

Blessing #3: The Revelation of the Mystery

Ephesians 1:8-1:9

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 1, 2019

Please turn to the book of Ephesians. As you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're in the beginning of a series. And I say "the beginning" - we've been in it several weeks, but it's going to take some time to get through on the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians tells us that salvation is all of God. All the blessings and riches and treasures of the Christian life come from His hand and not from us. In other words, it's a gift. Salvation is a present to you, which is what Christmas is all about, right? Jesus was God's gift to us, He was God's greatest blessing. We talk about that this time of year.

It was because of Him that we have all the other blessings you read about in this book. You don't get a single blessing in the book of Ephesians by yourself, earning it. They all come from His hand. If He didn't come, you wouldn't have this. If He wasn't born in a manger and died on the cross, none of this would be yours.

George Whitfield said, "Jesus was God and man together so that He might bring God and man together in Him." And that's the message of this book. Which is an important message because this is something the Ephesians needed to hear. We haven't talked about this in a while. But this is important because the readers of this letter, the original audience, desperately needed to hear what Paul had to say in this book.

If you look in verse 1, this tells us about the audience. It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus." That's who this was written to; the original audience was the saints who are at Ephesus.

We haven't mentioned this in a little while, but Ephesus was the capital city of a province called Asia Minor in the first century. Like Canada has done with its territories, the Roman Empire was divided into provinces. And this one, Asia Minor, was a large stretch of land located in the modern-day country of Turkey. If you look at a map, it's right between Europe and the Middle East. It was located almost midway between Babylon and Rome. So this was a very major thoroughfare in the ancient world. It was a gateway between East and West.

There are several famous places in Asia Minor - the seven churches of Revelation were there; Smyrna, Philadelphia, Thyatira, all that was in Asia Minor. Paul's hometown of Tarsus was there, so Paul was a native of this province. He came from this part of the world. Galicia was there, Colossae was there. The ancient city of Troy was there, and Ephesus was the capital of all these locations. Ephesus was a significant place. It was the most powerful city in the region, and as such, it became a very corrupt place. With all the power and money and wealth that went through this town, Ephesus became known as a sinful city.

One ancient author named Heraclitus said that the Ephesians were fit to be drowned because they lived in the darkness of vileness, and their morals were lower than the animals. You can't get much more insulting than that. He said, "I've been to Ephesus and they're worse than the animals."

Another historian said that the city was so bad that it fell because the governor was too evil to defend it. He was so preoccupied with his concubines and homosexual lovers that he couldn't be bothered to raise the army when the city was in danger. And this is where Paul planted a church. It's the amazing part of the story. This is where he started a work of God.

It's amazing when you study the history of the cities to whom the New Testament was written - how bad they all were. I don't think there was a good city to which the letters were sent. In fact, the book of Acts tells us the first time Paul encountered the Ephesians, this was one of the things that happened - when he first visited them. Acts 19 says he started a riot.

One of the silversmiths in the town said, "This guy is taking away our idols. He's taking away our money." And it says, "When the Ephesians heard this, they were filled with rage and began shouting, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.'" Artemis was their false God. It says when they recognized Paul and his companions were Jew or Jewish, a single outcry arose from them and they all shouted for two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians."

You want to talk about a bad first impression. You go to the city, preach the Gospel, and for two hours, they riot and shout, "Great is their god." But it didn't stay that way. The good news is the vileness of the Ephesians did not continue. And in fact, a lot of them were converted. Acts 19:19 says that many of those who practiced magic when they heard the Gospel, brought their books together and began to burn them in the sight of everyone; and they counted at the price of their books afterwards and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver or several million dollars' worth of books.

I don't know if guys know this, several million dollars is a lot of money. And several million dollars' worth of books is a lot of books. Several thousand dollars' worth would fill up a room. Several million dollars' worth of books would fill up a whole library. And the Ephesians when they were converted, went to the town square, went somewhere in a public place and took all their magic books and burned them in the sight of everyone. That's the kind of impact the Gospel made in Ephesus. That's the kind of impact Christ made there. In response to that, Paul writes them this letter. Since they lost all their books (this is kind of funny), Paul gave them this one. He said, "You don't need all of that, here's one book for you. Here's one letter."

