

The Love That Surpasses Knowledge

Proper 12

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Ephesians 3:14-21

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This week at Vacation Bible School, we were using the TimeLab series from Answers in Genesis. TimeLab, as the name implies, had us traveling back in time and into the future. There is certainly enough to keep one occupied to consider the breadth and length and height and depth of one time period; but even more so when you consider how many people—generations after generations—have lived before us, even with the quote-unquote “young Earth” worldview.

We live in dimensions. We know about the first dimension, which is just a point in space. We know about the second dimension, which is a line. And we know about the third dimension, where we get the three dimensions of length, width, and depth. After all, we live in it. The world is not flat, nor are we paper-thin. We live on the plane of the earth’s surface and can move back and forth on it, as well as take airplanes and rockets into the sky.

It seems that everything has a mathematical explanation and equation to go with it. The scientists at NASA used very high mathematical equations to launch their first rockets into space, and eventually, the first man into space. They needed even more equations to bring him back down safely—and they did.

Yet that was a multi-person endeavor. No one man or woman had all the knowledge that was needed to send the rocket and man out of the world, or to bring him back. Today we continue to have scientists and inventors who work on puzzling out the equations and mathematics needed to do great things.

But the Scriptures tell us that there is something even greater than knowledge. More specifically, our Epistle text tells us that there is.

Verse 1

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...”

Paul begins our text speaking of submissive worship to God the Father. He knows that God has created every family in heaven and on earth. He knows that it is by the Holy Spirit’s working that people from the families on earth come to believe in Jesus as their Savior from sin. But faith is more than knowledge. It is believing what Jesus has done and continues to do for you—which is so much more than words can articulate.

Too often we try to put God in a box. This week we were hearing that we can’t simply put God in a box. We try to put Him in the Sunday morning box—we only worship and hear about Him on Sunday mornings. But God wants more than just Sunday mornings! He wants full-custody. He is with us twenty-four seven. We try to put God in the only-when-I’m-thinking-about-Him box. But God thinks about us all the time whether we are thinking about Him or not. We try to only think about Him when we are doing something we know He wants us to be doing. When we’re speaking to others about Him; when we’re listening to hymns or songs about Him; when we take a moment to read the Scriptures at this time of day or that time of day. But God thinks about you even when you’ve stopped thinking about Him. He knows when you’ve done well and He knows when you’ve sinned.

We are all well aware that we are sinners. We have not always kept God in mind or kept Him first. And we have not loved each other as we should. Yet despite our shortcomings, God has shown us His love in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

“That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

The love of Christ Jesus knows no boundaries. It crosses from city to city, continent to continent, era to era. Like our Vacation Bible School, it travels through time! That is because the love found in Jesus is God’s love. Jesus had to be God so that every person’s sins would be covered by His death and resurrection. We hear in Psalm 49 that “no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice.” Even if it were possible for one person to live a perfect life without sin, that man or woman would only be able to ransom “another.”

One life for another sounds reasonable to us. In the Old Testament, if one were to be killed by another person, the relatives could kill that person. That was the idea behind an “eye for an eye.” But all of humanity was lost in sin. That would require half of us living perfectly to pay for the other half of the entire population throughout time! Again, the idea we considered before said “If it *were* possible”—were implies that it’s not possible, we were just considering what it would be like if it were.

But while Jesus died on the cross as a human being, He died as a human to allow Him to die. At the same time, His death on the cross as God allowed Him to pay the price for the sins of every human being for all time. That is the “breadth and length and height and depth” of the love of God! He allowed Himself to die so that He could pay the punishment for every human being of all time! Yes, every dirty, rotten, sinner on earth today, and every one of them of any and every era.

Verse 3

Paul concludes: “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Jesus Christ throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

God’s giving does not stop simply with giving us the forgiveness of sins in His Son’s death. He has promised to hear us when we pray; to give us everything we need for this body and life; to give us His Word and Sacraments; and so much more than for which we could ever think to ask.

Because of God’s giving nature, Paul reaches a doxology of praise at this point in his letter to the believers gathered at Ephesus. And when we hear of that same love applied to us—to each and every one of you, and to me—we are also willing to sing praises and to worship God as our Heavenly Father. To pray to Him. To ask petitions of Him. To thank Him for all that He has done and continues to do.

As we have heard, God has done and continues to do so much more for us than we are even capable of knowing. And He has done all this and continues to do all this freely. He does it all for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.

To add one more thing: God has promised to bring all who believe in His Son to the new heavens and new earth promised in the book of Revelation. In that place there will be no more crying or pain or sadness; no getting bored or sitting around on clouds; no, it will be eternal joy being forever with God our Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. It will be working for Him without thorn or thistle. It will be nothing but good all

the time. And that is just one more thing God gives to us freely for the sake of His Son Jesus out of grace—without any merit or worthiness in you or me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.