



THE WORLD GOD IS MAKING | WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? (2)

September 20, 2026

Ephesians 1:11-14

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Questions

- Share a moment that significantly contributed to making you who you are today. Try to think of events or experiences from across your entire lifetime. They do not have to be dramatic, just formative.

WORSHIP

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 105

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name;

Make known his deeds among the peoples!

Sing to him, sing praises to him;

Tell of all his wondrous works!

Glory in his holy name;

Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!

He spread a cloud for a covering,

And fire to give light by night.

For he remembered his holy promise,

And Abraham, his servant.

So he brought his people out with joy,

His chosen ones with singing.

And he gave them the lands of the nations,

That they might keep his statutes and observe his laws.

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 1:11-14

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

We are continuing our sermon series through Ephesians, *The World God Is Making*, and this week our Community Groups are reflecting in particular on what it means to discover and encounter Jesus Christ in our midst, which is the first aim of Central's vision for CGs. Our passage continues the single long sentence Paul began in verse 3, though most translations and commentators start a new paragraph at verse 11 for the sake of clarity. Breaking up this sentence helps us to see a shift in Paul's pronouns. He writes first in verses 11-12 of "we" (himself and fellow Jewish believers), then in verse 13 of "you also" (his Gentile readers), and finally in verse 14 of "our inheritance," held by both in common and equal measure. All of this is part of God's plan, worked out according to his good pleasure. And three times Paul tells us its end: adoption "to the praise of his glorious grace" (verses 5-6), appointment as his heritage "to the praise of his glory" (verse 12), and final possession of the inheritance, again "to the praise of his glory" (verse 14).

It is worth noting the phrase "the praise of his glory" in particular. As the pastor and commentator John Stott puts it, God's glory is his own self-revelation, and the glory of his grace is his disclosure of himself as a gracious God. In other words, God's glory is God showing us who he really is, and what he shows us is that he is gracious, chiefly displayed in his kindness toward sinners, both Jew and Gentile. To live to the praise of that glory, then, has two components. First, it means worshiping him, as the gracious God he has shown himself to be, through what we say and do. Second, it means living in such a way that others come to see him and praise him too. Both of these run directly against our grain. By our fallen nature, people tend to shut themselves up inside their own small selves, with enormous confidence in the power of their own will and an appetite for showing forth their own glory. But the people of God, by the Spirit, have begun to be turned inside out.

Paul then describes how all of this is secured. Believers are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (verse 13). A seal in the ancient world was a mark showing to whom something belonged and guarding it against theft. In giving us his Spirit, God has stamped us as his, and he will keep us through the trials of this life until he takes final possession of us on the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). God does not offer us some inheritance at a distance. The word translated as "guarantee" in verse 14 could equally be rendered as "downpayment" or "first installment." The Spirit is a downpayment for what? For the whole of what we looked at last week in verse 10: a new creation in which all things in heaven and on earth are united in Christ. He has given us a foretaste of it now, small as it may be compared to what is coming.

The danger comes when we take all that this inheritance means and reduce it to something abstract or experienced on a purely individual basis. Recall the Exodus: God's people were rescued out of slavery and came into the wilderness already belonging to God and sealed as his, but not yet having arrived to the inheritance promised them. Likewise, when we are rescued out of slavery to sin, we find ourselves redeemed and sealed by the Spirit, but waiting on a new creation in which heaven and earth are renewed and our relationships to God and to one another are restored. If we actually believed what was coming, it would change how we live, how we face suffering and death, and how we imagine the Church. Instead, we often live as spiritual orphans rather than as heirs.

The Presbyterian commentator Matthew Henry once noted that none of this foretaste would have been known to us at all if God had not revealed it through his written Word, the

preached gospel, and the Spirit of truth. This is especially relevant as we begin a new CG year together, since the Word read and reflected on, the worship we offer, and the prayers we pray are not the incidental “furniture” of a Community Group; they are the ordinary appointed means by which this mystery is made known to us and the family likeness of the Church becomes visible to the watching world around us.

1. Looking at the Bible

- Paul moves from “we” to “you also” to “our inheritance” across verses 11-14. Who is he describing in each case, and why do you think that progression would have mattered to the first readers of this letter?
- What does Paul mean by calling the Spirit the “guarantee” of our inheritance?

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Not only does every passage point to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- Why does Paul repeatedly connect God’s work in Christ with “the praise of his glory” (vv. 12, 14)?
- What difference does it make that this inheritance is something believers share together, rather than something each believer possesses individually? What might this suggest about the kind of people the church should be?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Where are you most tempted to live as though you have to secure your own future?
- If it is true that knowing the truth about our inheritance would change the way we live, what are some ways you think it should shape our lives now?

4. Looking at our World

- How might we reflect Christ’s glory to one another? What values of the new creation should we embody now?

PRAYER **Pray for each other:** Share any prayer requests you have.

- Each person share your most pressing personal need.
- Remember your “Praying for Faith” names from last week. This week, the person to your left will pray for your three names. Throughout the week, continue praying for the three names you pray for today. Ask the person whose list you have about the people for whom you’re praying.