And it starts off this way - this is how the letter to the Ephesians begins if you look in verse 1:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus. [You can imagine the need of being faithful in a place like that]. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

Just a quick review of this passage - I've told you before, Paul starts off the book of Ephesians in an unusual way. He does something strange because he begins by giving us the longest sentence in the Bible. He starts a sentence that begins in verse 3 and goes all the way down to verse 14 without a break or without a pause. It has over 200 words in it in Greek. So those of you that are in school, I do not encourage you writing a sentence that long, but that's what he does.

Some have said he probably did that because he was speaking out loud while a scribe wrote it down and he got so excited and he got so worked up that he couldn't stop all the way down to verse 14. I heard a preacher in Georgia years ago that would preach and he would get so excited, his face would turn red and he wouldn't take a break, and we thought he was going to pass out and fall down on the floor. That's how Paul wrote Ephesians chapter one. You can just see him about to pass out as he gets to the end of this.

He tells us what this is about in verse 3 when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." If you notice, the word "blessing" is repeated several times there for emphasis because that's what this chapter is about. This is all about blessing.

As Paul is writing to an evil city, a place that's fit to be drowned, he's saying something to encourage these saints. And he says, "You are blessed. Don't forget that God is watching out for you. God is for you, not against you. God loves you. He's on your side in spite of what you see all around you." And to explain this, he says, you are chosen in verse 4, and predestined in verse 5 because that is from where your blessings come. That's where they originate - not from you but from God.

Verse 5 then mentions "adoption" because that's the first blessing in the list. This is where it begins. God adopts you, which means He brings you into His family. When you're adopted, you change families. You come into the world in this family, you go out in that one. It's what God has done.

Then he says, God redeems you in verse 7. That's the second blessing in the list, which means He buys you back from sin. In order to adopt you, a price had to be paid, blood had to be spilled, a sacrifice had to be offered. God did that for you as well. If you miss some of this stuff, this is all on our website. We've gone through these great passages.

But all this leads to another blessing I want to talk to you about this morning. It leads to another gift in the list, and that is the revelation of the mystery. That's the next blessing Paul describes here in Ephesians 1. God has let you in on a mystery.

If you read in verse 7 through verse 9, it says,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will...

That's the next blessing in the list: the blessing of the mystery of His will. If you read verses 9 through 10 and it sounds mysterious to you, that's the point of it. This is a mystery. You're blessed because God has told you a secret. And I'll tell you what the secret is, the secret is that Jesus has come into the world. That's the secret. That is the mystery here.

Verse 10 mentions the summing up of all things in Christ because that's what this is referring to. Jesus has come to save the world and sum it all up, to put it all in its proper perspective. You look around the world and it looks like a crazy place, doesn't it? You guys know what I'm talking about? Jesus has come to sum that up for you. He's come to make sense of it.

Paul calls this a mystery because people in times past did not know this. The Old Testament did not know that Jesus would come the way He did. They had some understanding of it, but not like you do. There were prophecies in the Old Testament. There were visions about this, but not with the clarity that we have. And millions today don't know this either. Millions today don't know Christ, but God has let you in on the mystery.

In Greek, it means “the unveiling of something” or “the revealing of it.” It's kind of like the idea of pulling back a curtain. When you reveal something, you pull back a curtain and you see what was actually there. That's what this word means. It doesn't refer to something that is still a mystery, it refers to something that was a mystery and it is so no longer.

There were several mystery religions in the ancient world that said that the way to God is mysterious and we're the only ones that know it. We're so special, we're so wonderful. That's not what this means. This refers to something that was unknown but is now known to anyone who is willing to learn it.

