

**Topic: Blessed!**  
**Preacher: Rev Stu Cameron**  
**Text: Ephesians 3:14-21**  
**Date: 28 November, 2010**

One of the most famous prayers in the bible is one that the Apostle Paul prays for the church at Ephesus. I would like us to read it together:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his 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.  
(Ephesians 3:14-21)

This is not a polite prayer – this is a passionate prayer. Paul begins not with words, but with his posture; 'For this reason I kneel before the Father.' In his day prayer was usually offered standing up, not on your knees. In both Jewish and Gentile culture to pray on your knees was exceptional. It spoke of passion and desperation. What was Paul so desperate that God offer the church at Ephesus? What was the purpose of his prayer?

I believe Paul's desire for the church at Ephesus is revealed in this phrase:

...that you may be filled to the measure with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:19)

Put simply, Paul wants the believers in Ephesus, as well as us, to be filled to overflowing with the presence and power of God. This begs another question; what does it mean to be filled with the fullness of God?

Paul had a very clear understanding. First, Jesus Christ was both fully human but also fully divine. Jesus was filled with all the fullness of God. Paul wrote to the church at Colossi about Jesus:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. (Colossians 1:19)

Jesus has all of God's fullness in him. And when we believe in Jesus, when we acknowledge him as Lord and saviour then we are filled with all the fullness of God in Christ. Paul said this to the church at Galatia:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. (Galatians 2:20)

Christ is filled with God. We are filled with Christ. We are filled with God.

So what does this life filled to the measure with all the fullness of God look like?

I want to suggest that a life filled with the fullness of God is a life of celebration and a life of anticipation.

A life filled with the fullness of God will look back with celebration and look forward with anticipation.

As we celebrated with our call to worship, today marks the beginning of Advent. Advent is the period leading up to Christmas where we celebrate the birth of Jesus and also look forward to his second coming. It is a time of anticipation. Advent marks the beginning of the church calendar – the first Sunday of the church year. So today as we look forward to a new year with God and all he will do, we also look back and celebrate the activity of God in our midst over the last twelve months. Today marks at time of anticipation as well as a day of celebration.

First to celebration.

When we live a life filled with God we will always be celebrating. We will celebrate whether our circumstances are good or bad, or our life easy or hard.

First, we will celebrate what God as done and is doing for us.

In the first two and half chapters of Ephesians Paul articulates what it is we inherit as sons and daughters of God. It is an incredibly rich inheritance. Here is what Paul tells them and us:

- Through Christ we have received every spiritual blessing
- In Christ we have been Chosen
- We are blameless in God's sight
- We were predestined to be adopted as God's sons and daughters
- We have received Redemption through Jesus' blood
- Our is the Forgiveness of sins
- God's Grace is lavished upon us
- We have received the seal and promise of the Holy Sprit
- The Power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us
- We have been made alive with Christ
- We are Saved by grace and created for Good Works prepared by God
- We have been brought near to God through the blood of Jesus
- There is now no barrier between us and God
- We are reconciled to God and have full and free access to the Father
- We are Citizens of the Kingdom – Members of God's household – children of the Most High God
- Joined together by Christ the foundation stone, together we are the dwelling place of God

This is our inheritance! This is the life God gives us that we celebrate.

I did some research during the week. I discovered that in October last year in NSW the government was custodian of \$87 million dollars in unclaimed inheritances. There was \$87 million that rightfully belonged to heirs that was not yet claimed. Here is an even more staggering figure. Across Australia there is a total of \$13.6 billion of unclaimed superannuation. Money that rightfully belongs to tens of thousands of Australians languishes untouched and unclaimed.

Far sadder than money left unclaimed is the fact that many Christian believers do not live in and celebrate the inheritance that we have in Jesus Christ.

We need to claim and then celebrate our rich inheritance as heirs, as sons and daughters of God.

Too many of us focus on what we don't have rather than celebrate the incredible riches we already have.

Too many of us allow circumstances to steal our joy.

No matter our circumstances, all of us who claim faith in Jesus Christ are rich beyond measure.

In the song Craig sang earlier one of the lines says it this way; 'If grace was an ocean, we're all sinking.'

We are awash in God's amazing grace.

Almost a thousand years ago Hugh of St. Victor said it this way:

God does not share his love between all of his creatures. God gives all of his love to each of his creatures.  
(Hugh of St. Victor)

Just for a moment I want you to use your imagination. Imagine this beautiful Pavlova represents the fullness of God and his love. Common sense tells us that God comes to us with his love and says, 'Here, have this piece. Enjoy!' And that would be pretty good. That would be common sense – there is only so much love to go around.

