

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 22 January 2023
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: Every Spiritual blessing
Passage: Ephesians 1:8a-10
Title: Informed
Outline: **Knowing how it ends...
...changes everything now**

Some time ago I saw the movie “Murder on the Orient Express”

Great scenery... steam train through snow-capped mountains...

...intriguing plot with a quite a few twists and turns throughout...

Now – I’m not going to spoil it for you if you’ve not seen it...

But knowing the **end** at the **beginning** changes everything – ie, if I went to see the movie again **now** – knowing how it ends, would **utterly change** how I viewed just about **every scene** in the movie...!

Knowing how it **ends...** changes **everything...**

Now – there’s quite a few situations in life where knowing the end changes everything...

Susan and I have travelled the Newell highway up to QLD or back quite a few times in the last three years...

but because we knew the **destination** and what **awaited us** – seeing Michael in Toowoomba and then on to Emily and Anthony and the grandchildren in Ipswich – what a blessing that was - that changed the nature of the drive... if we were just driving without a **destination** – different story...

...but we knew what was waiting for us at the end of the journey -

Knowing it how it **ends...** changes **everything...**

Knowing that the school holidays **will** eventually end...

Knowing that there is an **end-date** to the **radio-therapy...**

Knowing that when you’re at the airport, the airport **itself** is not the destination but something great awaits at the other end of the flight... changes **everything...** //

It’s when there **unknowns** that life is most challenging isn’t it?

- **Will** my little girl get better?
- Are the tumours **shrinking**?
- Will I **ever** find a job?
- Will my **marriage** survive?
- Will I clear my **name**?

... those and similar questions are some of the toughest we’ll face...

but friends... what I hope we’ll see today... is that in the midst of life’s uncertainties and challenges...

... **we** are totally **privileged** to know the end from the beginning... //

and knowing how it **ends**, changes **everything...**

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and there are my two points this morning

1. **Knowing** how it ends
2. **Changes** everything

1. KNOWING HOW IT ENDS

Let's read again vv9-10...please look with me - *he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.* /

Many of us love a good mystery....

...especially once all is revealed and everything fits into place.

The Apostle Paul uses this word 'mystery' quite a bit... but every time he does, it's always in the sense that what was **ONCE** a mystery, but is no **longer** – the mystery has been made known.

See what he's saying here? – *he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure...*

His will – his eternal plans – **WERE** a mystery – but he's now made them known...

Not just his plans for **tomorrow** or next **week** or **2023**... but his big plan for the entire **universe** for all **eternity**...!!

We **Christians** are "in the **know**....!"

Indeed that's why we **have** the Bible – where God reveals **himself to us**, and his **plans**, his **purposes** to us... so we **know**!!

We know **why** he created the world

We know our **place** in the created order

We know that we mucked everything **up** by doing our **own thing**...

And we know that because he **loves** us, because of the **grace which he has lavished on us**... he had a plan to **rescue** us from our **slavery to sin** and its consequences and draw us back into relationship with himself! //

We know where **all history** is leading!!! //

Mystery **revealed**! ///

But what we being told specifically in these verses?

Look with me again - *he made known to us the mystery of his will – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

Well that's certainly not how we see the world right now!

We see **division** and **turmoil** and **injustice** and **oppression**...

We see **conflict** and economic **imbalance**

We see **religions** that teach **opposite realities**...

We see the **decline** in **Christianity** in the west

We see **rise** in **persecution of Christians** ...

Even in our own lives and families we know not all is well...

But here's the **promise**... here's the **plan**... that one day God will bring everything together in **perfect unity** under the leadership of his **Son** – the **Messiah** – our **Saviour** – our **King** – **Jesus**!! //

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Can we **dare** to imagine what that will be like?

Absolute peace. No division. Everyone on the same **page**. With Jesus at the centre! //

Philippians 2: *Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!!!*

And from that beautiful verse in the second last chapter of the Bible – **Rev 21:4** - *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

That’s the **plan**... ///

You might ask – “hang on Mark - what about those who have been or who are currently opposed to God? What about those who reject Jesus?”

Great question... **important**... and as we always read Scripture **with Scripture** – and interpret Scripture **by Scripture**... and we understand that those who stand opposed to God at this moment, will either end up **reconciled** to him because they will turn to him as God draws them to himself... or along with all evil and the evil one *himself*; **banished** from God’s presence forever! – so that all that **remains** – will be under the **unifying leadership** of the **King of Kings!!** / We acknowledge with great tears... tremendous sadness... /

That’s why we want to urge more and more people to turn to God and find forgiveness now...!!

That is why want to be about the business of **SHARING JESUS FOR LIFE!**

Another question you may have is “**WHEN** Mark? – **when** will this happen?”

And I take you back to the passage – for the answer is there – if you’ll look with me once more - *he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,*¹⁰ **to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment**

Just like in Galatians where we read that at just the right time God sent his son Jesus....

That is – **in God’s perfect timing**...!

When it’s time! / **His** time!

That may not be a very satisfying answer.... And if you’re like me – some days – you want that to be **now!** – Just now Lord – please bring on the end, **NOW!**

Some things **have** been revealed to us – that everything will be brought to unity under Christ – but some things **haven’t** been **revealed** – that is **WHEN** that will be!

On the first Sunday in Advent just past – in the lectionary readings – we recalled that **that day** will come like a **thief** in the night – **unexpected** and **unannounced**.

