

God's Amazing Plan - Josh Soehner
Ephesians 3:7-13

2 years ago, my wife Johanna and I rode for the first time in the back seat of a Tesla while we were on a trip in San Francisco. It was pretty amazing! The car was elegant, luxurious, fully electric, and powerful. And for about 45 minutes as passengers we were able to enjoy the brilliance of the vehicle during our drive. Generally, the mastermind behind anything amazing will have first started out with a plan. 14 years ago, CEO, Elon Musk publicly revealed on the internet what his "secret master plan" was for Tesla Motors to create and sell effective electric cars to the masses.

1. Build an expensive premium sports car that most can't buy
2. Use that money to build an affordable car
3. Use that money to build an even more affordable car
4. While doing above, also provide zero emission electric power generation options

It should not be surprising to us to know that the God of the Universe, the God who created all things, the God of wisdom and order, has his own master plan. His plan was also a secret and has now been revealed. What is really amazing about his revealed plan is that we the Church are at the very center of it.

By way of quick recap, over the past few weeks, as we've worked our way through Ephesians, Paul has been slowly revealing more and more of what God's plan for the ages is. Numerous times now, Paul has spoken of this plan as a mystery, because it was formerly a secret. Today we reach the climax of this mystery, and we see what the desired purpose of God's plan is. God's plan, from what we've already seen in Ephesian is that Jesus Christ through the gospel has created a new entity, a New Creation, the Body of Christ, comprised of Jews and Gentiles. God's amazing plan is that through the

gospel, Christ would redeem sinners from all backgrounds of life and build a spiritual temple, the very dwelling place of God Himself in Spirit, where united together we glorify God as one body the Church.

Our text today continues in this same theme. There are many who think these verses collectively (3:1-13), are the most important in all of Ephesians. Summarizing, one commentator, he called Ephesians chapter 3 the apex of the Church revealed in the New Testament. The scripture verses today talk about mysteries, cosmic plans, and God's eternal purpose that has been hidden for ages are all found in our text today. As we discuss these things deep things of God, just as Johanna and I were awe-struck as passengers by the beauty of Elon Musk's master plan come to life – Tesla - my goal this morning is that we would all be captivated by God's Amazing Plan which is centered in Christ and His Church.

The main burden and idea of the message today is being Amazed with God's Plan. There are 2 key points from our text today. The proclaimer of God's Amazing Plan, and the purpose of God's Amazing Plan?

The proclaimer of God's Plan. Who is the proclaimer? It is Paul a minister of the gospel. Look with me at v7. ***Eph 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.*** Last week we saw that Paul identified himself as a prisoner and a steward. Now, Paul identifies as a minister, specifically a minister of the gospel. The word minister carries the meaning of a servant, or an attendant. Think of a waiter at Churchill's steakhouse that serves you up an amazing medium-rare 8 oz fillet, Oscar style on behalf of the master chef for your enjoyment. Paul, as a minister intends to serve up the wonderful gospel to his audience on behalf of his Lord. In God's administration he uses others to carry out his plans. God chose Paul to make him a minister of "this gospel", and "this gospel" in context, is the good news of what Christ has done to make Jew and Gentile the very body of Christ, the Church.

And God didn't choose just anybody to be his minister, he specifically chose Paul who identifies himself as the least of the all the saints. Look at v7-8b ***Eph 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8b To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given,...*** .

We might think, "Paul your displaying insincere piety here". But remember before Paul was a Christian, he was also a man on a mission. His plan was to destroy the newly formed church. Paul was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church (the body of Christ). When Paul was on the road to Damascus the voice of Jesus that spoke to him said Saul, why are you persecuting me. ***Acts 9:5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*** Jesus didn't say to him Saul why are you persecuting the church. It's because the persecution of Christ's body the church, is the same as persecuting the Head, Jesus Christ. If ever there was a gift of grace to a person, it is seen in the life of the Apostle Paul. God saved Paul right in the middle of his plan to destroy the church. Then God made Paul a minister of the gospel according to grace, so that he might proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and help build the very church he intended to destroy. How amazing are God's plans?

What specifically was Paul called to proclaim? He was called to proclaim to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Look with me at v8. ***Eph 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*** Part of God's master plan was to make Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. Here in v8 Paul qualifies his mission to the Gentiles and says - to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. The word unsearchable in the original means, "past finding out". Who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done for sinners is beyond comprehension. Paul is saying there is no possible end to the riches of Christ. What exactly comprises the unsearchable

riches of Christ? One need not leave the letter to the Ephesians to see what the unsearchable riches of Christ are.

Chapter 1:

- God the Father has predestined to adopt us to Himself as sons **through Jesus Christ**
- **In Christ** we have redemption and forgiveness of our sins through His blood
- **In Christ** we have obtained an eternal inheritance
- When we heard the gospel of truth and believed **in Christ**, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit who is our guarantee of salvation.

Chapter 2:

- When we were dead in our sins, as children of wrath, fully carrying out the desires and passions of our flesh, by the grace of God He saved us **in Christ**
- We have been raised up **with Christ** (from death) and are seated with him in the heavenlies
- The immeasurable riches of grace in kindness from God are now shown to us **in Christ Jesus**
- We are God's perfect workmanship (trophies of grace) created **in Christ Jesus** for good works.
- We Gentiles have been included in the very promises of God through the gospel of **Jesus Christ**

The next time you find discontentment in your heart, or depression and despair lurking in your soul because you are tired of the same sin patterns that you just can't break, or loneliness sets in that comes with being single, or mom's your struggling emotionally because your children are wearing down your patience, or you are just generally struggling to find purpose and meaning in your life, I encourage you to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to yourself. Mine the depths of these unsearchable riches. You will never come to an ending point. Let them be as spiritual food for your soul. Then go and bless someone else by telling them how Christ has been rich for you. It's a guaranteed remedy.

Paul was called to proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. What else was Paul called to proclaim. He was called to proclaim to everyone God's mystery plan. Look with me at v9. ***Eph 3:9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things.*** Paul was called to reveal to everyone, what the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God was. What that means is that part of Paul's mission was to illuminate for everyone God's eternal plan. This eternal plan that is referenced as a "**mystery hidden for ages**", has always existed but was previously unknown. Paul was commissioned to shed light on what was unseen in ages past.

Unless you were in the Navy, I'm guessing you have not ridden in a submarine. However, you can book a trip on the Idabel sub. The Idabel is a custom-built submersible that has 9 panoramic windows allowing three people to go to depths of 3000 feet. But when you get to the bottom you wouldn't see much if it weren't for the 11 powerful lights that illuminate the ocean floor. When the lights are on what can be seen is a diversity of sea life that is almost beyond human comprehension. That indescribable view has always been there it just requires light to reveal it.

By the working of God's power, he gave the gift of grace to Paul to bring to light for everyone to see what has always been hidden in the heart of God. Paul had the mission to proclaim that in eternity past, God devised a plan to choose people throughout history, to save and join them together in one body the Church, as co-heirs and partakers of the riches of Christ. Just like Paul, we also have the privilege to be proclaimers of this gospel. Every Christian, not just Paul, is called to be an evangelist of the gospel. We have the privilege to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to a lost and dying world. Don't think that you need to be an apologist to be an evangelist. Neither do you need to be capable of clearly articulating the ontological argument in support of the existence of God. If you don't know where to start, preach how Christ is rich to you.

Now because God has revealed to us his hidden plan through the written word, we can proclaim to others that there is a place on earth where through the saving power of Jesus Christ, people of all walks of life can find true unity with diversity and that place is the church. The church is the spiritual temple, the very house of God comprised of people called living stones, with Christ as the cornerstone. It's good to be reminded that the church is not a building. We often refer to the building as the church. GCF is about to build a meeting place 2 miles north where the church can gather. The church is the spiritual temple, the very dwelling place of God comprised of people called living stones, with Christ as the cornerstone. (Eph 2)

We live in a time where the combination of Unity and Diversity are being shouted from rooftops. Yet in many ways as a nation, we are more divided than ever. People are longing to find acceptance, value, and self-worth in their own sinful, fallen identity. People are looking to movements and politicians for solutions. News Alert! This type of unity and inclusion that the world is seeking for will never be found or truly achieved by politicians, governments, or any other secular groups. There is only one place that real diverse unity is found, and it's found in the church - the mystery of Christ. True diverse unity is found only in this new creation. ***Col 3:10-11 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all (NKJV).*** Christ is how we relate to each other in the church. He is our commonality. Christ is how a country farmer and city executive can have real fellowship and relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ. It's how black and white and people of any ethnicity and race can be one, because we are all one in Christ, and this is God's unfolding plan of redemption now revealed to us.