This is huge. This is an amazing thing Paul says here. Because if you think about it, there are billions of people on the planet looking for this today. I read this recently, that 84% of the world's population is religious - 84%. I mean, the way you read the news, it sounds like everybody's an atheist and an agnostic. But 8 out of every 10 people have some form of religion, and they're trying to get to heaven, they're trying to find a Saviour. If you add it all up, there's something like 4,000 different religions to accommodate that; 4,000 different ideas as to how to find salvation. However, Paul says right here that you know the one that's right. Does that blow your mind? Is that encouraging to you? You know the one that can actually get you there. You know the true Saviour because God has revealed it to you. He has told you the mystery. Not because you're better than anyone else, but because He has blessed you. Amen? Can I get an amen to that? Somebody, somewhere?

It's not because you're smarter than all these other people. You're not smarter than all these other people - I'm going to tell you that in a minute. Before your self-esteem gets kind of high, let me lower it a little bit. This is because God has been gracious to you. That's the point of the passage. God has revealed this to you because He's been merciful to you.

Charles Spurgeon said,

If I could get to heaven by works, it would not be heaven for me, for if I were in heaven, I would say, “I'm sure there's been some mistake, I don't belong here because I'm not good enough.” But if it would be of grace and not of works, then I can enter in with boldness for the way has been earned for me by another, and His name is Jesus Christ.

That's what this is saying right here. You have this mystery, you have this knowledge and this information because God has given it to you by grace. He has let you know this mystery by mercy so that He can have all the glory. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

If you're taking notes in Ephesians 1:8-9, we're going to look at three parts to the mystery of His will. We can't get to all of this today. You can just read these verses and realize this is almost too much to take in in one sermon, but we're going to look at everything that we can. For now, we will see three parts to the mystery of His will.

And the first one, the first part to the mystery of His will is the thoughtfulness of it. So if you're taking notes, this is the first point this morning. The first part to the mystery is it's thoughtfulness. When you read about God revealing himself to you and not to others, one question that often comes up, is why? Why did God do that? Is that fair? 4,000 different religions in the world today and we say that ours is the right one. That sounds kind of arrogant, doesn't it? Sounds kind of proud. But that's what this is saying, and the question is why? Why do we know this and others don't?

While we don't know the answer to all of that, while Paul doesn't reveal everything to us, he does say that God was thoughtful in this. He had a reason for what He did. There's a saying in theology and in biblical archeology that says, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." What that means is just because you can't find something, doesn't mean it's not there. Just because you don't know the reason why God chose some and not others, doesn't mean He didn't have a reason. We don't know all of these things. This is a mystery. But Paul says God was thoughtful in what He chose to do.

If you look in verses 7 through 9, he says,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will.

And just to explain that a little bit, I've told you that this is one long sentence in Greek. From verse 3 to verse 4, this is one long idea with no pauses or breaks. And some have called this the longest and greatest sentence in the Bible because of all the doctrine that's in here. Some scholars have said this is the greatest explanation of Christian doctrine anywhere in the world.

And as such, it takes a little time to get through it because you have to look at every word separately. Sometimes you can take a portion of Scripture and just tell the whole story, but this is not written that way. This is written word for word, so you can't go fast.

I was encouraged as I told you last week about the Puritan Thomas Goodwin who preached 36 sermons on Ephesians chapter 1 and wrote over 700 pages on it. I was inspired by that because I thought it would be good to go that route. You guys, 700 pages on one chapter of the Bible - those Puritans.

But he did that because the sentence had to be studied that way- you have to go slowly, and when you go slowly through this, you come to the words at the end of verse 8: "In all wisdom and insight." Because of the way that's worded (there's no period in the original Greek) and so it's hard to know whether this goes

with the preceding phrase or the following one. In other words, it's hard to know if it goes with God's grace or His will.