I’ve **never** had a thief do a letterbox drop informing me that they’ll be working our area in the next week or so...

...and similarly – we won’t be told **when** the end will come... just that it’s **coming** and how **brilliant** that will be!

But we do know everything is heading in that direction.

And I’ve shared with you before that at least part of the reason for the delay?... from **2 Peter 3** – is the opportunity for more and more people to repent and come to know Jesus.... *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance...*

friends – we’re in the **know**...

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we know **where** this world is heading... everything in unity under Christ...

but for our remaining minutes this morning, I want to explore – how this changes everything now...

2. CHANGES EVERYTHING NOW

What changes?

Three things – (at least three!)

Perspective, trust and hope

Being able to see a long way into the future, changes our **perspective**

Like going up on a mountain and seeing how the roads, hills, and valleys work

Because we know how everything here will end, we have a different **perspective** from those around us...

...on what **matters**

...on what will **last**...

...on what is worth **worrying** about...

I remember my parents bemoaning on many occasions “I just don’t know what the world’s coming to”

If they were still around now and saying that I’d say (with respect of course!) – ‘**really?** – **let me fill you in!** - God is bringing everything together in unity under Jesus’...

Yes, we worry about **those who rule in other parts of the world – and sometimes – we worry about leadership in our own nation...**

...we might worry about **climate change**... and all the related issues

...we worry about the sustainability of our reliance on **fossil fuels**...

...we worry about the proportion of people who have no access to **clean water and no sanitation**...

...we worry about the number of people who struggle simply to have enough to **eat**... Ethiopia right now – famine once more....

...we worry about the rise of **militant atheism**...

... we worry about the escalation in the persecution of **Christians**

...we worry about **freedom of religion** and **freedom of speech**...

...but brothers and sisters... the **Lord** has all this under his **control**...

he has a **plan**... he’s on a **mission**... to bring *unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ!*

That doesn’t mean our **concern** over all those issues and causes and many others suddenly **ceases**... but it does mean we have some **perspective**...

Because we **can** become overwhelmed by all those issues... and feel **small and helpless**... //

But we **know** there’s a **plan**... we know there’s an eventual **end** to the world’s **sadness** and **tragedies** and **injustices**...! /

Knowing the **end**, changes our **perspective**.... /

It also changes our perspective in **personal circumstances**: are you struggling now – issues of **aging** perhaps?

You’ve had a medical **diagnosis which is unhappy?**

Please know that this time in the light eternity is only **short**... If you **should die**...? as **hard** as all the

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associated issues are... that will only mean you get to experience the unifying leadership of the glorious Lord Jesus – **sooner!!!!** //

So – this changes our **perspective** - ...it also deepens our **trust**...

Sometimes we don't have a clue what God is doing in our lives...

...and understandably... we ask – Lord – what are you **doing**? What is **happening**? Why am I facing this **challenge**??

And we've often said here – that we have to go with what we **DO** know about God's character and plans – to help us trust him for those areas where we **can't** or **don't** what he's doing... /

So – **because** we know he has a plan to bring everything into **unity** under **Christ**... / we know that everything that **happens**... is part of **that great plan** – even if we can't see or understand the **connection**!

God is using **everything** to bring about his **purposes**...

Romans 8 – *we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

He – in the context of this passage we've explored these past weeks... God has a plan to bring all things under Christ... and **chosen** us and **adopted** us and **redeemed** us to ensure we're part of the **plan**...

Therefore when things go '**wrong**'.../ we can **trust** him... he has a **plan**.

It's a **good plan**.

We're **part** of the **plan**.

He's **working** out his **plan**.

We can rest **easy** in the **plan**. /////

So – **because** we **know** the **plan**, – our **perspective changes**, our **trust deepens** and our **hope** grows... //

It's easy to lose **hope**.... To **despair**...

But knowing the end from the beginning changes that... as our perspective becomes **eternal** and our trust runs **deep** – so our hope **lifts**... and we begin to grasp the **significance** of the entire plan of God.

Knowing that there is a **future ahead**... knowing God has everything in **hand**... knowing our **griefs** and **trials** here are only **short** – only **short**... in the light of **eternity**... our eyes lift – our hope lifts...

Then suddenly, as John Piper says, when we see the plans to bring everything under the unity of Christ -

- *grace gets **bigger**;*
- *Christ gets **greater**;*
- *his **death** gets more **wonderful**;*
- *his **resurrection** gets more **astonishing**;*
- *the work of the **Spirit** gets **mightier**;*
- *the power of the **gospel** gets more **pervasive**;*
- *your own sin gets **uglier**;*
- *the **devil** gets more **evil**;*
- *and the anticipation of all that is to come gets all the more **real**. ///*

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... we want to live **WITH** him

we want to live **FOR** him

we want to live in such a way that others catch a **glimpse** of the **plan... //**

...we want to **kill off sin**

...we want to **love** our **families**

...we want to cut the useless **distractions** out of our lives

...we want to get with the **program** – **HIS program**

We want to be people with a big **perspective**, a deep **trust**, with a lively and joyful **hope!!**

For we have been given **every spiritual blessing** in the **heavenly realm...!**

Chosen to be **holy and blameless**

Adopted as his **sons and daughters**

Redeemed from **sin and death**

And **informed** of his great plan *which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*