

**Text: Ephesians 1:3-14**

**Title: “You are Much Richer Than You Think (Part II)”**

**[Ephesians: Navigating an Alternative Reading of Reality]**

“You are richer than you think.” Most of you know that they are the words of the current marketing slogan of Scotia Bank. “You are richer than you think.”

The advertising department of the Bank has produced a number of clever television commercials around the words. My favorite is the one where a middle-aged man, a bit disheveled because he is stressing out over financial uncertainty, comes into a Scotia Bank carrying his personal portfolio, obviously in much disarray. The Bank’s financial consultant looks at the man and at the portfolio and says something like “You didn’t get that here, did you?” To which the distressed man says, “no”, and asks the consultant to take a look at the portfolio, saying, “I think it is broken.” After a quick look through the papers, the consultant says, “Yes, it is broken.” The man’s face drops even further. And then the consultant says, “But we can fix it.” The man does not know how to express his gratitude and relief; there is an awkward exchange of high-fives and fist pumps and hand shakes. And then the slogan, “You are richer than you think”.

To which the Apostle Paul shouts, “Yes!”... “You are richer than you think.” I know I am being anachronistic here, in that Paul lived long before Scotia Bank came on the scene! But had there been a Bank in Paul’s time that advertised “You are richer than you think,” I think Paul would have grabbed the slogan in service of the Gospel.

He did so with the most dominant slogan of his time, “Caesar is Lord”. The words were the glue that held the Roman Empire together. People in Paul’s day could believe just about anything else they wanted to believe, as long as they just said the words of the slogan of the Imperial Cult (the worship of Caesar as God). “Caesar is Lord.” Paul grabbed the slogan, and so did nearly every other disciple of Jesus. And they said with great joy: Yes, there is a Lord, a Sovereign One. The Man from Galilee, the Carpenter from Nazareth, the One who was crucified on a Roman Cross...He is Lord. “Jesus is Lord.”

And in relationship with the true Lord, “You are richer than you think”. Better yet, Paul would say, “You are much richer than you think. Much richer in much richer riches.”

Our text today is the text we have been giving attention to the past three Sundays. Our text is Chapter one, verses 3-14, of the letter Paul wrote to disciples of Jesus living in the first-century city of Ephesus. It is in the original one long sentence. One of the longest in the Bible. 202 words! And what an alternative reading of reality it opens up for us!

As you take the text in hand, think of it as Paul handing you and me a new portfolio marked: “You are much richer than you think or feel”.

Hear now the word of God.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which

He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His Glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Did you hear and see the words Paul uses? "Every", "freely bestowed", "riches of His grace", "lavished", "inheritance". "Every spiritual being". "Grace which He freely bestowed on us". "According to the riches of His grace". "Which He lavished upon us". "We have also obtained an inheritance".

Note especially the word in verse 7, "...riches". "riches of his grace". The word is *ploutos*, from which we get the word "plutocracy". The super-rich. The verb form means "to fill", "to make full", "to fill up to the full". In relationship with the Lord Jesus, we are made plutocrats...very, very, rich people.

Again, Paul is in Rome, in Jail. Going on five years now. Two most recently in Rome. Deprived of nearly all that we think we need to make it in the world. Deprived of all the riches we think we need in order to live "fully human, fully alive". And in Rome, in jail, Paul is caught up in how extravagantly rich he and we are in Christ.

And did you hear and see how all of this is according to plan? "Chosen before the foundation of the world". "Predestined". "According to the kind intention or good pleasure of His will". "According to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will". Everything God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ He does purposefully. God is not acting on a whim. God has not been caught up in some flight of emotion from which He will one day recover. No, it has been and still is God's considered, calculated deep resolution to make us rich in Christ.

And did you hear and see, and maybe even feel the tension in the unfolding of the plan? The tension "already...not yet"? "Every spiritual blessing"...already...these past tense verbs; and not yet...these future oriented phrases. "Chosen...to be Holy before Him". Already...but also not yet fully so. "Predestined to adoption..." Already...but not yet fully experiencing the new status. "Redeemed through His blood" already. And yet, not yet; the Spirit given as a pledge of our inheritance "with a view to the redemption..." Already richer than we think or feel; not yet experiencing the riches as fully as we one day will.

And did you hear and see the phrase "in Christ" or its equivalent? Paul uses it eleven times in his one long sentence. We are richer than we think or feel because of Christ. But more than because of, IN Christ. Our true location in the world. In Rome. In jail. In Vancouver. In a variety of circumstances. But also, and primarily, in Christ. As E. Stanley Jones who spent his life for the people of India so often said, "In Christ we are in everything that is in Christ! And if Christ is IN us everything that Christ is, is in us."

Every spiritual blessing "Freely bestowed", "lavished upon us". "According to the riches of His grace". All because of Christ. All realized in Christ.

So, let us open up our new portfolio and see that we have been given seven spiritual blessings of the "every", Paul highlights just seven.