I think it's a little bit of both because this is how God shows us His grace. This is how He shows us the riches of it and lavishes this on us: by letting us know the mystery of His will in all wisdom and insight. They go together. This is how God shows you His grace – “In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will,” which means God planned this out ahead of time. And Jesus coming to the earth and revealing Himself to you and to me was not a random thing in the mind of God. It was no accident. He did this in all wisdom and insight.

The word “wisdom” there refers to God's judgment in this, His choice in this. Insight is another word for “knowledge” or “information.” And if you notice, Paul says, “God used all of this,” which means God used complete judgment and information in this. He made a perfect decision. If you ever wonder, why am I Christian in Christmas time and my family members are not, I don't know the answer to that, but I do know God has a perfect reason for it. This was done in all wisdom and insight. “Why am I saved but my neighbors next door are not saved? Their kids are so much better behaved than mine. They're wonderful people, why don't they know Christ?” Don't know, but I know there was a perfect reason for it. That's what this means.

We could look at it another way as well. It means the time was right and the place was right and the conditions were right. When God sent His Son, everything lined up. God didn't look down from heaven and say, “Oh no, they sinned. What do I do now?” It wasn't like that. He had this all planned.

One passage that kind of sheds some light on this is Galatians 4:14 which says, “But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law so that He might redeem those who were under the law.” “The fullness of time” there is another way of saying, “When the time was right, God did all of this. When the time was perfect, God sent Christ, saved you and let you in on the mystery.”

It's been said that Jesus came at a time when the world was under one ruler, one empire, and spoke one language - Greek, which had never happened before. The time was perfect when the Son of God came.

It's also been said, if Jesus came a few years before, Israel would have been at war with Rome and it might have messed up the whole thing. And if He came a few years after, there would have been war again. He came at the exact perfect moment and He revealed Himself at the right time to us, because God *in all His wisdom and insight* made known to us the mystery of His will.

And the point Paul's making here, at least in the beginning, is that God knows what He's doing with the universe. God knows what He's doing with the world. He has a plan for it all. It's all been thought out ahead of time; there are no mistakes. Which is important to remember because the world doesn't seem like that, does it?

Does anybody get tired of reading the news because you get depressed? I mean the shootings and the violence and the break-ins. It doesn't make sense. I can open my Bible and it makes sense. I open the newspaper, nothing makes sense in there to me or very little does. It seems so pointless. Paul says it's not pointless, God has a reason for it. In all wisdom and insight, He sent His Son.

In 1988, Hugh Morehead, the professor of philosophy at Northeastern Illinois University published a book entitled "The Meaning of Life." And in the book, he interviewed 250 famous scholars and asked them the question, "What is the meaning of life?" And he asked people like the most brilliant minds of the 20th century; Leonard Bernstein, E.E. Cummings, T.S. Eliot, and here's what they said: "I do not know the meaning of life." They said, "I don't think there's any answer to that question." There may well be no meaning to life. One of them said, "Sad to say, I don't know what the meaning of life is. Do you? If so, please advise. It would come in most handy to have an answer to that question."

Let me tell you something, friends, without Jesus Christ, there is no meaning to life. There's no answer. The pieces don't fit. Without Him, there's no purpose, there's no plan. But with Him, there is a solution to this mystery.

I remember studying the writings of Jean-Paul Sarte and Albert Camus in university, who said that life is meaningless. If you've ever read their books, that was their philosophy. They said, "It has no point, it's all about existing," whatever that means. I remember listening to that in class and I raised my hand and I asked professor Malden, "If that's true, then why don't they just kill themselves? I mean, these guys are writing thousands of pages trying to find purpose and there is no purpose. Why don't they just commit suicide?" And I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Jeremy, that's the great question of philosophy - why don't I just kill myself?" And then he paused because he had no answer.

And I remember sitting in class thinking, "What now?" Philosophy has no answer to that question. Sociology has no answer to that question, psychology has no answer to that question. There's 4,000 religions, they don't have an answer. Just keep working your way to heaven?

