

May 17 Sermon: Ephesians 3:14-21

<slide1>Good morning! My name is Brendan and this Friday marked one year of my time here as NSA's youth pastor! So since I have been here a year and it is the long weekend they decided that they would let me preach!!

This morning we are continuing our series in Ephesians on becoming what we believe!

My dad used to plan a men's ski trip up to sun peaks <slide2> each winter. IT was always a trip to look forward to. The mornings were usually spent skiing hard to see who could fly down the runs the fastest and maybe see who would have the best wipeout! After a hard morning on the slopes we would go to the lodge at the top of the mountain for lunch. Now if you have been to sun peaks before you would know that this lodge is famous for their cinnamon buns. <slide 3>They would bake them fresh right before lunch in an open kitchen in the cafeteria and I am pretty sure that they had a fan blowing the wonderful scent out into the crowd! The smell was amazing and it was almost impossible to have the self-control not to buy one! Now I love cinnamon buns and the whole of the cinnamon bun is delicious BUT there is one part that is particularly desirable! The nucleus < slide4>! My ritual is to carefully eat around the nucleus and save the best for last.

That's a bit what this passage is like for me! It's the nucleus in the middle of Ephesians! It is a wonderfully powerful prayer from Paul that the church would deeply know the love of Christ

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This prayer is a **hinge point** in this letter. The first half of Ephesians is on what to believe. Paul clearly explains the gospel and the basics of faith in Christ. [then this wonderful prayer] and in the second half of this letter Paul explains what the Christian life should look like (how to behave).

<slide6> READ the passage (page 948) - PRAY

<slide7> Paul prays for: (POWER - comes from God alone):

- (1) Power for Christ in you
- (2) Power to know God's Love – and then we'll talk about,
- (3) Power at work in us

<slide8 >All these things in the context of community. Yes, *there IS an individual process inside of you BUT the Christian faith is never meant to be individualistic but through community.*

Vertical and Horizontal.

*Look who Paul addresses through this passage: every **family** (15); dwell in your heart**S** (17); all the Lord's holy **people** (18); **we** ask – within **us** (20); in the **church** – throughout **all** generations (21). We are to encourage and build one another up together with the help and power of God's Spirit!*

The **first** part (14-17a) **Power for Christ in you** - That God would dwell in your hearts:

- In verse 14<slide9>Just before Paul prays for the Ephesians Paul says: **For this reason**. Now the reason is found earlier in the chapter: (8) that there are **boundless riches** for those in Christ and (vs12) through our faith in Christ we can approach God with freedom and confidence (12). this is the **springboard** for Paul's great prayer!

- God's power is for Christ to make his **home** in us! <slide10> Jesus comes into our hearts and **renovates it!** He takes the **old bad stuff out** and puts in a beautiful new space where he can dwell in you through your faith in him (now I don't know if you have ever done any reno's but (1) they always take longer than you think they will—often like our spiritual journey; (2) you often find more rotten things after you tear back the drywall than you think you will; and (3) they go much better with the help of a number of people!

The transformation that God can do is amazing!

- I was going for a walk this week **thinking of what it looks like to have Christ in your heart the warmth of the sun hit me.** <slide11>first day of warm sunshine in spring analogy (wet coast; prairies; Ontario). But so much more.

One of **the roles of the Holy Spirit** is to speak to your inner being, to your heart to tell you how much God loves you! That Jesus delights in you, and that you are in fact a child of God!

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The **second** point (17b – 19) **Power to know God's love:** rooted in God's love:

- In the **second** part Paul prays that we would be rooted and established in love:
- (tree story/illustration) (Ps 1:1-3) I love the picture of being rooted: <slide13>*There is a hiking trip I love in on the NW coast of Washington. I love this Hike and I have been there 4 times. 3 of the 4 times I have gone on the northern part of the trail that passes by a tree at a specific tide point. You can only cross this point at low tide. Now on the coast there are beautiful sea-stacks and rock formations that have formed because the power of the ocean waves have eroded all the soil and left only the rock.*
- <slide14> *Now this particular tree grew near the ocean at this tide point. Luckily the tree had a strong root system in place. Now there are two main functions of roots: (1) is to draw up nutrients and water from the ground in order to stay alive as well as grow and mature (2) Roots keep the tree strongly planted and secure in the ground.*

** **In life** we too will have storms and waves of attacks that come our way. And sometimes like this tree a difficulty can come that is so harsh that the ground from under us erodes away before our eyes.*

If we are not strongly rooted and established in God's love how are we going to be able to stand up to the storms of life? Because so often we put our trust in the things of this world (such as: family; wealth; friendships; our looks; sports; health; etc) but all these things can be eroded in the blink of an eye. These things are only temporary where as God and his love for us are eternal—the solid nutrient rich ground into which we need to put our roots into first and foremost!

[(READ Psalm 1:2-3)]

<slide15>*So the **question** for yourself is .. Are you firmly rooted in God's Word? In God's love? And in God's community – the church?*

<story: first time being a volunteer youth leader>

- *BUT Paul isn't done with being rooted in God's love; **READ vs. 18 grasp** – to get a secure hold on something; to wrestle; or to capture (to capture a city in battle)*
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wide, long, high <slide16>

(Ps 103:11-12) *“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us!”*

AS Jesus has pushed our sins away from; there is a convenient place to be embraced into the infinite arms of God’s love

- **deep** → How deep does Jesus’ love go? Firstly, Christ demonstrated his love for us by living among us and giving us an example of a life that was totally devoted to God. Then, Christ died for our sins so that we could be restored to God, to people, to ourselves, and to creation for all eternity. When Christ died he went into the depths of death - for us! And he did this so that we could have freedom from the sin that brings brokenness to the world and so we no longer have to fear death! This is the love story that God has inviting us into!

