THE WORLD GOD IS MAKING | THE BIG REVEAL (9)

November 8, 2026
Ephesians 3:1-6

PURPOSE

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

WORSHIP

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Revelation 15

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.
Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you!

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 3:1-6

[1]For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— [2]assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, [3]how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. [4]When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5]which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. [6]This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

BIBLE STUDY

Commentary

We are continuing our sermon series through Ephesians entitled *The World God Is Making*, and this week we began to look at chapter 3. Paul opens this week's passage with "for this reason," the same words that began the prayer we looked at a few weeks ago in N. T. Wright's sermon text, Ephesians 3:14-21. Here Paul begins that prayer but breaks off almost immediately and does not return to it until verse 14. In between, he explains his own ministry to the Gentiles. This digression should not be thought of as a random change of subject, though. It grows directly out of the end of chapter 2, where Gentiles who were once strangers and aliens were talked about as fellow citizens and members of the household of God, and the literary connections between these two categories are purposeful. For example, the readers are again addressed as "you Gentiles" (verse 1; compare 2:11), "apostles and prophets" are mentioned again (verse 5; compare 2:19), and what Gentile and Jew now share is described again (verse 6; compare 2:19). What is new is that Paul now speaks of all this in relation to himself, as the one entrusted with making it known. God gave him a stewardship of grace "for you" (verse 2), and the content of that stewardship is what Paul calls a mystery.

The word “mystery” here could be misleading. In English, a mystery is something puzzling or unknown. In New Testament Greek, it is the opposite. It refers instead to something once hidden that God has now revealed. It is not some secret knowledge for the spiritual elite; rather it is a truth no one could have discovered on their own, given by God according to his own wisdom and timing, and now belonging openly to the whole Church. That is why the apostles can call themselves “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). They did not own the message, invent it, or work tirelessly until they came to uncover it. They received it and were responsible for handing it on faithfully.

Verse 6 tells us exactly the content of this mystery: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Gentiles share the benefits of the gospel on exactly the same terms as Jewish believers. Salvation does not come by first becoming Jews or by keeping the ceremonies that once marked Israel as God’s holy and separated people; instead it comes in the same way Jews are saved — by grace through faith in Christ Jesus (2:8). Yet Paul says this mystery “was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed” (verse 5). And because they share one salvation, they belong to one body. The Old Testament had already promised that the nations would come to worship Israel’s God (Genesis 12:3; Psalm 72; Isaiah 19:23-25). So while the promise itself was already known, what had *not* been made known was the manner in which it would be brought about: that Gentiles would stand on completely equal footing, with nothing left to separate them.

Paul presses that equality in verse 6 with three words that all begin with the same Greek prefix, meaning “together with.” Gentile and Jew are co-heirs, co-members, and co-partakers. It is the same prefix used in chapter 2 when he called them “fellow citizens” (2:19). These words are being piled up to make it abundantly clear that Gentiles have not been admitted into God’s people as second-class members. This ties nicely with where the passage began, when Paul called himself “a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles” (verse 1). He was in chains precisely because he preached this mystery. Yet he does not call himself Rome’s prisoner, but Christ’s. As John Calvin once put it, the glory of Christ turns what the world regards as disgrace into the highest honor. As Paul will tell his readers a few verses later, what he suffers on their behalf is their glory (3:13). His chains were the price of a gospel big enough to make strangers into one family.

1. Looking at the Bible

- What does Paul call himself in verse 1, and on whose behalf?
- According to verses 3-5, how did Paul come to know the mystery, and who else has it been revealed to?
- What three things does verse 6 say about the Gentiles?

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.

- Verse 6 says Gentiles share the three things discussed in the last question “in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Why could they not share them any other way?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Has following Christ ever cost you anything? What would you be unwilling to let it cost you?

4. Looking at our World

- How does the world tend to measure success? By that measure, how would Paul's ministry have looked to others who saw him in prison?
  - What does this tell you about how we should measure success in our own lives?
- What would it look like for someone to walk into Central and never have to wonder whether they'll be treated as a second-class member? What part could your CG play in that?

PRAYER

- Share prayer requests with one another.
- Paul was imprisoned for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Pray for Christians imprisoned for their faith around the world today, that their chains would serve the spread of the gospel.