Paul is illuminating for everyone that for all eternity, God purposed to send Jesus his son to die and suffer for people that hate him and hate each other. And to then reconcile them to himself as his very own dwelling place through the gospel. What an amazing plan of God (it's not what my plan would be).

Paul was called to proclaim this amazing plan to both the Gentiles and to everyone. Our first point was to look at the Proclaimer of God's amazing plan. Our second point is to explore the purpose of God's amazing plan. What is the purpose of God's amazing plan? The text tells us it's so that God's wisdom would be known through the church.

Look with me at v7-10 Eph 7-10. ***7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of***

all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

The purpose of God's plan, according to our text is that the manifold wisdom of God would be made known through the Church – specifically to the angelic realm. That is both profound and astonishing. God's vehicle in displaying his infinite and diverse wisdom, is perceived by the unseen world, through the Church. The word manifold means multi-faceted and it's the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "many-colored" coat or robe that Jacob made for his son Joseph. God's wisdom is beautiful, assorted, layered. His wisdom is beyond any level of human wisdom conceivable. God chose to display his manifold wisdom not just individually through you and I, but collectively through his church.

Commentators have differing views on the exact nature of this angelic audience. The audience is likely comprised of both good and evil angels with the emphasis being on the evil or demonic realm. This mystery was hidden even from the good angels. 1 Peter 1:12 tells us that angels long to look into the mystery of salvation. But the emphasis of audience here in Eph 3 seems to be focused on the demonic realm. Notice Paul's language when he describes them as rulers and authorities. This is the same language Paul uses to describe fallen angels and demons both earlier in Col 2 and later in Eph 6. More on this in a minute.

What is the purpose of God's mystery plan? It is to display his wisdom to the angelic realm. How was the purpose of God's plan accomplished? It was accomplished through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Look with me at v 10-11 ***Eph 3:10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

God's amazing plan that he purposed in eternity past – to display his wisdom to the heavenly rulers and authorities, was realized and carried out in the person and work of Christ Jesus our Lord. God the Father planned it in Eternity past, and God the Son both accomplished it and has been carrying it out throughout history with the help of God the Spirit. In God amazing wisdom his plan was executed literally through the execution of His Son Jesus.

Satan, being a creature filled with pride thinking he is more wise than God, crept into the garden of Eden as a crafty serpent, to deceive God's creation, mankind, who is made in the very image and likeness of God Himself. But because God's wisdom is so much greater He had already devised a plan to glorify himself in Eternity past not just through his original creation of man, but through his new creation, the church, which came about by Satan's deception. After Adam sinned and fell short of the glory of God, the Lord prophesied to Satan that one day a man would be born and his heel would be bruised, but this man would crush the serpents head. Plainly that is Jesus as a divine man would accomplish God's plan by destroying Satan and the power of sin through his own death on the cross and would lead many sons to glory. Paul says in Colossians says in ***2:15 "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him"***.

Just when Satan and his realm thought they got the best of God, Jesus disarmed them and put them to open shame and triumphed over them on the cross. In God's wisdom he flipped the script on Satan and his demons. I love the song that we sing, Jesus, Thank You. In the first verse opens with "the mystery of the cross I cannot comprehend." Only an infinitely wise God could create such an amazing plan. It's the multi-faceted wisdom of God that devised this plan from eternity past, then was realized in the Son of God, and is now displayed through the Church. The purpose of God's plan is that the church

would proclaim to God's enemies his glorious wisdom and this was realized in the man Jesus Christ.

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God...who has known the mind of the Lord!" Rom 11:33

We see in Eph 3 that the gospel is not void of the church. The gospel includes Christ and the Church. It's "this gospel" as Paul refers to it, that he was commissioned to proclaim. Fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, Eph 3 clearly shows us the biblical centrality of the church. It shows us the importance of the church on a universal level because it has been in the heart of God for all eternity. What does that mean for us today? For starters, it means that the church is central to Christian living. It means that the church is essential to our everyday lives. It means that gathering as the church is worth risking death whether for a pandemic or persecution.

All too sadly in my short days as a Christian, I can call to memory many times I have met people that claim Christianity. Yet, when I ask in the conversation what church do they attend, often I get the answer that they no longer go anymore for such and such reasons. That is dangerous thinking! People have constructed their own version of Christianity that is void of the gathered Church. That is not biblical Christianity. That is not the Christianity found in our Bibles like in Eph 3. The church as the body of Christ is not something that we join today and then is disbanded in the future. The church is important because it continues on as the spiritual temple of God throughout eternity.