The point Paul is making in this passage is that we have an answer to that question. Christ is the mystery, He is the secret to the universe and in all wisdom and insight, God has revealed this to you and to me. God has a plan. God has a purpose. There is a meaning to life. And it's found in Him. I remember reading thousands of pages of philosophy books talking about "the being" and "the one" and all these fancy words. And at the end of the day, what they were saying was, "I don't really know." Paul says, "You can know the meaning of life. It's found in Jesus Christ."

Which leads to the next point to consider in our passage, the next part to this mystery. The first one is the thoughtfulness of it. While we don't know why God revealed this to us, it's a very humbling thing to read about here. Paul says there was a reason, He did this in all wisdom and insight. It was a perfect choice. Your salvation was a perfect decision in the mind of God.

Bringing us to another point in our passage, the second part to the ministry, and that is the revelation of it. First, we have the thoughtfulness of it. Second, you see the revelation of the mystery, which is what the passage is all about. Not only does God have a mystery, but He has revealed it to you. That's the blessing of this. Not only is there a meaning of life that people are searching for all over the world, but you know it, because it's been explained to you. That should blow you away, amen? You know something for which scholars have been looking for centuries.

And if you read on, it says,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us (that word “us” is a powerful word there) – He made known to us (you Ephesians who burned all your books) the mystery of His will.

The word “mystery” means “the unveiling of something, the revealing of it.” It doesn't refer to something that is still a mystery, but to something that was a mystery, it's now been revealed. And Paul says it's been revealed to you and to me.

And just to explain that phrase “mystery of His will” a little bit, the Bible mentioned several mysteries. So this word is used several different ways in Scripture. And just a couple of examples of this. You can read in the Bible about the mystery of the kingdom and the mystery of lawlessness. That's a reference to the antichrist you read about it in the book of revelation. So that's the word you used for him - the mystery of the lawless one.

You can read about the mystery of Babylon and the mystery of the seven stars in the book of revelation. There's the mystery of the Gospel and the mystery of the church. We're going to read about the mystery of the church in Ephesians chapter 3. The mystery of godliness, the mystery of Israel's rejection in Romans 11.

But the interesting thing about this phrase: “mystery of His will,” is that it kind of encompasses all of that. All of that is wrapped up in this one phrase: “mystery of His will.” Because that's all explained when this happens. That's all summed up as verse 10 says in Christ.

The Bible commentator Matthew Henry says,

All the lines of divine revelation meet in Christ, all religion centers in him. In fact, there is no true religion apart from Jesus Christ. Without Him, all is vanity. Jews and Gentiles are united to each other in Christ. Things in heaven and things on earth are gathered together in Him, peace is made between God and man, and between man and man. All of this happens through Christ, and it's all the mystery of His will. He's the one who explains all the mysteries.

The phrase “made known” comes from “gnosis,” which is the word for “knowledge” or “information.” “That's what you have now,” Paul says, “That's what God has given you. He's given you information about the secrets of the universe, and it comes through Christ. God has all knowledge and He's given knowledge to you.”

I want to stop for a moment and let that sink in. If you pause for a second and think about what this means, just look around the room and what do you see? I don't want to burst anybody's bubble, but you know what you see? You see normal people. You see ordinary people.

You go to the church up the road, what do you see there? You see normal people. You go to the church in the next town, what do you see there? You see ordinary people. The point is, ordinary people have been given an extraordinary treasure because it shows the greatness of the mercy and the grace of God. God doesn't look down from heaven and see the smartest people and say, “Those are the ones that will know the mystery.” He looks at the normal ones.

Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 13:11, He says, "To you, it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But to them, to the Pharisees, and leaders of the Jews, it has not been granted." Why? Because the Pharisees were proud, the disciples were humble, so they get to know the mystery. The proud don't get in. The people that think they're special don't get in. This comes to those who know they're not.

The greatness of the mystery...the greatness is that God is great; it's not that we're great. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to babes." That's what you are in the eyes of God. That's what I am. We're just babies. You can't get any more ignorant than a baby, right? Babies don't know anything.

