



Lent 6 Worship  
Ephesians  
April 1, 2020  
St. Johns Lutheran  
Park Rapids, MN

### Preparing to Hear – Ephesians

- Saint Paul wrote this to the church about five years after he had been with them and about three years before the first letter to Timothy, who served the Ephesian congregation.
- Paul had first made contact with a group of disciples at Ephesus during his third missionary journey and ended up staying there for three years.
- The letter is written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome. It is most likely written at the same time as the letter to the Colossians. Both letters share common material and the trip from Rome to Colosse would most likely go through Ephesus.
- The letter is one of general encouragement. The only real trouble that seems to be addressed is division between the Jewish and Gentile members of the congregation.

### Things to Listen for in Ephesians

- The Holy Spirit moves Paul to begin this letter with a beautiful Trinitarian *Berakah* prayer - that is a prayer of blessing. It weaves our blessing (praising) God for His blessings (good gifts bestowed on us). It begins with God the Father and flows beautifully into praising God the Son and rejoices in the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul talks about giving thanks for the faith and love of the Ephesians which then again ends up focusing on the blessing of God in Christ.
- The first thing Jews and Gentiles had in common was that they were dead in their sin. The second thing they had in common was that God made them alive in Christ Jesus, and the third thing was that the Holy Spirit gave them faith.

- Christ is back in the center as the One who came for all, Jew and Gentile alike and in Him is our citizenship, our unity, and our family status.
- Even as Paul moves into Christian living, the message of Christ remains in the center as binding force for the church and the power for living according to God's direction. He is even the center of Christian marriage as is made so clear.
- Paul makes clear that the battle of life is against spiritual forces and that the only way to stand against them is to be equipped with the very armor of God.
- Key memory passages in Ephesians:
  - ✓ 2:8-10 "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."
  - ✓ 6:10-20: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil..."

### Reading and Hearing

*1 Timothy*

#### Christ and the Church (1:1-3:21)

- Triune Blessings in Christ (1:1-14)
- Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:15-23)
- Dead by Nature, Alive in Christ by Grace Alone (2:1-10)
- Gentiles and Israel, One in Christ (2:15-22)
- Paul the Preacher to the Gentiles (3:1-13)
- Prayer to Grasp the Love of Christ (3:14-21)

#### The Baptized Life of a Believer (4:1-6:20)

- Baptism Unites (4:1-16)
- Baptism Clothes the Believer (4:17-32)
- Baptism Directs Our Steps (5:1-20)
- Baptism Orders Our Relationships (5:21-6:9)
- Baptism Equips Us with God's Armor (6:10-20)

#### Conclusion (6:21-24)

## Taking It Home

### Thursday – Read Ephesians 1

Paul begins with this magnificent prayer/song praising the Triune God for all that He has done and continues to do for us. It is a complicated section with a lot of connecting clauses. In fact, in the Greek vs. 3-14 are ONE sentence.

The first reason to praise the Father is that He has blessed us *in Christ!* How many spiritual blessings have we received *in Christ?* Does that leave us room to somehow coax more blessings out of God?

The Father is also praised for choosing us in Christ and predestining us to be sons through Jesus. This is meant to be a comfort to us, not a complicated philosophical mess. The good news is that standing with faith in Jesus' work, I can look back through the cross and see that God had this in mind for me from before a single creative word was spoken.

The grace God has blessed us with is in “the Beloved.” Who is that?

What are some blessings we have in Jesus?

What is God's plan in Jesus? (vs. 10)

What else do we receive in Jesus? (vs. 11)

Who “seals the deal”? (vs. 13-14)

Paul has heard that things are going well in the five years since he left. He prays for an increase in wisdom that they may know what three things?

What power is focused on?

Where is Christ seated?

*Prayer:*

*Praise be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for in Your grace You have not only redeemed us and forgiven us, but called us as sons and daughters and promised us an inheritance. Help us ever to grow in our wisdom that we may ever be sure of the hope You have given us in the power filled resurrection of the Son. Amen.*

### Friday – Read Ephesians 2-3

What is clear about our spiritual life outside of Christ?

Where are we also now seated?

Vs. 8-10 are worthy of memorizing. Everything is a gift from God, the grace, the faith and even the works.

Paul comes to the heart of what appears to be the conflict that is smoldering in the church at Ephesus (and other places), the Jewish/Gentile disunity. Who brings unity and how?

What is the household of God built on?

What is the mystery of God now revealed?

Paul says that we have boldness and access with confidence to the Father through Jesus. He says then they shouldn't lose heart over Paul's imprisonment. What might we "lose heart" over?

Paul is again found to be praying for blessing on the congregation. What are some of the things he is praying for?

*Prayer:*

*Out of the amazing abundance of Your love, mercy and grace You have brought us from the death of sin to life in Christ and taken us from outcasts to members of Your household. Help us always to remember the fullness of Your love that we might not lose heart in any situation. Amen.*

#### **Saturday - Read Ephesians 4**

The Holy Spirit guides Paul into that intersection between faith and life. Our new life in God's grace is to be filled with the things of God. What are the first of those things in vs. 2-3?

If you've missed the idea of unity before, it's pretty hard to miss it now. How many "one" things does Paul mention?

Does God give the same gifts and calling to everyone?

What's the point of the work of shepherds and teachers?

As Paul mentions the unbelieving Gentiles are darkened in their understanding, remember what his prayer was for the Church at the beginning of the letter, 1:18 and following.

What is sensuality?

Baptism is mentioned specifically twice, but it's language pervades the letter, especially in the "put off...put on" in vs. 22-23 and "sealed" in vs. 30.

Which of the many things listed do you find easiest/hardest to follow in vs. 25-32?

What is the purpose of working? (vs. 28)

*Prayer:*

*Let us ever walk with Jesus, Follow His example pure, Through a world that would deceive us And to sin our spirits lure. Onward in His footsteps treading, Pilgrims here, our home above, Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father's bidding. Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where You guide.*

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**Sunday – Read Ephesians 5-6**

Christ is back in the center as the reason and strength of walking the life of love.

What is the fruit of light?

What is specifically addressed as the will of the Lord?

What are we to do to one another out of reverence for Christ?

How is the word to wives about submitting to their husbands summed up in vs. 33?

How are husbands to treat their wives?

This sections transforms beautifully into the image of Christ and His bride, the Church. The white robe of baptism is transformed into the wedding gown. And this relationship is to be lived out in marriage.

What advice is given to Christian slaves? How does that apply to us?

What are we to be strong in?

“Put on” is, again, baptism language. Why put it on? (vs. 11 and 13)

What is the only “offensive” part of the armor and what does it stand for?

How is it to be used? (vs. 18)

What does Paul ask this congregation to pray for? Pastor Newton and I would ask the same of our congregation.

*Prayer:*

*Strengthen us to be imitators of You, O God, living the life of love shown to us in Jesus. Help us to be light in the darkness of this world and to reflect in our relationships the unity we have in Jesus. Equip us to stand firm, dressed in the watery armor of our baptism. Amen.*