

006 Antidote to Crazy Thinking

Every Word in Ephesians

By Dr. Joshua Mack

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ephesians 1:3-14

Preached on: October 31, 2010

Grace Manor Farm

Susterstroom

Bronkhorstspuit

South Africa

Website: www.graceunlimited.co.za

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceunlimited

This sermon is available for free download from www.graceunlimited.co.za There you will also find many other sermons, speakers blogs, events, pictures, links, web store, edocuments and contact details. Simply follow the links to Grace Unlimited on Sermon Audio.

There is a lot in life that is unknown. I will guess that for most of us, there have been times when you look to the future and you become overwhelmed with all the stuff you don't know. I can even think of friends of mine who are here today, who it's the end of the month and they're looking and trying to figure out where they're going to stay tomorrow because the landlord is being confusing and difficult and messing even with the rent that they've given. There is so much in life, so many pressures, so much that we don't know: you don't know if you're going to be healthy; you don't know if you're going to have enough money; you don't know if you're going to be safe; you don't know what's going to happen to your children. You don't know...you don't know...you don't know. In fact, with all the stuff that we don't know, we can sometimes look to God and look to what we have in the gospel and we can become frustrated with God because we look at him and we think, "Why didn't you make more stuff known to us? Why did you leave the future so unclear?" And when we focus on that, when we focus on the stuff that we don't know, it can really tempt us to become uncertain and fearful and even sometimes really, really frustrated or angry.

I was thinking this week about all of that and especially about the Apostle Paul and the situation that he found himself in as he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. You know, I would have to say if there was anyone who was in a situation where he might have felt like the future was unknown in terms of what was happening with his life here on earth, it would have had to have been the Apostle Paul. This guy was constantly going from one crisis to another: from being stoned, to being kicked out of cities, to being shipwrecked, to being accused of things he didn't do. He even here as he writes this letter to the Ephesians, being imprisoned or kept in protective custody because of the fact that he was committed to proclaiming the gospel. We can think about the situation in which Paul found himself and I think for many of us, if we were in Paul's place with all of that

uncertainty and with all of that not-knowing, we might have been tempted to become frustrated or frightened or even angry with God. “There is so much I don't know! Why don't you let me know more?”

What I want you to see today as we continue walking our way through Ephesians 1:3-14, is that Paul's feelings are just the opposite. There is something surprising about these verses and that is, with all of the stuff that Paul doesn't know, he actually in verses 9 and 10 shows us that one of the greatest blessings we have in Jesus Christ is all that we actually do know. If you remember, Paul was worshiping God, that's why verse 3 begins how? We looked at it several weeks ago now. With an explosion of worship, right? “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And why is Paul blessing God? Why is Paul overwhelmed with worship for God? Because he has left us in the heavenly places with every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ.

And we've begun to just sort of walk through this passage and enjoy the different blessings that Paul describes. Like verses 4 and 5: the blessing of being chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Or, verse 5 itself: the blessing of being adopted, being brought into God's family. Or, last week we saw union with Christ: being in Christ which results in being set free and forgiven, verses 6-8. Now, this afternoon, we actually come to the high point of this passage, verses 9 and 10. Look at it with me. Paul, speaking of the grace which God has lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, verse 9, “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

If you wanted a word to summarize this lesson, you might use the word “revelation.” We are going to consider this afternoon what a huge, bold print huge blessing it is that God has not only chosen us, God has not only adopted us, God has not only redeemed us, God has not only forgiven us, we're going to consider what a huge blessing it is that he has also revealed to us the core, central, most important elements of what he intends to accomplish in this universe and he's revealed that to us in the gospel. That's the essence of what Paul means by the mystery of his will. Look at verse 9 again. He says, he is “making known to us the mystery of his will.” We think of “mystery” as something we don't know. Paul here is obviously thinking of “mystery” as something we do know because he says, “God has made known to us the mystery.” Of what? “His will.” Which is? “His plan.”