However, you may be you are here today and are thinking, This all sounds really nice! I know what Christianity is about, maybe you have been a Christian for years or just a few weeks and are thinking I don’t know if I have ever experienced or known the love of Christ deep in my heart and soul!

<slide17>Pastor Timothy Keller writes, “This may be where you are. You are in Christ. You are adopted into the Father’s family. You have the very divine life in you, the Holy Spirit. You are loved and accepted in Christ. You know about these things, and yet at another level you don’t know them. You don’t grasp them. You are still dogged by bad habits, often anxious or bored or discouraged or angry. You may have many specific problems and issues that need to be faced and dealt with through various specific means. Yet the root problem of them all is that you are rich in Christ but nevertheless living poor!”

If you find yourself wondering; is there more to this God thing? To Christianity? If you are wanting more out of your faith, you are definitely not alone!! <slide18>

And that is exactly what the prayer in this passage is about! I too, am in a season right now where I am asking more of my relationship with God!

As I find myself asking this question in prayer I often feel the response from God is this: when have you put aside time for Me lately? Just ME?!

How am I to know the power of God if I don't spend deep intentional time with God?

If we are know and understand God's riches, we must know God's story through the Bible, by reading, praying, and sitting in His presence both alone and in community.

Find out what ways that you connect best with God: maybe its reading the Bible at a coffee shop, maybe its deep spiritual discussions with close friends, maybe you have a special place where you pray, maybe its going out in creation, or listening/playing worship music or Maybe there is something of this world that we are hanging onto that is keeping us from going deeper with God! Maybe you need prayer for healing in your life from past or present hurts, habits, or hang-ups! These actions can help but,

- There is also a point here (in vss. 18+19) where Paul prays if we are to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God <slide19> we must also understand that **this love surpasses knowledge: But we don't like that saying!** In the western world we hold an extremely high view knowledge. So if this 'love' surpasses knowledge we tend to step back and are already cautious and not so sure about it until we can **scientifically prove it!** But as we know this love God has for us will always far surpasses our understanding. This is why Paul is praying!!

Let me tell you a story to try and help us understand:

An interview in a UK newspaper a few years ago started with the headline;

"what on earth made you do that!" The newspaper reporter was incredulous. A young woman had just won a completion. The prize she won was a three week trip around the world. the chance of a lifetime. But, she had given it up in order to stay with a friend as she went into the hospital to face a crucial, and terrifying operation.

'I mean,' went on the reporter, 'surely she'd have understood? There must have been other people who could have been with her?

the young woman remained silent, pursing her lips. Eventually seeing she wasn't going to get away with saying nothing, she burst out.

'All right. you really want to know. you think I'm crazy. But what none of you know – and I wasn't going to tell you – is what she did for me

three years ago. I, I was on drugs and I couldn't stop. It got worse and worse. My family threw me out. She was the only person who looked after me. She sat up all night, again and again, and talked me through it. She mopped me down when I threw up, she changed my clothes, she took me to the hospital, she talked to the doctors, she made sure I was coming through it. She helped me with the court case. She even helped me get a job. She – she – she LOVED ME! So did I have any choice? Now that she's sick herself, it's the **lease** thing I can do to stay with her. That's far less than she did for me.' (love changed her)

- This is a small picture of the love that Christ Jesus has for us. And this love changes our priorities in life! (*tie in story!*) Our priorities change from this life revolving around me and whatever I want, to revolving around God and others. We are free'd from slavery to this world and given power to work for God.

The **Third** part (20-21) <slide20>: **Power at work in us** (application :what does it look like to have Jesus dwelling in your heart?)

The biblical scholar NT Wright says: “The logic of love outweighs all other logic known to the human race. The sense of love, then, changes everything and gives people the power to face things and do things they would not have otherwise done.”

<slide21> When we know that Christ has built His home into our hearts; and when we begin to understand His infinite love for us; our fears and anxieties in life begin to diminish! We no longer have the need to go through life on our own strength but we KNOW that we have the power of God's Spirit working in us and through us!

When the power of God's presence and love take root in our lives it becomes a **launching pad** for building God's Kingdom here on earth right now!

READ 20-21 <slide22>

<slide23>“We don't believe something by merely saying we believe it, or even when we believe that we believe it. We believe something when we **act** as if it were true.”

- Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*

The next 3 chapters of Ephesians tell us how to act but lets take a quick look today!

Think about the things that you are passionate about! Then, pray and ask God how He can use your passions for His Kingdom. That might mean joining a ministry in this church; maybe it means starting a new one; or maybe it means starting something in your neighbourhood; or at work or school! Remember its not you but God and His power working through you! Dream big and commit your plans to God. This isn't about working to cross off a checklist to appease God but this is Kingdom building! A **joyful response** of God's amazing free gift of love to us!

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I believe John Piper coined the prayer "Lord, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am!" John Piper Let's go today with confidence that God's powerful love is at work in your hearts! Lets pray:

Benediction

As you go today, don't just let these ideas sit in your brain: write them down and talk about them with your friends and family! Take time on your relationships with God today and on tomorrow's holiday! We live in a beautiful place in the world – go spent time with God in His awesome Creation

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine according to the power that is at work within us; to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen!