

Ephesians 1:11-14

God's glory = our good.

“What’s the most important thing about you?”

Tired of the usual greetings of “What do you do?” or “Who do you work for?” I thought it would be tremendously clever to ask a deeper question of new acquaintances. “What’s the most important thing about you?”

The question was mostly met with blank stares! Some would respond with thwart they did and who they worked for! Some though, after a pause, would respond with things far more meaningful than title or position.

“A good brother.” “A persistent optimist.”

Of course I would rib Christians that didn’t say “I belong to Jesus!”

As I studied this week it struck me that every time we gather for worship on Sundays, or on Tuesdays in our small groups, we are giving an answer to the question.

We are making claims of identity, of value, priority. Increasingly able to say, Jesus is the most important thing about me.

“I am in Christ.”

Ephesians is the declaration of life in Christ, united, bound to him. This letter provides anchoring truth and the way to live in light of it.

We have been digesting this meal slowly. To savor every truth and be transformed by it.

Today, in the conclusion of the doxology, the worshipful opening of this letter to the church we recognize that God’s glory = our good.

All that has come before builds to these verses.

In Christ we are:

- Blessed with every spiritual blessing
- Chosen by God
- Made holy and blameless before him
- Predestined for adoption
- Redeemed, rescued from sin by the blood of Jesus
- Part of God's purpose to unit all things in Christ

The gospel proclaimed and believed, the redeeming work of Jesus unfolding before us.

Where humanity was kicked out of the garden because of sin, the redemptive story of Scripture and Jesus is how now the garden (the place of peace, flourishing, communion with God) is invading the world. Bringing life to that which was once dead.

All of it is for “the praise of his glory.”

Glory: high renown or honor won by notable achievements. Essentially his flame. The ultimate influencer, main character... who doesn't just want you to know him, but knows you and desires for you to be known in relationship to him.

How his glory is good, in our text, provides unity, sealing, and eternity.

Unity

Two groups here. First, “we have obtained” and then “you also...” Paul is speaking of Jews, God's people - who he chose to showcase life with him to the world - and of Gentiles, those not of the lineage of Abraham. All brought together in Christ.

Paul will build the case more in the second chapter of Ephesians, but this follows right after the promise of verse 10.

Ephesians 1:10 “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (ESV)

We see the reconciliation happening in Christ.

This is the expansiveness of the redemptive plan and who it is for.

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (ESV)

Predestined to hope in Christ, faithful Jews not joined with Gentiles who believe in Jesus.

A converging of all of redemptive history, old covenant and new, into one humanity in Jesus.

1 Peter 1:10–12 “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. [12] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” (ESV)

Ancestry no longer determines redemption, but all that are in Christ, united as one.

It was this dynamic unity that astounded the ancient world. As Alexander Maclaren so eloquently said: “When these words were spoken, the then-known civilized world was cleft by great, deep gulfs of separation, like the crevasses in a glacier, by the side of which our racial animosities and class differences are merely superficial cracks on the surface. Language, religion, national animosities, differences of condition, and saddest of all, difference of sex, split the world up into alien fragments. A “stranger” and an “enemy” were expressed in one language, by the same word. The learned and the unlearned, the slave and his master, the barbarian and the Greek, the man and the woman, stood on opposite sides of the gulfs, flinging hostility across. Then the benefits of the Gospel came! Then “the Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, male and female, Jew and Greek, learned and ignorant,” clasped hands and sat down at one table, and felt themselves “all one in Christ Jesus.” They were ready to break all bonds.”

Because of God, we are his. Those once far apart made family. Predestined to be family, to be his.

“Making those who believe in him heirs with Christ was not an ad hoc event; God had planned it from all eternity. By definition God is sovereign, directing all things freely according to his royal counsel. This is in sharp contrast with the pagan gods of the time, who were understood to be often fickle or bound by an inscrutable and arbitrary fate. God’s predestination gives his people tremendous comfort, for they know that all who come to Christ do so through God’s enabling grace and appointment.” ESV Study Bible

His will is worked out.