I remember pulling rubber bands and salt and dirt out of my kid's mouth. They don't even know what to put in their mouth. That's what we are, and God has chosen to reveal to us the most amazing mystery of the universe.

You know, if you think about it, while we're on the subject of Christmas and Jesus' birth, if you remember, who showed up at Jesus' birth? It was ignorant people, right? Shepherds and magi. We call them wise men, but the Jews would not have seen them as wise men. They would have called them fools because they're pagans. There's been some discussion that they might've been like stargazers and that kind of thing, reading the horoscopes - fools.

Where were the rabbis? Where were the Pharisees? And then who was His predecessor? John the Baptist, right? A guy who dressed like a hobo and ate bugs. You can imagine what he would have brought to the potluck. Nobody would eat off of that guy's plate. "Hey, here's some locusts and wild honey." "Oh good. Do they come with barbecue sauce?" I mean, come on. Nobody's going to eat that! John was Jesus' right hand man. He said there was no one greater than that guy.

Then He called the 12 disciples and what were they like? They were fishermen, blue collar workers. Then they went out and made disciples and who did they call? They called nobodies. And then who did those disciples call? They called more nobodies. And you go on down the list and eventually, the Lord called you and the Lord called me. Why? Because we're nobodies too. We are people that have been given an amazing treasure.

Augustine used to call the Jews blind men carrying lanterns because they had the light of the Word of God, but they didn't see it. We see it, but I'll tell you, friends, our blindness was taken away from God, not from us. You know the mystery. It has been revealed to you by grace.

Paul talks about how God has lavished His grace in verse 8, and as an example of that, he says, "He has made known to you the mystery of His will," because this shows how great His grace is. This shows how amazing His mercy is, that people like you and people like me and people like these Ephesians would be brought in on this.

A story is told about a time when a friend of D.L. Moody's was reading an article about him in the newspaper out loud so Moody could hear it. They were just sitting in his living room reading the newspaper, and his friend just said, "Hey, listen to this." And the article went on to talk about how Moody was fat and

ugly, and he had a high pitched voice. The author of the article couldn't figure out why anybody would listen to a thing he said.

And his friend said, "I'm so sorry. What do you say to something like that?" And Moody said, "I say this, 'That is my secret. That is the secret to my success because all of that is true and God is using me anyway'."

Friends, this is the secret. God still uses you even though you are that way. He chose to reveal Himself to you, He chose to show you the mystery even though you're a nobody and He did it by His grace. Isn't that amazing?

Which leads us to one more point here in our passage, one more part to the mystery. The first one is the thoughtfulness of it. God had a plan for this, He had a purpose. Even though we don't know why He chose to reveal this to us and not to others, He did it in all wisdom and insight. Second part to the mystery, is the revelation of it. Not only does God have a mystery, but he revealed it to you and to me by His grace.

It brings us to a third part to the mystery. One more point to consider. And as I said earlier, we can't get to everything today, but one more is this: the kindness of the mystery. Well, you've seen the thoughtfulness and the revelation of it. But now, we come to a third part, to the kindness of the mystery which really rounds this off because it shows you why God did this. This is something Paul goes back to over and over again in this passage so you don't forget. He keeps reminding you that God was kind in doing this.

And if you read in verses 7 through 9, it says,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.

I've told you before, this is a one long sentence, no periods in it. So Paul has to get creative as he writes this. And one thing he does, is he turns to prepositions. If you count from verse 3 down to verse 9, there are 36 prepositions in this passage. That's why when you read it, it's kind of a little hard to read. Here he gives us the preposition "according to" - it's the next one he gives us which is a preposition of motive or reason. When I say I do something according to my principles, that means that's the motive for my behaviour. Paul says that God did this "according to the kind intention of His will".

Some of you have the ESV Bible, I think it says something like "purpose" in there. It uses the word "purpose." The idea is that it means "good pleasure". "Good purpose, kind purpose," is sort of the idea of the word. God revealed to you the mystery of His will because He's a good God.