Blessing Number 1 – verse 4. “Just as He the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless with Him.” Chosen. Elected. As I encouraged you to do last Sunday, as you try to get your mind around all that this means, do not lose sight of the fundamental fact Paul is celebrating. Our salvation is not grounded in ourselves. Our salvation is not finally determined by anything we did or did not do. Our salvation is grounded in God’s free, sovereign, gracious decree to make us His own.

That is, we are not an accident. No matter how we were conceived, we are not an accident. That you and I have come within the orb of the Gospel is not an accident. That you and I believe that the New Testament is claiming what Jesus of Nazareth is, is not an accident. None of us stumbled into existence. None of us stumbled into hearing the Gospel. None of us stumbled into faith. Chosen. Elected. Before the world was made.

Blessing Number 2 – verses 2 and 5. “He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself.” Again, as I encouraged you last Sunday, do not get thrown off track by the word “predestined”. Focus on the fundamental fact Paul is celebrating. We have a destiny. Not of our own making and, therefore, not finally contingent upon us. We have been destined to adoption.

For long before the universe was ever a dream, a Relationship existed. Between a Father and a Son. A relationship marked by delight, creativity, intimacy, servanthood, and love. And the Relationship made a decree. Dare I express it in simple terms? The Relationship said: “Like, this is too good to keep to ourselves. Let us make some creatures who can join us in this delight and creativity and intimacy and servanthood and love.” So the Relationship made us! And pre-destined us, gave us the destiny of being taken up into the Relationship, so that in union with the Son we too might know the Father’s full embrace.

Blessing Number 3 – verse 7. “In Him we have redemption through His blood....” Release from captivity...because the Lord Jesus paid the redemption price. He paid the ransom that sets us free (Mark 10:45).

Released from all that holds humanity hostage. Released from bondage to sin, from the lordship of powers in the heavenly place, from the forces of darkness, from the accusations and lies of the evil one, from the finality of death. He has released us from it all, so that we can be free to enter into and enjoy God’s election and adoption of us.

Blessing Number 4 - verse 7. “We have...forgiveness of our trespasses.” Forgiveness. Not just another word for redemption. Forgiveness is all about restoration of relationship. Theoretically, we could be released from bondage, but not be in relationship. Someone could come along and release captives from jail...and then walk on, not interested in any on-going relationship. Forgiveness is about establishing relationship with released captives!

“Of our trespasses”, says Paul. Forgiveness of our trespasses. The authors of the Bible use three different words for our condition apart from the riches of grace. They are sin, transgression and iniquity (see Psalm 51). Sin – miss the mark. Like an archer, pulling back the arrow, letting it go and missing the target. We all sin – we all miss the mark in some way or other. Transgress – cross the line. We come upon a force or gate with the sign “No Trespassing”. We think about it for a few minutes. And then do it anyway – we transgress; we go ahead and cross the line. We all do it – in one way or another. Sin. Transgress. And Iniquity – this “thing in us” that makes us miss the mark and cross the line. This twistedness in us, this perversion in us that makes us want to cross the line.

By His blood Jesus rescues us from iniquity. He releases us from its horrible grip. By His blood Jesus erases our sin, our missing the mark. He wipes the slate clean. And by His blood, Jesus forgives our

transgressions. He chooses not to hold our willful disobedience against us!! He takes the rap for us. And then brings us back into relationship with Him and His Father.

When we transgress, when we walk through the “no trespassing” sign, in whatever way, we suffer the consequences. God does not spare us the sting of our willful disobedience. But He does forgive, cancel the indebtedness, and restores relationship.

I sometimes use a book entitled “A Dairy of Private Prayer” written by John Baillie in 1949, to help me pray; especially when I am too weary to pray, or feeling too guilty or ashamed to pray. In the book, Baillie has a prayer for each morning and evening of each day of the month. On January 18<sup>th</sup>, I was deeply ministered to by the prayer for the evening of that day. Baillie has his reader pray this confession:

“For my deceitful heart and crooked thoughts:  
For barbed words spoken deliberately:  
For thoughtless words spoken hastily:  
For envious and prying eyes:  
For ears that rejoice in iniquity and rejoice not in the truth:  
For greedy hands:  
For wandering and loitering feet:  
For haughty looks:  
Have mercy upon me, O God.”

And then Baillie has us pray: “Almighty God, In asking Thy forgiveness, I cannot claim a right to be forgiven, but only cast myself upon Thy unbounded love.”

“I can plead no merit or desert:  
I can plead no extenuating circumstance:  
I cannot plead the frailty of my nature:  
I cannot plead the force of the temptations I encounter:  
I cannot plead the persuasions of others who led me astray:  
I can only say, For the sake of Jesus Christ Thy Son my Lord. Amen”

And wonder of wonders, He forgives. He wants the relationship! There is more in the portfolio!!

Blessing Number 5 – Verses 8-10. “In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.”

God has made known to us “the mystery”....the mystery of history. This word “mystery” does not refer to something hidden which only those with the magic keys can unlock. The word “mystery” refers to “God’s program for the world” (Harold Hoehner), which has been there for all the ages past, but which no one could have ever figured out on their own, which has to be revealed by God in order to be known.

