

“What Do You See?”

Ephesians 1:15-23

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • April 22, 2018

Have you ever had the experience of not being able to see what everyone else seems to see? They're pointing to it and commenting about it and no matter how hard you try you just can't see what they see. But when you finally ARE able to see, it seems so obvious. Once you see you can't unsee.

One of the most popular films of the past 40 years is *Field of Dreams*, starring Kevin Costner and James Earl Jones and Burt Lancaster. The movie is about a corn farmer in Iowa, Ray, who hears a voice speaking to him in his field. He hears the voice several times and it whispers to him, “If you build it, he will come.” Ray feels that what he's supposed to do is build a baseball field on his farm.

If you've seen the movie you know that he builds the baseball field and eventually it becomes a place where baseball players from the past are able to come and play. But only Ray and a few other people can see them. His in-laws, for example, can't see the players. But in one of the most powerful scenes in the movie, Ray and his brother-in-law Mark, who can't see the players, are arguing on the bleachers. Mark insists that Ray has to sell the farm to keep from going bankrupt. During the argument, Ray's daughter Karin falls from the bleachers and is unconscious, choking on a hotdog. At this point one of the players who had been a doctor, Archie Graham, steps off the field to treat Karin. And that's when Mark's eyes are finally opened. He sees what he couldn't before. He says, “when did these ball players get here?”

Field of Dreams beautifully illustrates what the Apostle Paul is telling us about God. And he does it in this beautiful prayer. Last week we looked at the way God rescues us. We are unable to rescue ourselves. God has to do it for us. And He does. As we heard last week, verse 11 of Ephesians 1 says, “In Jesus we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel

of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”

Then beginning in verse 15, Paul says, “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you.” In other words, Paul is saying, “I have heard how you are living and I can clearly see that God is working in your lives and in your church.”

This had to be great encouragement to the Christians in Ephesus. They lived in the midst of a sinful, self-serving culture. Does that sound familiar? Following Jesus was difficult and costly. No doubt those Christians were tempted to go along with the culture in many ways, and no doubt they often failed. But Paul thanks God for their faith and their love for one another. He sees the good, no matter how imperfect, and encourages them to keep doing it. Keep loving Jesus and keep loving other people more and more. You and I should do the same thing. When you see Jesus at work in someone, when you see somebody exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, you should point it out. Encourage one another. We are often quick to point out others' faults. We should be quicker to point out others' faith and love.

So what is it that Paul prays for when he remembers the Ephesians? He prays that God would give them “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of [their] hearts enlightened, that [they] may know what is the hope to which he has called [them], what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.” There's a lot in that short prayer so let's look at several parts of it.

Paul begins by praying that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom *and* of revelation. Notice that wisdom is not enough for us to know God. The only way we can know God's truth is that He *reveals* it to us. We only know God because He reveals Himself to us. For

example, God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush and on the mountain when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments. In our reading from Matthew Jesus says, “no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Now God certainly uses a number of ways to reveal Himself to us, primarily through the Scriptures. From cover to cover the Bible primarily points us to Jesus, the ultimate revealing of God to us.

So what is it that Paul prays that God would reveal to the Ephesians and to us? Three things. First is hope. Paul prays that we would “know what is the hope to which he has called you.” Remember, hope is not the same as wishing. Hope in the Bible is based on a promise. Next week we will be celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism and baptism is all about the promises of God. Romans 6 says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” The promise of baptism is the same as we see here – resurrection.

In John 14 Jesus makes the promise to come for us one day. He says, “I will come and take you to myself so that where I am you may be also.” And in Philippians 1:6 we hear the promise, “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” The promises of God are trustworthy and they are guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.

The second thing Paul prays is that we would know “what are the riches of his glorious inheritance.” What are these riches we stand to inherit? It’s eternal life. One day we won’t need to hold on to the hope of eternal life any more because we will experience it for ourselves. But this inheritance is more than what happens when we die. Jesus said, “I came that they may

have life and have it abundantly.” He’s talking about *this* life. God’s rich blessings begin now. God says, “you can have things like love and joy and peace and patience in your life right now.”

And so third Paul wants us to know *how* we can have those things, the fruit of the Spirit, and it’s through “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.” The power that created the world by speaking, the same power that raised Jesus from the grave, is available right now to help you experience love and joy and peace. Think about that. No matter what you are facing today, no matter how difficult things seem, the power of God the Holy Spirit is greater. That doesn’t mean you will always get everything you want. But it does mean that God is in control and will provide you with what you need. It means God will keep his promises.

That brings us to the final thing we find in this passage. How do you go about experiencing this divine resurrection power in your life? Well, you’ve got a head start. You’re here. Verses 22 and 23 say, “And he put all things under Jesus’ 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.” You experience God’s power by participating in the Church. The Church is God’s instrument for transforming the world by working to undo the effects of sin. Our American individualism tends to get in the way. But when you read the Bible you discover that faith is not really individualistic. It’s corporate. To follow Jesus requires being a part of Christ’s body, which is the Church.

Pastor Brian Chappel writes, “Despite all of her weakness, there is no more powerful an organization of hope in the world than a body of believers loving one another, helping and forgiving one another, praying for the work of Christ in their midst, supporting each other in joy and in sorrow, equipping disciples, showing mercy to outsiders, and praising the God who enables it all.”

So that's our mission. As followers of Jesus we need to band together so that we tap into the resurrection power of God so that we can love one another more and more and grow in our faith in Jesus. As we do that together I pray that God will open the eyes of our hearts to know Him fully, to the praise of his glory.

Amen.