

Your True Colors Shining Through

On Sunday we continued our sermon series on the book of Ephesians by focusing on the third chapter, which talks about sharing the message Jesus entrusted to us.

1. Warm up question. What's something that excites you so much, you seize every opportunity to talk about it?
2. The Apostle Paul was so excited about the message of Jesus, he seized every opportunity to talk about it. In Ephesians 2 (last week's passage), Paul summarized his understanding of Jesus' message – that we are saved by grace, i.e., God's unconditional lovingkindness, not by religion as rule keeping. As a result, Paul also came to realize that, by definition, grace is for everyone, not just the Jewish people. This concept of universal grace was so exciting to Paul, he wanted to share it with everyone. For insight into Paul's perspective, read Ephesians 3:1-13.
 - a. As you read through this passage, what word or phrase grabbed your attention – and why?
 - b. As best you understand, what is the mystery Paul refers to in this passage?
 - c. Why was the mystery not revealed until the time of Christ? What took so long?
 - d. In this passage Paul envisions himself as part of a great movement with a great message that has the power to break down barriers that have long divided humanity. Jeff compared the spirit of Paul's vision to that of the iconic 1971 Coke commercial, "I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing." Why do you think that Coke commercial was so compelling?
 - e. Do you feel like you're part of a great movement that has a great message? In your view, what's that message? How would you summarize it?
3. Read Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:3-11.
 - a. As a follower of Jesus, do you feel you have a responsibility to share your faith?
 - b. Have you ever shared your faith with someone? Was it a good or bad experience?
 - c. Has someone ever shared his/her faith with you? Was it a good or bad experience?
 - d. What do you think is the best way to share our faith?
4. The Message Bible renders Jesus' words in Matthew 5:14-16 as follows: "You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting

you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Being in heaven.”

- a. Have you ever known someone who seemed to live the way this passage describes? Tell us about that person.
 - b. Do you feel this passage describes how you're living? Do you feel like a “light-bearer”? Why or why not?
5. Sharing our faith in a pluralistic culture can be a sensitive matter. Many Christians share their faith in a way that seems chauvinistic and highly critical of other faiths. Jeff suggested we take a different approach – sharing our faith in the same manner we might share our excitement for a great restaurant we discover – explaining our excitement about what we've found, without criticizing anyone or anything else. Is that the way to go? What are your thoughts?
6. In Ephesians 3:8, Paul says he feels like “the very least of all the saints” because of his prior history as a persecutor of Christians. But he goes on to say that God's grace was great enough to overcome his shortcomings. We too often feel unqualified to be “light-bearers” for Christ. The prayer Paul prays in the second half of chapter 3 focuses our attention on two key things that can prepare us for that role. Read Ephesians 3:14-21.
- a. Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians is that “you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through God's Spirit” (vs. 16). In other words, before we can be any good to anybody else, we have to let God “strengthen our inner being.” Before we can give off light, we have to absorb light, like a solar panel. What are some of the best ways for you to absorb light into your inner being?
 - b. How does time spent in worship together on Sundays affect you? How critical (or not) is Sunday worship to your spiritual rhythm?
7. Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians is that “you are being rooted and grounded in love . . . , and that you have the power to comprehend . . . what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (vss. 17-19). When we live in that love, Paul says, “the fullness of God” will shine from us.
- a. What do you think it means to “be rooted and grounded in love”? How do we achieve that?
 - b. What do you think it means to “know” a love that surpasses “knowledge”? What kind of love is that?
 - c. Have you ever seen someone express the love of God in a way that was so profoundly compelling, it makes you want to be more like that? Tell us what happened.