Paul delighting in God for what he has made known to us as believers and, guys, this is huge: God has told you the heart of his plan for the entire universe. And I think we sometimes take this for granted. That's what I'm saying. With all that is unknown in our lives, we get so focused on that, the unknown, that we miss out on the joy of what is known. We're like, “Yeah, the gospel. Sure, yeah, that's great but where am I going to work next week? That's fine, the gospel, good, that's nice but where am I going to stay a month from now?” And I want to show you why that way of thinking is crazy and why you should be worshiping God for what he has made known to you. I want you to see with Paul that this is a reason for worshiping even in prison and when you don't know if

you're going to die and you don't know what's going to happen to you. To help you to do that, I want to walk through these verses and just notice exactly what's here that Paul tells us about the revelation we've received in the gospel which makes it more than make up for all the stuff we don't know. It's like as we study these verses, we're looking at the fact that God has made known to us his plan and we're saying to Paul, "Okay, that's nice but why is this exciting? Why should I rejoice or bless God for this?"

So, first of all, Paul gives us four different reasons this is thrilling and you should go away from here worshiping God. First of all, Paul says there is the reason he's made this known. To appreciate what you know as a Christian, you have to start here: the reason God makes known to us his plan is grace, his grace. If you feel that's basically the reason for everything that we've studied in Ephesians so far, you're right, you've been listening. But check out verses 7-9 again. Paul is describing what God accomplished through Christ. He says, first of all, verse 6, it was redemption. Then he talks in this verse about making known the mystery of his will but smack dab in the middle, is this amazing phrase which I want you to see in verse 7 which explains the motivation for both of these actions and that is what? "According to the riches," do you see it? "According to the riches of his grace which he has lavished upon us." He's saying, "God has showed us his great grace by setting us free but he didn't stop there. He also showed us his great grace by making known to us his saving plan." You could translate this: God lavished – lavished is like when you are too kind to someone, you can't stop giving – God lavished his grace on us in all wisdom in that he made known to us the mystery of his will.

Now, I want to ask you, I want you to stop and think if you've ever thought about it that way? That God making known to you the mystery of his will is a result of his kindness, that it's undeserved, that you didn't deserve to have God tell you anything? It's not just Jesus dying on a cross that is grace, it's God making it known to you that's also grace. As we look at what God has revealed to us in the gospel, we should always be amazed by the fact that he totally didn't have to reveal anything to us. When you plan on moving and you have pets, like a dog, do you feel that it's necessary for you to sit down and have an hour long conversation with your dog about your plans for your life? You sit down with your puppy and you say, "Well, we're making this decision. It's very difficult but we're going to move. How do you feel about that?" No, none of us do that with our dogs because what? They're creatures and so are we. We're not God's equals. We are his creatures and he doesn't have to tell us anything about his plans for the universe. What's more, we're sinful creatures. Creatures who if you think about it, doubted his word from the very beginning. Can you imagine, you make these people, you don't have to tell them anything but you do. You stoop down and you tell them, "Don't eat this," and the first time a snake comes along and tells them something different, they think to themselves, "Oh wow, maybe God, his word, is not all that great." I don't know about you, but if somebody treated me like that, I would be tempted to be very cocky.

The thing is, God wasn't because he is a god who loves to reach out to the undeserving. He has let us in on some of the greatest secrets in the history of the universe and you should be amazed by that. Every time you think about the gospel, what the gospel makes known to you, you should be flat out amazed by that but so often you and I, we're so into

ourselves that we have a hard time getting our minds around just what we've got. It's like we open up the Bible and we hear the gospel, this amazing revelation of the core of what God's doing and we open it up and we're disappointed that our face isn't plastered in there right away. So, we hear this gospel and we don't see the picture of ourselves first and so we think, "Ah, what kind of message is that?"

