

## I.N.I.

Epiphany Sunday  
Jan. 8, 2012  
Ephesians 3:1-13

In Christ Jesus, who has come to reveal Himself as the Savior of all of mankind, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Epiphany! In our bulletin we see that this word means “to make known, to show forth, to manifest, to appear.” All of these terms also apply to our scripture readings and our sermon text this morning. In our first reading we heard Isaiah prophesy that the Lord’s glory will be **MADE MANIFEST** and **APPEAR** to Gentiles as well as to the Jews. In our Gospel reading we saw the fulfillment of that prophecy when Jesus **APPEARED** to the Wise Men, the first Gentile Christians recorded in the New Testament. Throughout this Epiphany season we hear of how Jesus **SHOWED** Himself as true God. Someone wrote, “During the Christmas season we see how God appears as Man in the person of Jesus Christ, during the Epiphany season we see how this Man, Jesus Christ, **APPEARS AS GOD.**”

That's the mystery of the Gospel. The word "mystery" means something not revealed, something hidden, secret.

How many of you children wanted to peek, or maybe did peek, at your presents as they sat there so temptingly all wrapped up under the Christmas tree. Perhaps you shook them, weighed them, felt them, maybe even tried to see through the wrapping. The excitement and surprise of Christmas Eve or Christmas morning would have been spoiled had your mom or dad told you what was inside, if they would have revealed the secret of their contents.

Well in our text this morning we find that we are spoiling it for others if **WE DO NOT TELL THEM**, if we **DO NOT REVEAL** to them the mystery of the Gospel. This is something that we should reveal and tell all the world. And that is our theme this morning:

### **THE SALVATION SECRET IS OUT!**

We see that:

#### **I: GOD HAS REVEALED IT IN JESUS.**

Paul begins our text by remembering how God had graciously called him from his life of hatred toward Christ, persecuting Christ and Christians, to not only being a believer in Christ but one called to be an Apostle; entrusting him with the administration of this Gospel; revealing to him the mystery of His grace in Christ. What a humbling experience. That is why Paul says in our text; **TO ME, WHO AM LESS THAN THE LEAST OF ALL THE SAINTS, THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN, THAT I SHOULD PREACH AMONG THE GENTILES THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.** Paul looked upon himself as the least of the least, the lowest of the low, the most undeserving. And all of us who have honestly looked into the mirror of God's unchangeable law also know how wretchedly sinful we are. That is not a mystery. We see our sins everyday. How amazing that God reaches out and rescues miserable sinners like us.

How does He do it? By revealing this **SALVATION SECRET OF HIS LOVE IN JESUS CHRIST.**

There are many mysteries which have been revealed to us in the Bible. Truths which we could never know if the Holy Spirit had not revealed them to us. A "**MYSTERY**" is that which God alone knows but which He then reveals and makes known to human beings through His Word so that they in turn might tell it, reveal the “secret” to others. In Christ, God the Father has revealed His love for sinful, lost mankind.

That Jesus Christ is God in human flesh is a truth we could not know without the revelation of the

Scriptures. That salvation is by the Grace of God and not by our own works is also a mystery which God has revealed to us in His Word by His Spirit. That God loved all of us sinners so much that He sent His Son to take our place, to be our Substitute, to live the perfect life we could not live and to die the death we deserved to die is the mystery of the Gospel revealed to us in Christ. That mystery, that hidden secret we need to tell to the whole world. That salvation secret was revealed to Paul and it has been revealed, made known to each of us. **GOD HAS REVEALED IT IN JESUS.**

Secondly, we see from our text that:

## **II: GOD HAS REVEALED IT FOR ALL PEOPLE.**

This salvation secret has been revealed for the whole world to know. The Bible is not to be a hidden, unopened, unused book as it once was in the middle ages. A book only for a chosen few to read and expound on, while the rest sit in ignorance and are led by the religious scholars. No, we are all to be Bible students, Bible scholars in that sense. God's Word is to be read and then spread throughout the world, for all to know and believe. This secret of the Gospel is not just for the Jews, but for all the world. He intended it for all people, to bring the lost and condemned from every tribe, nation, people and language. In I Tim. Paul writes, **GOD OUR SAVIOR DESIRES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED AND TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.**

But did God have a plan for the salvation of the non-Jew in the Old Testament? It may have seemed that God was lavishing all of His love only upon one nation; the Israelites. But we need to remember the Gospel promise was given first by God to Adam and Eve for all people. This was before there even was a Jewish race or any race of people. It is not God's fault if sinful, selfish, self-centered people rejected this message or refused to share it with their neighbors or the next generation.