Isaiah 46:9–10 “remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, [10] declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ (ESV)

History, redemptive and otherwise, works according to the counsel of his will. God wants you as his children, the One who lavished grace on you, who keeps giving you what you could never deserve. He spoils you in the best sense.

In Christ you are made his.

And our unity - this shared identity as those in Christ, it preaches to the world around us.

Jesus’ high priestly prayer:

John 17:20–23 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” (ESV)

United with Christ in faith, united with others in him. The kingdom going forth, the garden growing, bringing God glory as we experience his good.

Sealing

Not only were we predestined, if you are in Christ, you also responded. Given the truth of the gospel - that you were a sinner in need of saving - you believed in Jesus.

At that moment you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Promised by Jesus for all those that believe in him.

John 14:15–17 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (ESV)

Comforter. Teacher.

John 16:13–14 “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. [14] He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (ESV)

The Spirit is yours, in you, in Christ. God’s spirit, as the down payment for what is to come.

By the Spirit’s sealing, we are kept until the fullness of time, experiencing the garden life even in desert places.

John 17:15–19 “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. [16] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. [17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. [18] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. [19] And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” (ESV)

Sealing. Think of food, sealed packages, meant to keep what inside fresh. The Spirit does this in us as we wait for Jesus' return.

The Spirit does amazing things, still. We will see more that the Spirit does in Ephesians, his vital ministry here is as a guarantee. Applying redemption until we arrive, acquiring possession of our inheritance.

We, as God's treasured possession, taking hold of eternity.

Eternity

The fullness of time realized, union with Jesus experienced in the flesh. Good like we could never imagine. His glory as the warmth of the sun on our backs.

Worth the wait.

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. [17] For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (ESV)

“Imagine the sublimest, most treasured experiences of the Holy Spirit we have ever had and then realize they are only a foretaste, the tip of the tongue on the spoon, of what is to come. Remember the release in coming to Christ and knowing you were forgiven? Remember that time when in worship you were smitten with awe? Remember the time you followed the Spirit's leading and were wonderfully used? Remember the satisfaction of finding the fruits of the Spirit surprising you with goodness where you once responded wickedly? Think of all this and then multiply it a millionfold.” Kent Hughes

Eternity with Jesus is our inheritance. And it is exceedingly good.

John 17:1–3 “When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, [2] since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal

life to all whom you have given him. [3] And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (ESV)

The punctuation of this doxology. Of all we are given in Christ. Belonging, rescue, sanctification, grace.

“And why are we given such a torrential shower of blessing in verses 3–14? God’s chief purpose is for the praise of his name (vv. 6, 12, 14). Every blessing for us in Christ, planned by the Father and sealed by the Spirit, is meant to make much of our triune God. Grace glorifies the Giver.”

“Here then are the ‘how’ as the ‘why’ of God’s people, who are also his ‘heritage’ and his ‘possession’. How did we become his people? Answer: ‘According to the good pleasure of his will’ Why did he make us his people? Answer: ‘For the praise of the glory of his grace.’ Thus everything we have and are in Christ both comes from God and returns to God. It begins in his will and ends in his glory. For this is where everything begins and ends.” John Stott

God’s glory = our good.

Whose glory will you live for? The choice is between *yours* or *God’s*.

“This all comes into violent collision with the man-centredness and self-centredness of the world. Fallen humanity, imprisoned in our own little ego, has an almost boundless confidence in the power of his own will, and an almost insatiable appetite for the praise of his own glory. But the people of God have at least begun to be turned inside out. The new society has new values and new ideals. For God’s people are God’s possession who live by God’s will and for God’s glory.” Stott

Grace is given, redemption is experienced, life is sweeter in God’s glory.

Believe in Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection was for you. God chose you. Surrender to him, his way, and his glory.

When the question comes - “What is the most important thing about you?”

May our response be, “I am in Christ” to the praise of his glory.