

Tell and Show
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Ephesians 3:1-13

3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Title: Tell and Show

Theme: The church exists to reveal Jesus as Messiah and King.

Introduction:

Why we love mysteries and caper movies. With the best ones, once the murderer or the true mastermind is revealed, we smack ourselves in the forehead and say, “Of course! The answer was right there in plain sight all along! Looking back, it all makes perfect sense.”

(Great example of this is the 1995 film *The Usual Suspects*)

Paul is trying to help his Gentile readers understand that Jesus was the answer to the great Jewish mystery of who God would raise up to rescue not only Israel, but in fact the whole world.

Before he was Paul, the great teacher and founder of churches, Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus.

Who Saul of Tarsus was: A person who has been zealous for God and for the preservation of the ancient ways of the God’s covenant since he was a little boy.

Who is Paul is now, at this writing: A person who is as zealous for God as ever, but has come to know that the rescuing Messiah every Jewish person has been waiting for and the righteous King every Roman citizen has been longing for has come into the world – and it is the same person: Jesus.

How did this happen? We who are familiar with Paul’s story recall that, as he was travelling to Damascus to inflict violence on Jesus’ followers, Paul had an encounter with the Risen Jesus himself. Jesus presents Paul with a question, “Why are you persecuting me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” Paul asks.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Bible publishers often add the heading, “Saul’s Conversion” to this part of Luke’s story in Acts chapter 9. But that is a little misleading. To modern readers that makes it seem that Saul started this journey Jewish and ended the journey as a Christian. It would be better to say that Paul started out zealous for God and the ancient traditions and ended up even more so. Rather than being converted, Paul became enlightened. If conversion is about changing one’s mind about what is true, enlightenment is about recognizing that the truth is so much greater, more real, indeed more true than one previously thought.

Paul's prayer for the church at the end of this chapter is for just this kind of enlightenment. "Now that you know who Jesus is and what God intends, I pray that you know it even more!" Paul says.

Paul is reveling in the marvelous way God has caused this mystery to unfold and be revealed. The big reveal turned out to be so controversial among Paul's contemporaries, Jewish and Gentile alike, that from the moment Paul began talking about it openly he was threatened, beaten, stoned, and imprisoned multiple times. But it was such extraordinary news that he could not – would not – keep it to himself.

Paul never pretends that this enlightenment comes because he is smarter or morally superior to anyone else. "I am less than the least of all God's people," he says. Then he credits his understanding to grace. It is an unearned and unmerited gift from God, having nothing to do with deserving. The marks of a life transformed by the gospel has always been awe, gratitude, and humility.

Paul tells us that God had a very specific purpose for this revelation: That the church would TELL and the church would SHOW.

Now that God has revealed the Messiah Jesus to be the Lord of all, Paul says, the church is to be revealed as Christ's body on earth.

Keep in mind what Jesus said to Paul on the road to Damascus: You aren't persecuting people who follow me. You are persecuting ME.

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

The Church is the showcase for God's "manifold wisdom" – that is,

All the ways in which a God-oriented life is a best life a person can flourish.

All the ways a God-oriented community is the best way people can flourish together.

All the ways a God-oriented humanity is the best way to the whole world can flourish.

We, the church on earth, deliver a message from heaven to all the self-serving rulers and cohesive authorities. We TELL them: Your time is up. There is another King, and his name is Jesus. Our allegiance is first, last, and only to him. This is what FAITH means.

We, the people of God who place our trust in the Jesus – the Jewish Messiah and the true and rightful King of the world – SHOW the way to others as we approach God with freedom and confidence. This also is what what FAITH means.

FAITH in Jesus Christ means belief in the gospel AND trust in the person of Jesus AND allegiance to Jesus before all else.

Are we willing express our allegiance to Jesus with the same enthusiasm that we support the 49ers this afternoon?

Will we speak up for Jesus and his Kingdom during this election year?

Will we live not as Red or Blue buy instead Purple – the royal color of our Crucified and Risen Lord?

When we come to this table, we are saying: Jesus Christ first. Jesus Christ last. Jesus Christ only. Amen.

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