But that's part of God's grace. We take the grace of God that he showed us in giving us the gospel for granted because it focuses on Jesus, he's the central picture and we're like, "Oh man, I wish every page was about me." When the reality is, the fact that it's about Jesus is actually part of his grace because he's taking our eyes off of ourselves and focusing them on the person who totally deserves it. So, when you're thinking about the gospel, the point is, when you're thinking about what God has made known to you, if you want to be amazed, begin with the reason. Remember that it's because of grace.

Second, though, think the manner. The reason, the manner. The manner God makes his plan known to us is profoundly wise. It's all grace, that's the reason, but now we're thinking about the way he did this and we're going to see it is so wise. Just reflect and enjoy the wisdom of God in making this known to you. Look at the passage again, it said, "in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will." So, wisdom and insight where there's actually a little bit of discussion here: what does wisdom and insight describe? They did something in all wisdom and insight but what does that describe? There are some people who think it describes the grace. There are some people who think God showed his grace to us in all wisdom and insight and that could be true or it could be that he's saying, "God made known to us the mystery of his will in all wisdom and insight." Either is possible but I think Paul is referring here to the way God made his plan known. I think he wants you to see how wise it was the way God made his plan known.

I think that because if you look at verse 17 of chapter 1, he says we need "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him," to verse 18, "know his plans and know what is the hope to which he's called you." So, his plan for us is so deep we need supernatural help to know it and I think that wisdom describes his plan because in chapter 3, verse 10, he tells us that part of his plan is, look at this and I can't wait until we get to this in a couple of months or years or who knows, verse 10, so that through the church "the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places." God is saying part of his big plan is to show the angels how wise he is by looking at the way he saved you, the church.

I think that wisdom refers to the message because in other passages like 1 Corinthians 2, Paul talks about his preaching as the very wisdom of God so he thought of revelation as God's wisdom which is why I think here back in Ephesians 1, to come to it, when he says "in all wisdom and insight" that he's describing the way God has made himself known. Look back for just for a second: when you study the Scriptures, you want to ask questions, right? You can't just guess what something means. You have to think about what does it say, what does it describe and how do I prove that's what it means. But in all wisdom and insight, I think it describes the way he's making his mystery known and it's like Paul saying, "As you look at what God has told you and as you look at the way God

went about telling you about it, you can't say to yourself, 'Oh, that was basic. Oh, that was simple.'" No, you have to use words like wisdom and insight to describe it. You have to look at the way God made himself known and you have to say, "Whoa! I can't believe how wise that was!"

God had a perfectly designed strategy for making known the mystery which centers on Jesus Christ and I think it does us good to just take a step back and just enjoy how wise God was in how he revealed himself to us because we can sometimes get all caught up in the nonsense of the world and miss out on how amazing this message is. I mean, when we look at nature, there's a kind of wisdom in the way God made the world known to us, right? RNA, DNA, who can understand that stuff besides Hamilton? None of the rest of us. It's confusing. It's amazing God's wisdom in nature. But what I want you to hear is that the way God revealed himself in the gospel is even wiser. We can look at a tree and be stunned, but we should look at the tree, the cross, and be even more stunned.

For starters, you see the wisdom of God in how he went about making it known. Think about that. There is joy in watching a good teacher at work and he not only said something that's true but it's fun to watch a good teacher, the way he communicates. How he can help people understand what he's saying. There is wisdom in that and there is wisdom in the way God went about making his plan known, isn't there? What I mean is this: sometimes when I have something I really want to share with people, I usually just blurt it out. I have a very hard time. If I have something I want to teach you, it's very hard for me to slow down and wait. I just want you to know it all right then. But what sometimes happens because I'm like that, is that the people I'm talking to don't know, they don't have any idea what I'm saying because they don't know what they need to know to understand what I'm telling them.

