

Continuing in the Word, "The Big Picture," Ephesians 3:9-11

http://www.wishkahchurch.org/audio_sermons/audio_sermons.htm

Jesus is named over twenty times in the book of Ephesians and is referred to by personal pronoun many more times. He is referred to ten times in the first ten verses of the book. Whatever the subject Paul is addressing, it ties into Jesus Christ. We've been blessed with every spiritual blessing *in Christ* (1:3). We've been adopted as God's children *by the means of Jesus Christ* (1:5). We're accepted by God *by Jesus Christ* (1:6). We have redemption *through Christ* (1:7). And that is just the beginning. The theme of Christ runs throughout the Bible and the book of Ephesians. Therefore it is no surprise to find Paul referring to Christ and His central role in chapter 3 verses 9-11.

Christ is central to "the mystery", central to all of creation, central to what God is accomplishing in the heavenlies, and central to God's eternal purpose. The question then is are we conforming ourselves to the centrality of Christ? Is Jesus Christ the one whom your life revolves around? To acknowledge the centrality of Christ is core to Christianity. Without Christ there is no salvation, no hope, no relationship with God, and no new life. Without Christ we have spiritual death and depravity. Christ truly is at the center of God's plan and dealings with the people of earth, and core to the ministry of Jesus Christ is His death on the cross.

His birth was amazing. His teaching was remarkable. His miracles were astounding. His example was flawless. His claims were incredible. But His cross, that is beyond phenomenal. It was an astounding paradox of epic proportions. Sinless God in the flesh dying on a cross for depraved sinners who deserved to die there. The Creator of all killed by and for His creation. The cross is the climax of Jesus earthly ministry. Everything prior to the cross looked forward to it. Everything after the cross looks back to it.

The virgin birth without the cross, though a marvelous event, would leave us still in our sins. Jesus' teaching without the cross would leave us better instructed, but still depraved. Jesus' miracles without the cross would be amazing, but of limited importance. Jesus' example without the cross would be admirable but we would still be lost and therefore not equipped to pursue imitating Him. Apart from the cross Christ wouldn't have fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah so He wouldn't have been the Messiah, and His claims to be the Son of God would be blasphemous, not to mention the fact that with no cross there would be no resurrection from the dead with victory over sin and death.

So again we must face the question, is Jesus Christ central in my life? But we can't stop there. We must also ask, is the cross of Christ central to my belief in Christ? How amazing that such a symbol of pain and humiliation could be transformed into a symbol of hope and salvation. Never forget or neglect Christ and His cross! The cross is the central action of the central figure of all history.

Pastor Jim