

Lance Kramer's CP Raz Sermon Notes
Sunday, June 9, 2024
"A Seat at The Great Kingdom Table of Grace"

21 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth,"^[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:1-3

Perhaps the greatest verse in the Bible. It displays God's final intent for mankind: For God's People, to be in God's Place and in God's presence. If you're a mom or a dad, this desire to be with those you created is wired into us, to have every single one of our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren under one roof.

Jesus said it in Matthew 23:37: ³⁷ **"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.**

Now for a Scripture in the letter to the Ephesians chapter 1: ³ **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he^[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship^[a] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. Ephesians 1:3-6**

In Genesis 1 and 2, God shares His Original Intent: for God's People to be in God's place and in God's presence; however, in Genesis 3 man chose autonomy over God's sovereignty.

Ever since the great sin in Genesis 3, God has instituted His great rescue plan for ALL of creation.

Through the covenant with ONE MAN, Noah, He's promised never to destroy the world with a flood.

In the unconditional covenant with Abraham's Family, He's promised to establish a land and a lineage from which His family will be blessed.

In the conditional covenant with Moses He's established a nation who will experience His Presence: the tabernacle.

In the covenant with David He's established a descendant of David who will reign on the throne over the People of God.

In the New Covenant He promised the forgiveness of sin, the internal renewal of the heart, and the intimate knowledge of God.

Being the Great Father He is, He's kept His promises one by one.

POINT #1: God's Final Intent was His Original Intent: for God's people to be in God's place, and in God's presence.

And now with that background, let's begin with the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus.

3 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.

What is this mystery God revealed to Paul?

Let's continue. ***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. Ephesians 3:4-6***

You see other apostles and prophets in the Old Testament wrote about this great mystery, but the mystery wasn't quite clear to them. It's like they had a 1500-piece puzzle of Jesus but only had the outside pieces.

God said to Abraham in Genesis 12: 2-3,

**² "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;**

**I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^[a]**

**³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."^[a]**

This last phrase, "...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" eludes to the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's Kingdom.

Much of the four Gospels contains accounts of Jewish refusal and Gentile inclusion. We see this in:

---the parable of the prodigal son, the sower, the mustard seed, the weeds, the net, etc.

We see Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners, we hear stories of the Samaritan woman (a Gentile like you and me), of the Roman centurion's son getting healed, the good Samaritan, etc. In fact, when Jesus says, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first," meant that the Jews, who were the first to hear the Gospel would be the last to come into the Kingdom, and the last to hear the Gospel, the Gentiles, would be the first ones in.

Notice the words in Paul's last sentence there, "...Gentiles are HEIRS together with Israel, MEMBERS together of one body, SHARERS together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

This is the great mystery within the Gospel, that anyone who believes in Christ are heirs, members, sharers in the promise, not just the Jews.

POINT #2: Jesus' love knows no geographic barriers, no gender barriers, no religious, cultural, social, or political barriers. He is radically inclusive.

Paul then goes on with Ephesians 3:8-11

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.

Isn't that neat? "...through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known.." "Church" in Greek is "ekklesia" which means, "called out ones". When we look at the church today, it's perhaps one of the most diverse groups in the world.

When you have a group of hikers, they're most likely "hiker type people", right? Not much diversity. Most of them wear Patagonia, they have big back packs with the little hoses they can drink water from. They wear wool socks and haven't washed their hair in days.

Same can be true for sports fan groups, carpenter's unions, teachers, etc. But the church; however, includes Gentiles and Jews who are hikers, sports fans, carpenters, teachers, etc. When others in the world see the church, they see that diversity and they also see the "manifold wisdom of the God of radical inclusion".

¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:12

When Jesus died on the cross, the great veil that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, signifying 100% access to God.

Some people think Jesus is the finish line in this Christian life, but He's not. He's the way to the finish line which is peace and unity with God. Jesus said in **John 14:6, ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

In John 10:9, He says, **⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.^[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture.**

Getting away from the whole Jew/Gentile topic, Paul then moves into his application.

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.

So Paul prays for strength and power for the Christians in Ephesus to grasp how HUGE God's love is and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.

It's interesting to me that there's really no rebuke by Paul to the church in Ephesus. Unlike the letters to the Corinthians, Galatians, etc. To the church in Ephesus he wants them to use their strength and power to KNOW.

Remember, the city of Ephesus was a major city, second only to Rome. It was a major trade center, had great statues and monuments like the Temple of Artemis, the Celsus Library, the lecture hall of Tyrannus that Paul taught from for two years.

"Knowledge" and gaining knowledge was a big thing in ancient Ephesus. It's no wonder that Paul wanted the Christians in Ephesus to, "...know the love that surpasses knowledge."

POINT #3: The more we know, the more we grow.

Now, to end, 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, for ever and ever! Amen.***
Ephesians 3:20-21

Often times as human beings we know we have limits. Physical limits, mental, emotional, etc. But we often forget that God has NO limits! Like we think of incurable cancer or something as hard or impossible for God, when really to Him it's just as easy as curing the common cold. If it's His will, there's nothing He cannot do.

Paul knows the struggle of the Christians in Ephesus, that there may be disagreements between the Jews and Gentiles in the church, and that because they're so intellectual, they may limit themselves in the way they think.

Chapter 3 addresses these concerns and wants them to know that with God's power, they may have a higher knowledge, a knowledge of God's manifold wisdom, and with that love each other as Christ loves them.

Pastor's Challenge: Know more, Grow more, Love more.