Not God. He was patient. Have you ever thought about why it was that thousands and thousands of years before the gospel. Well, it's part of God's great teaching strategy. He was willing to take thousands of years to give the necessary information and illustration so that you could properly understand what Jesus was all about. I remember someone being asked, "Why did it take so long to get to Jesus?" and he said, "Part of the reason was so that God could provide us categories and ideas that would help us understand the work of Jesus." Even here in our passage, if you go back to verse 7, it talks about redemption. Look at it, "In him we have redemption through his blood." Well, God had just done that, crucified Jesus in the Old Testament. That wouldn't make nearly as much sense as it does after seeing all the bloody sacrifices throughout the Old Testament. You read the Old Testament and you're like, "Why are these lambs and goats continually being slaughtered? Why is there blood everywhere?" Well, part of the reason there was blood everywhere in the Old Testament was so that when Jesus came and died on the cross, you would have the information in your mind to know and understand what he was doing up there.

So, we see God's wisdom in how he made this known with all the time he took, an illustration he used to make the gospel known. But we can go on. Think about the method God used to make this message known. We see his wisdom in how he was able to deliver

a perfect message through imperfect people. Let me give you an example: it's one thing to build a house when you have really great tools, it's another if you have no tools. Or what if you were trying to build a house and somehow the tools were fighting back with you. You'd pick up the hammer and the hammer tried to hit you on the head? It would take great wisdom to build a house with tools that were fighting against you and yet that's something like what God did in how he made the gospel known. He made this perfect message known through imperfect people. Here we have this amazing gospel and he was able to take weak and sinful men to somehow be able to communicate this glorious gospel to us. That's why.

I think we get another idea of how wise God was in the gospel and I hope you're not hearing this just as sort of academic information, this is supposed to warm your hearts because you're out there and you're thinking, "Why didn't God make more known to me?" Well, I'm telling you, it's amazing what he's made known. Do you hear me? And we've got to look at it; we've got to think about it so that we don't get frustrated and angry with God when you really have no reason to. So, look at this again: it's wise, God's wisdom in making it known. Think about the fact that he was able to communicate in a way that was at the same time simple and profound. You know, if you have someone who can speak in a way that children can understand and that the smartest men in the world are like, "Whoa, that's deep." You'd say that's a wise person. If you can say something that a child says, "Huh, I get that," and a scholar with his Ph.D. Says, "Whoa, I'm not sure. I hear it but there's so much there." You know that's a wise person.

Yet, that's what God did in the gospel, isn't it? Here we have a message that's fairly straight-forward. When I sit down with my daughters, I can explain the gospel and they can understand it but you know what? I've been studying the Bible and the gospel for how long now and even as a preacher, spending 20-30 hours a week, sometimes more, studying the word of God and yet even I come to a passage like Ephesians and I'm like, "Wow! There's so much in there. How do I even begin?" Constantly stunned and surprised by the gospel.

We can do this with anything in the gospel. You can tell a child, "God became man and died for you in your place," and they can say, "Yeah, I understand that." But then you mature a little bit and you say, "God became man and died for me? That's deep." Or you can say to your children, the foundation of the gospel, who God is, you can talk to them about God being three and yet one and they can repeat back the words to you but then you slowly look at that and you say, "God is three and one? My brain is smoking. That's too deep." Or you can look at the very word of God itself, the gospel, who wrote this? Men wrote the word of God, right? But who else wrote it? God wrote the gospel. A child can understand that but that's deep, isn't it? This is the word of God. How about when we talked a few weeks ago about election? We said that before the foundation of the world, God chose individuals to save. He, himself, chose individuals to save. You can understand that but we also said there's personal responsibility to repent of your sins. A child can understand that to a certain degree but then you start thinking about it: election, responsibility, "Wow!"

One of the things that should shock us about the gospel is his wisdom, how he's able to speak in simple and profound ways at the same time or maybe we could say just a few more things. I like thinking about this: I think you can see the wisdom and how surprising the message is and how surprising God's method was for getting the message out. Imagine you and our friends got together and you thought, "We're going to make a plan to fix a problem," and you're all talking. There are like 20 of you there and you're all coming up, everybody is sharing an opinion about how to solve the problem and none of you, no matter how much you talk about it, can solve the problem. None of you can solve it. You can't fix it. And then somebody comes in and he says something that the rest of the 20 people have not said and it's actually the very opposite of what they said. They're all sure this is the one way it wouldn't work; it's the only thing they think wouldn't work. And yet that's the only plan out of all the 20 that do work. What would you say about that person? You'd say, "Wow, that's wise. Where did you get that?" And yet, that's what we get in the gospel.