Earlier in verse 5, it says, "In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the kind intention of His will." That's the same word there. That means our adoption was based on this, our predestination was based on His kindness. Some look at predestination as a bad thing, as if it's evil. Paul says it's not because it's based on God's kindness. It's the same way here.

We don't know why God reveals Himself to some and not to others. We don't know why He decided to save us and let others pass by, but we know that the reason was kindness. If anyone is saved in the universe, if

anyone comes to Christ at all, if there is one single church on the entire planet, it is solely because of the kindness of God. No other reason.

Which means again, God didn't look at the world and find the godliest people and say, "I want them. I want those people in Chilliwack." It's not the way it works. He didn't look at the world and say, "Those are the smartest people. They're the ones I'll reveal My mystery to because they'll get it. They're just really bright." He did this in kindness.

I remember meeting a guy years ago at a church in Los Angeles who was a rocket scientist. I had to ask him to repeat what he said when I asked him what he did for a living. By 25 years of age, he had a master's degree in aeronautical engineering, and he made rockets for JPL, which is a company that works with NASA. He was brilliant. He had a nice house, lots of money, nice clothes, and then there was me, standing there, talking to him. And I didn't have any of that.

I made Bs in school and with an occasional B plus for good behaviour. Recess was my favourite class. But the most amazing thing was we're sitting here talking, we're in the same church, saved by the same Saviour, and it was all done out of the kindness of God. That guy didn't get in because he's smart - not the way this works. He didn't get in because he has a lot of money. As a matter of fact, most people that have a lot of money don't even try to get in at all.

This was all because of the kindness and mercy of God, which means you can have this today if you want it. You can know the mystery. That's what you can take away from this passage. This is yours. If this is done out of kindness, this means you can have it, amen? If this was done out of grace, this means it's yours. You can be saved, you can know the secret to salvation.

4,000 different religions in the world today, they don't know this. Much of the world's population are in the dark as well, but this is staring you right in the face. You can have all of this. The question is, will you believe it? What are you going to do with it? Will you trust it and be saved?

And I mentioned some philosophers a moment ago, but in one of his novels, the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard tells about a theater where a great variety show was being held. Each play was better than the last. Each play received more applause until the audience was in a frenzy, and the manager came forward to tell them that the theater was on fire and the people needed to leave. They were so worked up that they thought he was part of the play, and they just cheered and cheered and cheered until the whole thing burnt down in flames and they all perished.

And Kierkegaard said this, he said, "So will our age go down in fiery destruction to the applause of a crowded house full of cheering spectators?" I think he might've been right. The Bible says, this world will one day burn for all those who don't know Christ. It will one day perish in the flames and judgment. And by the way, the book of Revelation reads, it sounds like it'll be done to thunderous applause.

But the good news here, friends, is you don't have to go with it. You don't have to perish in the flames. You can be saved if you trust in Jesus Christ, and you can tell your neighbours that they can be saved if they trust in Jesus Christ, and you can tell your family the same thing as well. Will you do that today? Will you trust in

the one who is the mystery? Let me pray for you now that you would, and we'll take the Lord's Supper here in a moment as we celebrate the mystery together.

Father, we thank you Lord, for what's been revealed in this passage about You, about Your intentions for the universe. We thank you Lord, for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who is the mystery of Your will. And Lord, I do pray for my friends who are here this morning. I don't know where everyone's at, but I'm imagining some may be wrestling with questions about the meaning of life and the meaning of the universe, and the purpose of it all. Lord, would You let them know the answers are here in Your Word?

Father, thank you for those You have revealed Your Son to here in this room who have been saved. It is all of Your kindness. But for those who are lost, I pray You would draw them in to Christ. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Lord, as we remember what Christ has done, would You be glorified in it? Would You be honoured as we remember the sacrifice of the Saviour? We pray all this in His blessed name, amen.