Christ can now be known by all because the key to the mystery has come into the world. Jesus Christ is the key. The key to the mystery of history.

And what Paul celebrates in his long “every spiritual blessing” sentence is that in relationship with the Key we can know the mystery. In all wisdom...practical skill, and in all insight...intellectual comprehension.

The mystery? It will all be summed up in Christ. All of history will be summed up. All the lines of history -- political, economic, scientific, moral...will all be summed up. At a time determined by God

who works all things according to His good pleasure. Everything in the universe will be summed up in Christ.

Paul uses an image-rich word to make the point. The verb is built on the noun *kephale* which means “head”. The literal rendering of the verb is “summed up”, “sum up under a head”, “sum up under one head.” Christ is why some translate the verb as “recapitulate”, “gather up under one head”. Or, more graphically, “put two heads on”, “put two heads back on”. Re-capitulate. That is the mystery none of us would have figured out on our own.

God is going to re-capitulate all things. God is going to put the head back on all things.

Which is to say, apart from Jesus Christ, we are running around with our heads off!! All over the world right now, people are asking “what has gone wrong? What is wrong with us?” Even newscasters... saying things like “I do not understand what is wrong?” The Biblical answer? We are running around with our head off. We have capitulated to forces beneath our dignity. We have sought comfort in things that now hold us in bondage. I was speaking to a group of pastors near San Francisco last Wednesday. And to a person they were lamenting the collapse of Western civilization, “the implosion” as one pastor put it. What has happened to Western civilization? We have decided to try to make it all work on our own. We are running around with our head off!

But the mystery – open for all to know is that in His good pleasure God is going to recapitulate all things. God is going to put the head back on the human race. God is working even now, moving toward summing up all things under the crucified Lord as head. We know the mystery!

Blessing Number 6 - Verse 11. “In Him with Christ we also have obtained an inheritance. Of course. The one long sentence has been moving toward this blessing of our portfolio from the beginning. We have been chosen, we have been adopted, we have been redeemed, we have been forgiven, we have been clued in on the mystery. All leading to obtaining an inheritance. “We have been made partakers in an inheritance.”

Now, you might know that there is a debate about whose inheritance Paul is talking about. Is it ours, something we have obtained? Or is it God’s, something He has obtained? As in the Old Testament, here again and again God speaks of His people as His inheritance, His portion, His possession. Is it that we now possess something? Or is it that God now possesses something?

I wonder if Paul put it the way he did because he means both. That is God now possesses something – namely us, man and women in Christ. Makes sense: God chose us, God adopted us, God redeemed us, God forgave us...for Himself, to make us His own. We are His inheritance. And He is investing all His wealth in us! Like a new home owner, investing everything they own to make their home all it can be. Or like the owner of a hockey team investing all his wealth to win the Stanley Cup. Or like the owner of the Packers and Stealers investing *plutos* – money hoping to win the Super Bowl. God has obtained an inheritance – us!

And we thereby have obtained an inheritance. We get to enjoy His inheritance. We get to enjoy His investments, all He is in His people. We get to enjoy His preparing a new place for His people, a new heaven and a new earth where we live with heads back on.

Blessing Number 7 – verses 13-14. “...you were sealed in Him within Christ -- with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to redemption of God’s own possession.” Sealed. When we believed we were sealed. When we hear the Gospel of our Salvation and

believe, to whatever degree, we are sealed. As happens when we sign mortgage papers at the bank: the deed is sealed. To authenticate the deed. And to secure the deed. When we believe we are sealed.

With the Holy Spirit! My goodness. God authenticates the deal in Christ with the Holy Spirit. God secures the deal in Christ with the Holy Spirit. With the third person of the Holy Trinity. Who, says Paul, is a pledge of the inheritance. The word is *arrabon*. It is a business term. It refers to a down payment, or to a first installment. Now get this. An *arrabon* binds both parties in the deal, both the buyer and the seller. When the buyer puts down an *arrabon* as a down payment, but fails to pay the rest, he or she loses the down payment. When the seller puts down an *arrabon* as a first-installment but fails to deliver on the rest, he or she is obligated to pay double the first installment.

Oh my goodness! The Living God is authenticating the deal in Christ with the Holy Spirit. And He is securing the deed in Christ with the Holy Spirit. God is saying that if He fails to fulfill the promise – which will never happen given His character – but if He does, He will pay twice the *arrabon*! God will pay twice His first installment. God will pay twice the Holy Spirit. God will pay twice Himself!! What a portfolio!! We are richer than we think we are. We are much richer than we think or feel!

A solid anchor – chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world!

A new identity – predestined to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ.

Freedom – in Christ we have redemption.

Restorative relationship – through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions.

Perspective – we know the mystery, everything summed up in Christ, the true Head of all things.

We can keep our balance in times of change and turmoil.

An inheritance- shares in God's own inheritance.

And security – sealed, God Himself the first installment on our future!

Our son and his family worshiped with us last Sunday. Afterwards, David said, "You know what it means, Dad"...referring to Paul's long sentence. "It means God has our back. It is going to be ok."

"To the praise of the glory of His grace" Amen.