Who would expect the Savior of the entire world to be born to a teenage peasant woman? Who would expect God to come and spend 30 years of his life as a carpenter? Or at least the son of a carpenter? Who would expect God to hang out with sinners and tax collectors? Who would expect God to be rejected by his own people and then hung on a cross while people stood there and mocked him? Then who would expect God to pick a bunch of rejects and entrust the message on which the fate of the entire universe hangs, to them? Who would have expected him to pick a guy like Saul, someone who absolutely hated Jesus? Who was a Jew of the Jews? Who was trying to kill Christians? Who would have expected God to pick him to be the primary author of the New Testament? This is surprising how God made this message known. It's shocking.

And what's so wise about this is that it all fit perfectly with God's great plan. One of his great goals in the gospel was to make it so that our only possible place to boast would be in God and what he did for us. And yet you know people, you know the way people are. We'll almost take any opportunity to boast in ourselves. We're always looking for the smallest reason to be proud of ourselves. So, if God had given the smallest little reason for us to boast in ourselves, we would have taken it but he so perfectly planned how he was going about saving us and revealing himself to us that there's no way we can take any credit for ourselves. I can't stop, it's such a joy to think about God's wisdom. This is something, guys, angels longed to look at. So if you're bored by what angels wanted to look at, I don't know how to help you. If I go up to heaven and I see a group of angels sort of gathered around staring at something and they're all just sort of elbowing each other and saying, "No way," and then I look at it and I say, "Ah, that's kind of boring," something's wrong with me. No the thing, something's wrong with me. This is something 1 Peter tells us angels desired to consider so if you're better than an angel, you'd better look in the mirror once again.

Another thing that's so wise in how God made his plan known to us is that he was able to hide truth and make it totally obvious at the same time. How do you hide something and make it plain at the same time? Only God knows how to do that and yet, when you read the Old Testament knowing what you know now with the mystery being revealed, it's like

all the pieces fit into place, isn't it? You read Isaiah 53 and you say to yourself, "This is so Jesus. How could anybody miss that this is Jesus?" But at the same time, Peter tells us that the prophets were prophesying this stuff and they were constantly asking God for the kind of information we have now so they could better understand it. Or even look at how Paul puts it in Ephesians 3:4-5. He says, "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 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."

Now, I don't think Paul was saying God didn't reveal this, I think the key there is "as it has now been revealed." God revealed the information through the Old Testament in bits and pieces and people were trying but struggling to put it together and they couldn't do it completely and they didn't really fully get it until God made it known through his prophets and apostles in the Old Testament. Maybe I can put it this way: I don't know if you've ever watched a mystery on television or at the movies but there is a crime and there are policeman who are trying to put the crime together to figure out who did it and you're watching the movie and you're seeing all this information and you're trying to figure out who did it but you're confused all the way to the end of the movie and so the detective stands up and he says, "This guy did it," and he explains how he knows that he did it and you're amazed at his wisdom because he had all the same information you had but he was able to take all those pieces of information and put them together into an explanation that makes sense. That's part of what makes the way God has made known to us the mystery of his will so stunningly wise. He took all that information in the Old Testament and in the gospel makes it so clear. It all comes together. You understand what God's doing.

What God made known to us. If you ever attempt to take it for granted and say to yourself, "Ah, this isn't much," think about the reason you know anything: it's grace. Second of all, think about the manner God made it known: it's wise. Third of all, think about the method and this will be a little faster. The big thing here is that the method God used to make his plan known to us is long established. We're just going to say, "Wow, God's been working on this plan for a long time." If you look at the passage, verse 9, it says, he's "making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ." And it's that phrase "according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ" which we're thinking about. Paul is looking at how God went about making this mystery known. He's saying the way God went about doing this perfectly fits with the purpose he had already determined to accomplish long before. It wasn't an accident, it wasn't an afterthought for the apostles to start proclaiming this message. No, all of this was according to the purpose God had already set forth in Christ.

