breathe His Holy Spirit in us again. We don't have much time to play off being good Christians or religious people. He wants to come in with His power and dwell with all His fullness in our hearts. Often in our Christian culture we are led by activities and we think if we can get our son or daughter to go to this youth group every week. Or if we can stop them going out with the wrong crowd or if we could make them participate in all our church meetings we would be able to protect and keep them close to Jesus. Unless our children experience the Power of the Holy Spirit, through their own experience, and opening their hearts to Jesus, all our human efforts will fail. The Holy Spirit is the only one that can change people's hearts so we should pray like the apostle Paul for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit again in our church, in our city, in our nation and in the whole world ***“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Ephesians 3:16-17a***

III – Rooted and Established in Love

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:17a-19 Many of our activities in our churches today are organized in a way that may seem to keep us all busy in the church so we all don't go astray and end up losing our walk with the Lord. But from the moment those activities are no longer happening, for example

now during lock down, we may be tempted to fall back to our old way of life before we met Jesus. Or if we think of our youth, they're even more susceptible to stop following the Lord all together, because of so many other temptations and worldly opportunities. Why does this happen? It happens because the things of the Lord never took root in the heart, never touched deep inside. It was only a life of performing religious duties and rituals. Paul prays that we may experience the fullness of God in our lives in such a way that we won't ever consider living our lives without Jesus being the center. May we be rooted and grounded/established in God's love and that Jesus becomes everything for us. May we be strong and steady like a tall tree, rooted in God's love, so that when troubles and temptations come on our way we will be able to make the right choices for our lives, not giving in to sin. My sincere prayer for you today is **"...that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."** **V19b** How do you want people to know you? How would someone describe you? Would they describe you as someone who is filled with the fullness of God? I don't want people to know me only by the things I do or by the titles I carry (a pastor, a coach, a teacher). No, not at all! My primary goal is that people would know me because of my love and devotion for Jesus. Someone, who has been deeply rooted in the love of God. The primitive church endured all kinds of hardship and persecution because they understood how wide and long and how high and deep is the love of God for them. Finally the apostle Paul finishes this section beautifully praising God for His unsearchable wisdom and glory and He says: **"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."** **Ephesians 3:20-21**

Conclusion

Just like Paul had a powerful encounter with Jesus, which radically changed his life, my prayer is that you may also, my dear friends, experience His power in your own lives and be transformed daily into Christ likeness. May we as church be filled with the fullness of God and experience His Holy Spirit; strengthening us within, making us alive to walk in His freedom and glorifying Jesus in every action and word we say. May we all be rooted and established in His love.

Let's pray...

Dear heavenly Father, forgive us from our independent spirit and make us more dependent on you. Protect us from empty performances and religious traditions. Lord we want you to dwell in our hearts and we want to experience the power of your Holy Spirit. Lord we thank you for saving us and for revealing how deep your love is for us. God forgive us for settling for so much less than the fullness of your glory. Open our eyes and strengthen our inner beings so that we may fall in love with you all over again and be ready to give it all to you. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen

Song 3 – One Thing Remains – Jesus Culture

https://youtu.be/OKv7n_mvZTc Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

Higher than the mountains that I face
Stronger than the power of the grave
Constant through the trial and the change
One thing remains, yes, one thing remains

Your love never fails
It never gives up
It never runs out on me

Because on and on, and on, and on it goes
For it overwhelms and satisfies my soul
And I never, ever, have to be afraid
One thing remains, yes, one thing remains

In death, in life
I'm confident and covered by
The power of your great love
My debt is paid
There's nothing that can separate
My heart from your great love

Oh, on and on
Your love goes on and on

Final Words and Announcements

We are going to meet again in our church building on Good Friday, 2nd of April for an early evening service, starting at 6:30pm. For Easter Sunday we are now meeting at the normal time at 10:45 as we won't be baptizing Richard on this service. He had asked me to postpone his baptism. Please if you haven't booked a seat yet, please send me a text or email as we have the restriction on social distancing and our capacity is only 30 people inside the building. On Sunday, 11th of April, 10:45 is my commissioning service and Dr. Nick Ashton from the East Midlands Baptist Association will be visiting us and leading the service. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are coming as we have 10 or more friends wanting to come and visit for this event. We are planning to continue recording our services and it will be available for you to watch also on our YouTube channel and on our new website. There are zoom meetings happening for the adults and for the youth every Wednesday at 7:30pm. Sandy and Andrea are also meeting with the children at 7pm. Gifts and tithes can be sent directly to the church's bank account and the details are as follow: A D L Memorial Buckminster – Account Number: 13749406 Sort Code: 09-01-51

Let me finish by praying over you all this blessing

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.”

Have a blessed week!