

The 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
July 25, 2021

“Rooted in Christ’s love, God’s exceeding power works in us” (Ephesians 3:16-21)  
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 9th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading – Ephesians 3:16-21

**“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

**20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

Here ends our text.

This past week Jeff Bezos – executive director of Amazon, and richest man in the world, got into a space capsule with his brother, an 82-year-old woman who had trained in the Mercury space program back in the 60’s, and a young man from the Netherlands, and were launched 62 miles above the earth to the Karman line by a space rocket. They travelled over 2000 mph and reached outer space in about 3 minutes. Then they floated around under zero gravity for a few minutes doing a few somersaults in the capsule, buckled back up and floated back down to earth by parachute, landing in the West Texas dry soil. Opening up the space capsule, families met and hugged them and they doused each other with champagne. These civilians were now astronauts. Well, NASA is still debating that.

At any rate, a few more trips to space are planned for September and November and Bezos promises to bring the price of admission down to make it affordable to the middle class. Any takers? If an 82 year-old did it, well we can't really say I'm too old to do that!

But, you could say that you'll just wait for Jesus to return for your free trip up to heaven when all who are living are caught up in the clouds with those that are risen from the dead. So, Paul said to the Thessalonians in his first letter, chapter 4,

**“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)**

Jeff Bezos talked to an audience after he came back safely, wearing his oversized cowboy hat. He talked about his big dreams, starting Amazon and his dream to build this reusable rocket ship to help save the planet.

If you visit his Blue Origin website, you can read about his vision:

*“Blue Origin was founded by Jeff Bezos with the vision of enabling a future where millions of people are living and working in space to benefit Earth. In order to preserve Earth, Blue Origin believes that humanity will need to expand, explore, find new energy and material resources, and move industries that stress Earth into space.”*

Where's God in all this talk about preserving Earth? While being good stewards of the earth is something that God wants us to do, Bezos never mentioned or thanked God for bringing him back safely to Earth. There's no mention of the awesome glory of looking at the world God created from above. Just how frail it is and in need of Jeff Bezos to save it. You won't find a single mention of God on his website or in his briefings. But God's plan is not to preserve this earth for eternity, but to create a new heavens and a new earth.

The apostle St. John was granted to see this vision in Revelation 21 as he wrote, **“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.” (Revelation 21:1)**

And this is the vision, the big reveal, that Paul has been telling the Ephesians about in these opening first two chapters and which he can't help but expand upon again in chapter 3. Because it's so big! And because it includes the Ephesians!

Jeff Bezos' visions and dreams are small potatoes compared to what Paul is talking about in chapter 3. Bezos' thinking is short-sighted because it's all just focused on temporary, unsustainable things that will pass away. Paul is talking about trying to comprehend the width, length, depth and height of something much more important, something that is eternal and not transitory. Paul is talking about the Holy Christian Church that is bigger than anyone can imagine for it includes the Gentiles! It includes the Ephesians! It includes you and me.

And by the grace of God, and only by His grace, God has launched this rocket with all the believers on board with it's eternal destination even beyond the stars – heaven itself! Oh, that we would comprehend with all the saints how big this is! Oh that we would believe through faith in Christ that God is **“is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”!**

How easy it is to think small and be discouraged when we don't see the whole picture of what God is doing right now in His church. Paul especially had to lift the spirits of the Ephesians who may have been discouraged that he was in prison. How could this be a part of God's plan?

Paul concluded chapter two that we heard last week telling the Ephesians and each of us are being built into God's church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone. Yes, Gentiles too, Paul tells the Ephesians! This rocket capsule is big!

Now, Paul opens up chapter 3 by telling the Ephesians and each of us, that **“Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—...that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already...) 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,”**

Paul is telling the Ephesians that God's plans can't be stopped by Paul's chains for preaching the Gospel. The mystery has been revealed to you that you are fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ! Don't think small! You're part of something big. Don't be discouraged because I'm in prison and you're not Jews. God's revealed the mystery to you because ...you're a part of it!

How often we need to be strengthened as did the Ephesians, **“with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”**

What has got you discouraged and thinking that God’s might is small...and we’re not the **“dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:22)?**

Rising cases of new strains of Covid? Personal health problems? Weather related problems from flooding? Bad news of rising crime, inflation, prices...etc. ?

Paul continues telling the Ephesians in chapter 3, right before our text, **“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”**

**“To make all see”** includes you and me. See what? What God had eternally purposed and accomplished in Christ Jesus! God’s plan was big! He saved the whole world. And now rooted in Christ’s love, they have fellowship with the Jews and boldness and access to God through faith in Him! Don’t think small! Don’t lose heart at my tribulation! They’re for your glory! God uses Paul’s strong faith in tribulation to lift the people up in joy. And sets Paul as an example for them.

God reminds us in His word, **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22)**

So also Paul said in Romans 5, **“we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

So again, don’t think small when tribulation comes, but know that God has big plans make you more firmly rooted in Christ and use your gifts for God’s kingdom.

**“20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.”**

Yes, God is able! More than able to do exceedingly beyond what we ask or think according to the power that works in you, baptized child of God! Not just in Paul’s generation, but in our generation, all generations, forever and ever. Amen!

How is the Holy Spirit working in you right now? How is He making you stronger in faith and hope that doesn’t disappoint? As you stay rooted in His love, God will reveal to you how you are able to serve Him and share the Good News.

I received a call this week from one of the members of this congregation one night at around 10pm. The person wanted some understanding about Psalm 113. First of all, I’m very happy to hear about someone meditating in God’s word at 10pm. I love to hear about this and anyone can call me at anytime. I’m glad to try to help.

**“Who is like the Lord our God, Who dwells on high,  
6 Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?  
7 He raises the poor out of the dust, And lifts the needy out of the ash heap,  
8 That He may seat him with princes— With the princes of His people.  
9 He grants the barren woman a home, Like a joyful mother of children.”**

Though the world might look down on a barren woman, God doesn’t. He raises the poor out of the dust, the needy out of the ash heap, and seats them with princes. He gives the barren woman a home also – a home in God’s church. God thinks big always, when we’re at our smallest and raises us up. He changes our sadness to joy! What great plans God has for each of us, exceedingly great plans to use the gifts and talents He’s given us for the eternal purposes of building up His church.

You don’t have to go to the edge of our atmosphere to do that. Stay in our atmosphere, breathe the air here at ground level and see how **“is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**