

**The Gospel**  
**The Mystery of Christ**  
1 Timothy 3:14-16

December 9, 2018 a.m.

HDBC

**In the Christmas classic, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, Charlie Brown becomes discouraged and frustrated by all the stresses that come with trying to please everyone at Christmas. At one point he laments . . . *Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?***

Linus responds, *Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about.*

He then proceeds to quote the Christmas story from Luke's gospel. After finishing, he walked off the stage back to Charlie Brown and said . . .

***That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.***

**Charles Schultz**, the writer, understood that if you want to get to the heart of Christmas you have to go to Jesus. The good news of Christmas is not that we receive gifts but that we have been given a **gift**, and His name is Jesus.

**The good news** of Christmas is that Jesus came for us. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. That includes every one of us. The New Testament has a word for this **good news** . . . **The Gospel**.

Christmas is about **The Gospel**, the good news that salvation is offered through Christ. So, this year for our Christmas sermon series we are looking intently at the person of Jesus.

**This morning** I want us to consider a passage that I have never preached at Christmas. In fact, I've never preached on this passage. But, it offers a rich and unique description of Jesus. It is found in **1 Timothy 3:14-16**. The focus will be verse 16, but we always want to understand Scripture in its context.

## 1. The Importance of the Church (14-15)

I love this little portion of Scripture. In it we see the intimate relationship that Paul had with Timothy. They were not simply colleagues in ministry but were close friends. **Passages like this** remind us that God's Word is for real people who live real lives and who experience the same struggles that we do.

**In verse 15** Paul stated his reason for writing to Timothy. He wants him to know how to conduct himself, in leading the church at Ephesus. He preferred to come and share in person, but was not sure that he would make it. So, He wrote. In writing, he shared a powerful statement about the church.

**Three** descriptive phrases that remind us of the importance of the church.

### 1) **We are the expression of God's family** *The household of God*

The church is a family, His family. We are His children and are the recipients of His unconditional love. We are not simply an organization of like-minded people. We are woven into a forever family. We are not an organization, institution or society. We are family! Families love each other, support each other, encourage each other.

### 2) **We are the dwelling place of God's presence**

*The church of the living God*

**This phrase** speaks of a group of people who have gathered together to experience presence of God. Church is where God primarily chooses to reveal His presence. In the O.T. that would have been the temple. Though God was and always will be omnipresent, He chose a particular meeting place for the people to come sense His presence.

**When you get the N.T.** that changed. There is no special building dedicated as a place to meet God. He dwells in and with His people. 2 Cor. 6:16 *For we are the sanctuary of the living God.* Eph. 2:22 *You also are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.*

**We are** the dwelling place for the living God! The church, the gathering of believers is where God chooses to manifest His presence. **Think about how significant this makes our weekly gatherings for worship.** When we meet as the church for worship, we are inviting the manifestation of God to be among us in a unique way.

**3) We are guardians of God's Word**      *The pillar and support of truth*

Timothy would have read this phrase and thought of the massive pillars used to hold the roof over the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus where he lived. There were 127 pillars soaring 60 feet high supporting a roof that was sixty percent larger than a football field. the church is the support structure for divine truth. We guard it, teach it and practice it.

**Don't every** underestimate the importance of the church. We are . . .

The expression of God's family

The dwelling place of God's presence

The guardians of God's word.

This brings us then to verse 16 and Paul's description of Christ.

**2. The Mystery of Christ (16)**

This is more than simply a description of Christ. These phrases were phrases in a song that was used in worship. Notice the introduction . . .

*By common confession*

The truth about Jesus revealed in this verse was embrace by all true believers and was a source of unity for all Christians. These are things we all affirm. They draw us together.

*Great is the mystery of godliness*

There is a mystery to godliness. It is not easily acquired in terms of practical living. But, Paul offers the key. Look to Jesus, who is the embodiment of godliness. If you want to live godly lives, you need to focus more and more of your attention of knowing Him. Paul then offered six statements about Jesus.

### 1) Revealed in the Flesh

This is a simple statement referencing the incarnation. Jesus appeared in the flesh because he became flesh. He looked like one of us because He became one of us. He never ceased to be God, but he became fully one of us. He demonstrated how do live godly, by living godly as one of us.

### 2) Vindicated in the Spirit

Vindicated is an interesting word. It means ***shown to be righteous***. Throughout most of His adult life and ministry, Jesus was not simply misunderstood, but he was considered to be anything but righteous. Some thought he was **deceptive**. Others thought he was **crazy**. Still others thought he was **misguided**. Very few believed he was who he said he was. But, on a number of occasions his true character and nature were revealed by the Holy Spirit.

**At his baptism** the Holy Spirit came down upon him, affirming that he was indeed the Son of God. The ultimate act of affirmation that He was the Son of God happened **at the resurrection**.

**Romans 1:4** says *He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.*

**Romans 8:11** confirms the Spirit's role in the resurrection. *And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.*

The same Holy Spirit who lives in you, was instrumental in the resurrection of Jesus, proving that He was the Son of God.

### 3) Seen by Angels

Throughout his earthly life Jesus was observed by angels. They were curious and interested in the mission of Christ. And there were times when they were involved in a supporting role to His mission.

They saw Him as a **baby in Bethlehem** and announced His arrival.  
They ministered to Him **after his temptations** in the wilderness.  
They announced **his resurrection** to the ladies who came to the tomb.  
They were there **when He ascended** back to Heaven.

#### 4) **Proclaimed among the Nations**

The work and ministry of Jesus was observed not just by the people of Israel, but even by Gentiles. He interacted not only with Jews, but with Gentiles while he was on this earth. His reputation spread beyond the borders of Israel even while He was still on this earth prior to His death.

**This also refers** to the work of sharing the story of Jesus around the world. That was the commission that he gave his disciples and it is the commission we still have today.

#### 5) **Believed on in the World**

This does not mean everyone believes in him, but that some in every part of the world are believers. God never intended to save only people among the Jews, but has always had a heart to save people from every region of the world. The gospel is for the world, not just Israel then and not just for America, now.

#### 6) **Taken up in Glory**

He was taken up in glory when he ascended to heaven while his disciples looked on. He is reigning at the right hand of the father, as we saw last week in the passage in Hebrews.

These six statements offer a summary of the earthly ministry of Jesus.

Revealed in the flesh	Birth of Christ
Vindicated in the Spirit	Baptism, Miracles, Resurrection
Seen by angels	Birth, Temptation, Resurrection, Ascension
Proclaimed among the nations	Worldwide spread of the gospel
Believed on in the world	Results of the spread of the gospel
Taken up to glory	Ascension back into heaven

**In this passage we learn** that the church is a family. And, as this family gathers weekly to worship God we He chooses to reveal His presence by speaking to us through His word and whispering to our spirits through His Holy Spirit.

**In this passage we** part of the mystery of Christ is revealed. He is . . . the powerful, divine Son of God who came to rescue sinners. He lived and died, then rose again that He might adopt us into His family.

**The mystery of Christ** is that He loved us so much that He was willing to do all of these things in order to bring us into His family. The incarnation, baptism, temptation, death and resurrection, worldwide spread of His name were all designed that we would believe on Him. Because we have believed on Him, we will one day live with Him in Heaven, where he was taken up in glory at the end of His earthly ministry.

**The mystery of Christmas revealed in Christ.**

**Charlie Brown asked . . .**

*Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?*

**Long before** Linus answer the question, on a CBS TV special, Paul did.

**It's all about Jesus. Jesus, who came to save us, in order that we might one day live forever in heaven with him.**

*That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.*