

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

**Reign of Christ
Ephesians 1: 15-23**

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“A Treasure Chest of Hope, Riches and Power”

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. [Ephesians 1:15-23]

So the first thing I want to do is go around and ask each one of you here on zoom with me which phrase captured your attention. You don't have to say why or say anything else – just share the particular phrase....

And now, if you could, just share briefly what it was about that phrase that caught your interest....

For me, there are 3 things that I'd like to share with you.

The first is that I want you to know that I join in Paul's prayer.

“I do not cease to give thanks for you, as I remember you in my prayers”

AND

“I pray that...God...may give you a spirit of...revelation as you come to know him,
so that...the eyes of your heart [might be] enlightened.”

That last part I pray for myself as well,

because I believe that God is working miracles around us
each and every moment of our lives, but most of the time, we just don't notice.

Maybe it's because we don't know God well enough.

Maybe it's because we don't have or haven't developed our spirit of revelation.

Maybe it's because we're looking with the eyes in our heads instead of the eyes of our heart.

Maybe it's because we get distracted by the things that are getting in the way of God's work.

Maybe it's because we are too close to the problem

to see how God is working in the larger picture.

But for whatever reason, I think we fail to see much of what God is doing.

And so, I pray for you and for me that we may get to know God better

and that God would enlighten our hearts.

Secondly the reason Paul wants our hearts to be enlightened is so that we can see three things:

that we have been called to a hope that will not fail us,
that God has already blessed us with unimaginable riches,
and that God's power is immeasurable.

Let me say one word about each of those things.

For me, that hope came in what I can only describe as snapshot moments –
when I clearly heard God say, “This is the hope to which you’ve been called.”

I liken it to the way God took Abram out into the night and showed him the star-filled heavens
and said, “Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky”.

I am sure that for the rest of his life,

Abram could never again look at the stars without remembering God’s promise.

And I know that no matter how my life situation looks at any given moment,

no matter how far away the fulfillment of that promise seems,

no matter how much I may be overcome by doubt or depression or despair,

that promise always calls me back to hope.

For me, what Paul says about the riches of God’s glorious inheritance among the saints
means that God offers us everything we could ever need.

Sure, we don’t always get what we want, but that can be

because we don’t trust that God will give us something & so we try to get it ourselves,

or because we don’t follow the path that God has laid down to get us there,

or because the things we think we want may not be the things we’re really looking for.

But I firmly believe, that God created a universe of abundance.

That means that if we fear that we will lack, we will lack,

but as long as we trust in God’s abundance, it will be there.

So we need to hold onto the hope to which we’re called,

we need to trust in the unlimited abundance of riches which God has promised us,

and we need to know trust in God’s immeasurable power.

For me, I’ve experienced that power

when I believed that if God could raise Jesus from the dead, God could cure my migraines.

I’ve experienced that power when I asked for a miracle a few weeks ago,

and a virtual stranger sent me \$1000 to buy air cleaners for the church.

I’ve experienced that power in huge ways like those times and in small ways on a more frequent basis.

Finally, what Paul makes clear is that no matter what happens

in our world, or our country, or our state, or our town, or our church, or our family,

we can put our trust in God, for the One who is powerful enough to create the entire universe,

is the same God who knows how many hairs are on our heads,

who understands our every thought and feeling,

and who is at work in our lives whether we are aware of it or not.

I hope you will read this passage often this week.

Read it when you awake, read it before you go to sleep,

read it whenever doubt or fear or anger or frustration or any other negative thought or emotion assails you,

read it whenever you are moved to give God thanks and praise.

We are perhaps dealing with more stress than we have ever dealt with before –

with a world-wide pandemic, with racial injustice, with a government in chaos,

with economic uncertainty, with natural disasters rising to 300 a year,

and with all the other challenges that face us personally.

But today, we are reminded of our great and glorious God, the God of all creation, the God of all power & love.

And I pray that that God may give you a spirit of revelation as you come to know him,

so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,

what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,

and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power.

For each and every one of you, that is my prayer. **Amen**