

**“Making it Plain”**  
**by Rev. Frances Savill**  
**January 7, 2024**  
**Epiphany Sunday**

**Ephesians 3:1-12**

How many of you like mysteries?

Do you like a good detective show, or a great mystery novel?

So, a classic mystery story goes something like this... the setting is in a castle in Scotland, and probably it is a dark, stormy night, the small cast of characters includes an eccentric widow, a butler with odd mannerisms, a relative from out of town who just happens to show up, a grumpy neighbour, a few other odd relatives, and of course a detective who eventually solves the mystery. The plot includes a crime and a rich inheritance.

Our scripture this morning speaks of a great mystery. Now on some points Paul follows the classic story, but in other ways he differs greatly. It seems that God knows our love of a great mystery also.

Paul begins by saying he was given insight by God himself. This mystery that Paul is speaking of, he didn't one day figure it all out, or put the clues together. Paul isn't smarter, or a great detective, God didn't leave clues that Paul pieced together. Paul got in on this mystery because God revealed it to him.

This morning we celebrate Epiphany – which is about revealing. It's about God showing us something – suddenly our eyes are opened by God, and we see something that was previously hidden. Epiphanies are gifts from God.

Often, we talk about faith as a journey, and we speak about growing in faith, and growing our relationship with God, and all those things are true.

But there are also moments, gifts from God, when suddenly we see, an opening our eyes to the truth, or some other revelation from God to us.

Paul's eyes were opened – on the road, as Paul was heading to persecute followers of Jesus. Paul had a personal encounter with the living God, - with Jesus- and in that revelation – that Epiphany, Paul learned a great mystery. He learned that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah of God, and that God wanted **all** people to be in right relationship with him, not just the Jews.

Jesus was the access of **all** people to God, to set **all** people right with God, that all people might have a personal, intimate relationship with God the Father, with Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So, unlike the classic mystery, the cast of characters isn't small. Paul says that his life's work is to help **all** people understand and respond to this Message.

And Paul says that all of us, the whole church in every place, is to make plain this mystery. *"Through followers like yourselves gathered in churches this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!"*

This mystery includes the incredible news that all of us are made heirs of the riches of Christ.

In the classic mystery story, there are often heirs of great riches, and often there is a new will discovered, and there is a fight over the inheritance. In our gospel mystery there is a new will – and inexhaustible riches in Christ.

But what is different in the gospel story is that when more heirs are added, no one is any poorer, in fact, all are enriched. Our riches in Christ are inexhaustible, welcoming everyone, including everyone who will receive them. And unlike the classic mystery story, the story doesn't end when the mystery is solved.

In the classic detective story, the story ends when the mystery is revealed, but Paul says that the story is just beginning. With the revealing of this mystery, a whole new story opens up, a whole world needs to respond and be drawn into right relationship with God and receive the riches that are ours in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul says, *"When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities.*

*8-10 And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God is doing. "*

What God has done in Jesus and God's kingdom that is being established even now in our midst.

Paul's task is also our task. We are to bring the message out into the open. We are to invite people, and let them know in what we say and do, that they are included in the riches of Christ.

All of us have access to God, all of us are invited into an intimate relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul describes himself as unqualified for the task of sharing this message, and I think that's how most of us feel.

But we can share something of why our faith is important to us. We can invite, we can encourage, we can pray for people, we can share a little of our own story of faith.

I'm going to ask you do that. I'm going to give you a couple of minutes to write down – why you believe in God, or why you are in church, or why your faith is important to you.

You might say something like... *God has been with me in the hardest times of my life giving me hope, or comfort or strength.*

You might say... God has always been a part of my life. God is like a constant friend, or God changes me, and helps me to be the person I long to be. Or your story might be how God has set you free from addiction, or has changed your darkness into light, or given you a new start. God may be your healer, or provider, your shepherd, or your song.

You don't have to say more than a couple of sentences. And you don't have to be an expert. Paul says that we are all speaking about things that are way over our head - the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. But it is God who equips us, and God who gives power to our words.

Over refreshments this morning, I'm going to encourage you to share what you wrote, or part of what you wrote, and to ask God to give you an opportunity to share those words with someone else this week some time.

Jesus describes his followers as "the salt of the earth", or "light to the world." We bring out the God colours, or God flavours in this world, by what we say and what we do, and by who we are.

When people see who we are, when they see our relationship and joy in the Lord, there is something appealing about that, something that draws others in, something that calls to the deep places in all our hearts.

I see it in you folks all the time. You make a difference in this community, you make a difference in this world, in your families, amongst your friends. Ask God for help to share the incredible news that we know.

Paul tells the church and I'm proclaiming to you, that through followers of Jesus like us gathered in churches, God's plan is becoming known, and people are being drawn to Jesus, becoming his disciples, and it's being talked about, we're being talked about as we share this good news, even among the angels.

**Thanks be to God.**

## God has made a difference in my life!

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My Story...