John Stott in his commentary on Ephesians says (pg 127) in reference to the Church being at the center of God's Plan states the following. "For God is at work, moving from a plan conceived in eternity, through a historical outworking and disclosure, to a climax within history, and then beyond it to another eternity of the future". What Stott is saying is that God's eternal purpose which involves the church, is now being worked out in history, and this divine plan belongs to both history and to eternity. Look with me at Rev 21.

Rev 21: 1-3 and 9-11

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

The bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the New Jerusalem, they are all the same synonyms for the church of God. It's God's plan from eternity past, worked out in history, and will be for all eternity. The Church will display the glory of God forever.

So, I ask you today, to prioritize the church carefully and purposefully in your life. It shouldn't be 10th on your list, and it shouldn't be 5th on your list. It should be at the top of your priorities. What does it mean to prioritize the church? Primarily it means to come regularly and often on Sunday mornings and to gather and worship with the saints on the Lord's day. It means to invite others to church with you. Then, also be involved in the life of the church beyond just Sunday morning. Join a homegroup, join a discipleship group, serve on one of our ministry teams. If you are an occasional attendee, I exhort you with grace to invest your life in the apple of God's eye the church. It's at the center of his amazing plan. I'm not trying to be legalistic, but let's be real and not use legalism as an excuse as why not to prioritize the church in our lives.

Maybe you've had a bad experience with church. Maybe others have hurt you in the church. Maybe you've seen hypocrisy in the church. Sadly, yes that is and will be the case, and that has been many of our experiences in the past. The reason we can attest to this, is that we are sinners and often maybe even part of the problem. We are all hypocrites and offenders to some level. But thank God the church is not a social club for righteous perfect law keepers. No, instead the church is a hospital for

broken and wounded sinners like you and me. It's the place where we are no longer outsiders, homeless, excluded and far from God, but instead it's the place we are family, heirs and partakers of the same body and of the promises in Christ.

Now because Jesus accomplished God's plan, and we are part of his family the church, we can have bold and confident access to God. Look with me at verses 11-12. ***11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.***

Because of Jesus's work in accomplishing God's plan, we now have both boldness and access to God our Father, like we would a loving earthly father. The word boldness means "freedom of speech". If you are in Christ, because you are part of his family the church, you can have confidence to enter the very presence of God and speak freely with him and know that he will hear and listen to you. As a father of 4 boys, my sons have confidence that they can about at any time enter my presence and freely speak with me. It doesn't mean that I will always give them the answer they are seeking. Often it is not. What an amazing thing that we at any time can enter God's presence with boldness and have fellowship and communion with him because of what Jesus has done. The word tells us that through our faith in Christ we can have confidence when we approach God. That means we can have confidence when we approach him for things like healing from past church wounds, broken relationships, wayward children, etc. We can speak freely in his presence. Lord I'm hurting right now. Lord I've been wounded. Father, I've sinned again, help me break the bondage. We can confidently know that God will hear us forgive us of our sins if we ask him. And you can confidently ask God to give you a love for the church if you find it lacking in your hearts.

I hope you are amazed again at the gospel. I hope you are amazed with God's plan hidden from eternity that has now been revealed and is centered in Christ and his Church. Today we looked at looked at 2 main points. First the proclaimer of God's amazing plan, and the purpose of God's amazing

plan. Like Johanna and I were once passengers of a Tesla enjoying the beauty and wisdom of another person's master plan, the good news is that we are active passengers and participants at the very center of God's great plan and purpose for all things. We can find no greater purpose, calling, meaning, and contentment in life than to be part of what God is doing in history with his Church. The world despises the church. It would love for nothing more than to dismantle and destroy it. But in God's wisdom He chose the church to glorify himself through her. Paul says in **1 Cor 1:20**, "**Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?**" God has chosen the church to display his manifold wisdom to the rulers and authorities. The church is God's masterpiece realized in Christ. Therefore, we should be people most committed to a dynamic church life because we see the importance and the value of it to God. Serve the church, prioritize it, and be a faithful member of it.

In closing, listen to a quote from a sermon given by Charles Spurgeon titled [The Best Donation](#).
"Give yourself to the Church. You that are members of the Church have not found it perfect and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not. If I had never joined a Church till I had found one that was perfect, I would never have joined one at all! And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect Church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us..."