

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

## Welcome

**Announcements:** Giving Options-online, in person, on website, QR code; Special Offering is Verde Valley Homeless Coalition; Diana Smith is requesting help with Hospitality starting in March.

1

## Fellowship of Love

### Song

### Call to Worship

L: You who created the heavens and stretched them out above us, you spread the earth beneath our feet and summoned sprouts and shoots,

**P: Breathe life into us, God Who Creates!**

L: You who came to the river, who sought the Baptizer and the Jordan waters,

**P: Welcome us to the waters of life, Jesus the Christ!**

L: You who soared though the heavens and hovered and rested upon Jesus,

**P: Alight upon us today, Spirit of God, Heaven's Dove.**

## Unison Prayer

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

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Title: Being Made Known

**You Who Call Us, we come before you in answer to your call in our life.**

**You created the heavens and the earth and placed us here for life and hope.**

**We know your dream for a world that is righteous and just, a world you promise will come to pass.**

**Breathe your Spirit upon us again and again, and bring to life our passion for your bold vision.**

**Make us lights to those who sit in darkness! In the name of Jesus, who descended into the waters of baptism to show us the way to righteousness,**

**and of the Soaring Spirit, who alights upon those who arise from these life-giving waters.**

**Amen.**

### **Offering Lead In**

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

### **Song**

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

**Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12 NRSVue**

**3** This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you gentiles,

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<sup>2</sup> for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you

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<sup>3</sup> and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words,

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<sup>4</sup> a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:

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<sup>6</sup> that is, the gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

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<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power.

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

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<sup>8</sup> Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ

4

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<sup>9</sup> and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

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<sup>10</sup> so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

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<sup>11</sup> This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

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<sup>12</sup> in whom we have access in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

L: The word of God, or the people of God.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

**Message: Being Made Known**

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

I want to start today's message with a question. I don't often do this but bear with me I think it's important. That question is how do you know who God is? Now when I first asked this question I'm sure you had a thought pop into your mind for how you know who God is and I want you to do something specific with that thought. I want you to abandon it.

5

Hear me out. Our first thought for how we know who God usually comes from some rote answer that we learned at some point in our lives. "I know who God is because the bible tells me so." Congratulations! You haven't moved passed Sunday school songs. "I know who God is because my parents told me." Congratulations! You haven't grown out of your childhood again. "I know who God is because God told me." Well, let me see about getting you a prescription to help with that.

Now I am being tongue in cheek here. I don't mean to down play any of these methods of knowing who God are. All of these methods are important and are the places we should start with in our experience with God. However, these are not ending points. What I mean by that is that we often approach our relationship and understanding of God as a being who we know and how we know God becomes immutable, it can never change and God certainly never changes this understanding.

Years ago, when I was in seminary the United Church of Christ went through a slogan change. Their slogan at the time was "God is still speaking." In my opinion an excellent slogan, as you allow God to speak. The problem I've often found is that people

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

aren't really willing to allow God to speak. If God doesn't speak the way that we have always understood it, or how we expect God to speak than it can't be God who is speaking. Here's another view of this, it's pretty convenient if God hates all the things that you hate. You see we tend to like God speaking if God is speaking what we already know and think.

6

Our message today isn't really tied exclusively to this scripture but to the theme of this particular Sunday. It is Epiphany, the day that the wise men found the Christ child and paid their respects. It is an example of God speaking, of God revealing Gods self to humanity in a way that is unexpected and in a way that many couldn't accept. The letter to the Ephesians is often called the letter to the Gentiles. Paul in this letter makes it clear that God revealed Gods self through Christ to be in relationship with not just the Jewish people but to the Gentiles as well. The key to this though is that you have to be able to allow God to speak in other ways and to say things you may not agree with. You have to understand that anything and everything that you understand about God is because God decided that you could understand it.

Think about it. How would you describe God? God is love? God is hope? God is revealed through Jesus? Everyway that you choose to talk about God is a metaphor. A symbolic representation of who or what God is. The event of Epiphany is to show that you

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

can't comprehend how God is speaking or even what language God is speaking in. God is beyond the scope of your understanding!

7

Now obviously I think we can know God. If I go back to all the examples I talked about "Because the bible told me so." I can point how those are helpful in our understanding of who God is. Today I want to encourage you to not see God as your immediate friend but as the Great Other. The being so different from us, so different in conception and understanding that all of our attempts to put him in a box are laughable. God is not constrained by our definitions, by our language, or perhaps especially for our desire for uniqueness. God is still speaking, God is still reaching out, God is still making Gods self-known to us and to others around us. I think where most of us have to start is not with what we know about God, but with that which we cannot fully know. We cannot know God or know the mind of God.

Just in case there are some of you that are thinking I've gone off the deep end with this, I want to point you in a couple of directions. Let us look at Narrative theologians. These theologians talk about how our basic constructs of language often get in the way of really understanding who God is. It's a case of missing the forest for the trees. We become so precise in our language that we miss the heart of what is being expressed. Another place to look is with St. Thomas Aquinas who started his major theological work with

Message for Sunday, January 11, 2025

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-12

Title: Being Made Known

something called the via negative. He defined God by defining what God was not. This work of trying to understand God is one as Christians we should be engaged in. I'm not saying we will all become the next Thomas Aquinas, but I am saying the more you try and understand who God is, it is possible that God will reveal God's self to you in new and exciting ways. Amen.

8

### **Pastoral Prayer/Lord's Prayer**

**Song**

**Benediction**

**Song**

**Goodbye**