What purpose? I think the purpose Paul is then describing: how God chose certain individuals, how he predetermined to adopt them as sons for the praise of his glorious grace. Paul is saying, "Man, God had this awesome purpose in Christ before the foundation of the world and this revelation you have right now is all part of this big saving plan that he started long ago." If you look at Ephesians 3 again, verses 8 and 9, I think Paul explains it a little more clearly there. He says, "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints," humility there, "this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the

unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” That’s a pretty awesome statement. Why did God create the world? So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known. But here it is, “This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That last sentence is what I think the phrase back in Ephesians 1 means. This revelation we have in our hand is part of God’s eternal purpose, his eternal plan.

You say, “Well, that’s nice but how does knowing that help me? I get it, the apostles’ preaching was part of God’s eternal plan but how does that help me?” How does it help you? We’re such short sighted people. All we can see is our 30 minutes in the history of the universe and we’re looking around us and thinking, “What is God doing? Does God have a plan? Oh man, what’s he doing in my life?” Come on. Think about the gospel message he’s given you. Does God have a plan? He’s been working on accomplishing his plan of saving his people and exalting Jesus Christ from the beginning of the world, from before the beginning of the world and he’s doing it one step at a time and he’s perfectly accomplishing each step of his plan at just the perfect time. We’re so into our moment and we’re looking at our lives and what’s going on with us right now and we start getting scared and we’re like, “Oh man, God, have you lost control? Are you able to build your church here in Sunnyside? What’s happening with us?” What? God is building his church and we’re able to step back as we look at the gospel message and just watch a master builder at work. In spite of all the obstacles, all the attacks on the gospel, all the craziness, this Master Builder just keeps on building.

Nothing gets him distracted and he step-by-step accomplishes exactly what he set out to accomplish when he started. No one can stop him. Look at how long he’s been working on this plan. The proclamation of the gospel was established way before the foundation of the world was planned. When you look at the gospel and you’re saying, “Why is this amazing?” be stunned because this is part of God’s plan that he’s been working on for a very long time.

Fourth and finally and this is really the heart of it all and maybe we’ll look at this even some more next week, we’ll see, but the content. You want to be amazed by what God has made known to you, look at the content, at what he’s made known. He in the gospel has given you a sneak preview of the history of the entire universe. How’s that? Who gets that? We do. Verse 10, here it is, “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.” You say, “Okay, that’s nice. What is it?” Here it is, “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him,” that’s Jesus, “all things in heaven and things on earth.” You say, “What does that mean?” The fullness of time, that’s sort of a funny phrase, isn’t it? We don’t use that all the time. To understand what it means, you have to remember that time in this world isn’t going to go on forever the way it does right now at least. The clock is ticking. In fact, you can think of life in this world sort of like a bucket and think of time like water. If you have enough drops in a bucket, what happens? Even if it’s just one drop at a time, what eventually happens to the bucket and the water? The bucket gets full, right? It’s almost like God is dropping time

into the world...drop...drop...drop, and it's going to get full and this plan that he's revealed to us is for that moment, what's going to happen at the fullness of time. Which is already, in a sense, started with the coming of Jesus Christ but isn't completed. Here it's focusing on when he's going to wrap everything in this universe up.