The Old Testament writings over and over proclaim the message of a world-wide Savior. Remember God's promise to Abraham, **ALL PEOPLES ON EARTH WILL BE BLESSED THROUGH YOU.** Not just his immediate descendants, the Israelites, but **ALL PEOPLE.** In Leviticus, God refers to foreigners living among the Israelites and never excludes them from the promise of salvation. Elijah went to the Gentile widow in Zaraphath. Jonah proclaimed God's grace to the Ninevites. Isaiah speaks of God's proclamation going out to the isles and distant nations. In our scripture reading Isaiah says, **THE GENTILES SHALL COME TO YOUR LIGHT.** But sad to say, very few Gentiles cared to come, cared anything about the **LORD JEHOVAH'S** salvation and continued to serve their man-made gods of silver, gold, stone and wood. Also sad to say, with few exceptions, the Old Testament Israelites made little or no effort to tell others outside of their nation.

But what a difference now! Paul says, **THE GENTILES (ARE) FELLOW HEIRS, OF THE SAME BODY, AND PARTAKERS OF HIS PROMISE IN CHRIST THROUGH THE GOSPEL.** Through the New Testament apostles, the Lord God has revealed His saving will: the salvation secret of His Gospel for all to see. The mystery is no longer a mystery to other nations. The secret is no longer a secret, thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit through God's ambassadors. Who would have believed that Gentiles would be fellow heirs, fellow members of Christ's body; fellow partakers and sharers in God's promise. To Paul, prior to his conversion that would have made him sick to his stomach--would have been repulsive. But now in Christ, Paul rejoices and is glad that he has been called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He writes, **THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN, THAT I SHOULD PREACH AMONG THE GENTILES THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.**

What unsearchable riches! Jesus is the eternal God, yet He was born a human baby here in time. He

is all-powerful, yet in weakness He allowed Himself to be arrested, beaten, mocked and nailed to the cross.

He is immortal God, yet He died to redeem us from our sins.

He is the Ascended Lord, yet He is with us at all times in every place.

We cannot fathom His glory, the unsearchable riches of His person and of His work. God has revealed to us in His Word that we **HAVE** riches beyond compare, beyond our comprehension. Riches that no one can put a dollar amount to: **PEACE WITH GOD, FORGIVENESS OF ALL SINS, JOY, CONTENTMENT, ROBES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN**, and that's just the beginning of the list.

Finally, we see from our text that:

### **III: GOD CONTINUES TO REVEAL IT TO THE CHURCH**

That means you and me! Paul writes in vs. 10, **TO THE INTENT THAT NOW THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD MIGHT BE MADE KNOWN BY THE CHURCH TO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES**. The word **MANIFOLD** in ancient times was used to describe flowers and multi-colored cloth. It indicates a fantastic and varied beauty in a simple and basic pattern, a beauty which continues to reveal itself in new ways as one looks at it.

Who is to proclaim this multifaceted wisdom of God to the world which is both simple yet profound; basic yet beautiful? **WE ARE!** Notice we are even to proclaim it so that the angels in heaven hear it. Peter tells us in his first Epistle that angels desire to look into God's Word to see His secret revealed to mankind and they marvel at God's wisdom. The angels witnessed the successes which the apostles enjoyed as they took the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Again and again they rejoiced as sinners came to repentance.

If even the angels are impressed with and marvel at God's Wisdom revealed in His Word and rejoice over one sinner who repents, shouldn't we be all the more? For this revelation of His saving will through Christ is for us, for you and for me. He planned it for us, He fulfilled it for us, He has revealed it to us and now He proclaims it through us. He did not choose His holy angels to do the proclaiming of the Gospel, He chose us jars of clay for this very special calling.

What a humbling revelation that is. Unworthy though we are, Christ has removed our unworthiness and now through faith **IN HIM WE HAVE BOLDNESS AND ACCESS WITH CONFIDENCE** to approach our Heavenly Father. Clothed in Christ's robe of righteousness, we sinners can come before our sinless holy God as though we also were sinless and holy. For God has declared us to be righteous in Christ.

Judgment Day is a mystery, a secret yet to be revealed, but thank God He has revealed to us the secret of His love, of His Gospel love in Christ. Let's not spoil it by not telling others. As someone has said, "Let us make it our business to put smiles on the angel's faces." Proclaiming the Good News of our salvation is the personal privilege and individual responsibility of every believer.

The Wise Men shared their wealth with Jesus. May we learn to share the spiritual wealth that we have in Christ with the rest of the world.

Amen.