What does God tell us is going to happen as he does that? At the fullness of time? Here, look at it, we can start with the word "unite." He says he's going to unite all things in Jesus but what does that mean? Unite is sort of an unusual verb. It's used only two times in the New Testament. The other time it's used besides here is in Romans 13 and it's translated there "to sum up." It says that all the commands can be summed up in one which illustrates what the word "unite" means. It means "to bring everything into one; to summarize something." The basic idea is to bring something to a main point and the idea is that God will sum up everything in the world in Christ. He's going to bring all things together in and under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

That's where the world's going. Christ's Lordship, his headship will be clear to all. You can look at how the Bible puts it in a couple of other places. Maybe this will help. Ephesians 1, we'll just begin at verses 20-23 talking about God's great power. He says, "that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Keep going with me to Philippians 2, it's the next book. You can see where God is going. We're told this over and over again. Philippians 2:9-11, "Therefore God has highly exalted Jesus and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Where is the world going? That's where it's going. Hebrews 2, a few books over, verses 5-8, speaking of Jesus again, "Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking." It wasn't to angels, it was to Jesus. Now go down to verse 8, "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control." That's where the world is going. "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."

But we will, that's what the plan tells us. God, the Father, is bringing everything in the universe into obvious subjection to the authority of Jesus Christ. Whether it's things in heaven, the demons who war against Jesus in the universe, the principalities and powers, they are going to quiver at Jesus' feet just like they did in the gospel. These demons who seem so powerful, what were they doing to Jesus in the gospel? "Don't hurt me." And that's just a sneak preview of where everything is going. The demons are going to quiver at Jesus' feet and then be cast out and he's going to imprison them in eternal pain proving that he is the victor. And in the rest of Ephesians, we're going to see how God through Jesus is going to unite things on earth. He's going to bring Jew and Gentile into one body that lives for his glory.

Now, my point where this sermon is headed is that knowing that, knowing this is where history is headed, this is where all things are going: the exaltation of Jesus Christ; everything is going to be brought perfectly under his rule. Having God reveal that to you, that knowledge that you have, is huge. We sometimes get frustrated with God because we're like, "God, what's going on with my life?" when God has told you the heart of his plan for the universe and maybe you're upset because you wish God had told you everything about you and what you're going to eat next week but what you need to see is that God has told you something so much better than that. Instead of sitting around thinking, "Oh God, how do I get you to do my will?" I want to say, "God, what is your will and how can I live as part of that?" And we know God's will: it's the exaltation of Jesus Christ. That is where everything is going and so instead of spending so much time focused on myself, trying to get God to submit to my will, get in step with God's will.

If that's what God's doing, that's what I want to be doing: exalting Jesus Christ. I want to order my life to be in submission to Jesus now and to be about the glory of Jesus now and so should you. If you're an unbeliever, if you haven't repented and submitted to Jesus Christ, if Jesus Christ is not your Lord, God has shown his grace to you even today because God has told you where he is taking the entire universe. He is going to exalt his Son, Jesus Christ and if you don't bow to Jesus' Lordship now, you will be forced to bow one day and then cast into eternal torment. Why? Because you in your stubbornness refuse to bow your knee to Jesus Christ, because you in your selfishness refuse to accept the mercy of Christ. Why will you die? If you are an unbeliever, God has shown you kindness, he has told you exactly what is going to happen. And can I plead with you? Don't go from this place even today, don't go from this place without getting on your knees and saying, "God, thank you that you have shown me the mystery of your will! Lord, please, I repent of my sins and I want to put my faith in Jesus Christ and I want help to live for his glory because I know that's what you, God, are all about."

If you are a believer, if you have understood the gospel, if you've understood what God is about, if you have repented of your sins and turned to Christ, can I plead with you? Don't take what you know for granted. It's because of God's grace that you know anything at all. God revealed all of this to you in the wisest way possible. It's not a new idea; it's something he's been working on a long time and it tells you the heart of what he's up to, exalting himself through the person of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray and thank God for what he's made known to us.

Heavenly Father, we are just blessed. God, you are so kind. You didn't have to tell us anything but you've shown us exactly where you're taking the world. And Jesus, we pray that you would be gracious to us and save sinners here and, Lord, even help those of us who are believers to just get in step with your will, O God, and to stop living as if the universe revolved around us and to start enjoying the fact that it doesn't, that it revolves around Jesus Christ, that we get to be part now of what you're doing eternally and that is making Jesus look great. We thank you for this and we ask that you would help us to understand it and live differently because of it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.