But God does not come to us with a portion of his love; God comes to us, every one of us, with all of his love. We get the whole Pavlova!

A life full of God will celebrate what God has done for us. Such a life will celebrate what God is doing through us.

We are not passive recipients of God's grace. We have the privilege of being mediators of God's grace to others and to our world.

As I look back over 2010 I can only celebrate what God has done through our Newlife family. How many of us know it has been a year rich in blessing. Here are just a few of the many highlights I could list. This year we:

- Celebrated Newlife Care's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our care services arm has touched hundreds with the gospel and has lived out its vision to be Gold Coast people helping Gold Coast people in need.
- Established the Kids Hope mentoring program in local primary schools.
- Have seen our 12two young adult community continue to grow and flourish.
- Have successfully transitioned to three Sunday morning celebrations. This has enabled us to continue to grow to the point where we now have 800 people worshipping every Sunday, and 1200 people every week.
- Have seen Crossroads Helensvale grow to capacity just one year after it was launched
- Earlier this year we opened Robina House in the Solomon Islands. Funded completely by this church and built only using local labour, Robina House will leave a lasting legacy for Helena Goldie Hospital as visiting doctors and specialists will now have a place to stay.

But perhaps above all that we can celebrate this year is the fact that God has continued to transform people with the gospel through us. Over 2010, at least 50 people have for the first time made the life-changing decision to follow Jesus. Jesus himself tells us that all heaven rejoices when one lost son or daughter is welcomed home.

Our world is transformed one changed life at a time.

One of the best things God has done with us all year has been giving us the ability to record faith stories on video. The first story we told was Merle's. I want to tell you something really cool that has happened with Merle's story.

A few weeks ago I lead the Bible Studies at the Synod or state meeting of the Uniting Church in South Australia. As part of my presentation I showed Merle's story. No-one remembered my Bible study but everyone remembered Merle. The 300 or so leaders there loved it! I told them Merle's story was on our website and where they could access it if they wanted.

A week later I found out one of the Ministers who saw Merle's story was so moved by it he downloaded it and showed it to his church. Simon is the Minister at Clare. When I heard, I rang him to find out what happened. He said He had been challenged through my Bible study and some other stuff to give people opportunity to respond to the gospel. So that Sunday he preached as he normally did, he then showed Merle's story and he gave people an opportunity to respond. And people did. The committed their lives to Christ. How cool is that.

When one life is changed by the grace of God it ripples out to change other lives, and as other lives are changed so our world is transformed.

God is good!

We live a life filled with God as we celebrate what God is doing in us and through us.

We also live a life filled with God as we anticipate what God will do in us and through us.

In his prayer, Paul claims that God is able to do immeasurably more than we ask for or imagine. It's a big claim backed up by an even bigger promise.

God is able to do this by His power at work in us. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead, that fell on the early church at Pentecost and which has fuelled the church for the last 2000 years is at work in you and me and in this church. Wow!

We cannot, must not dream small dreams. We cannot, must not have stunted vision.

God is able to do immeasurably more than we ask for or imagine according to his power that is at work in us.

So with the gift of faith, as a church we are dreaming big.

As a church we have five faith goals.

The first is to creatively celebrate God.

And so in 2011 we will seek to grow our Sunday worship attendance to 950 people. God has grown us steadily over the last few years and we believe that God wants to continue that growth and that we should plan for and expect it.

Part of that growth will be happen on the Northern Gold Coast where Orrell and his team will establish a new campus of our church. We are going to give birth this year! It will be messy, scary, exciting, fun and exhausting.

Our second faith goal is to invite people of all ages and backgrounds into relationship with Jesus Christ and active participation in the church.

And so in 2011 we will seek to celebrate 80 people making first time commitments to Christ.

Our friends, our family, our neighbours, our colleagues are dying of spiritual thirst. Only God can quench it.

Our third faith goal is to empower people to use their gifts to lead others to Jesus, to build the church and to serve the world.

And so in 2011, amongst other things, we will call at least 20 people to serve on mission trips with our Acts 1:8 mission partners.

Jesus has told us we will be his witnesses in Jerusalem (local), Judea (regional), Samaria (national) and to the ends of the world (internationally). We are part of a global church and we have people and resources that can bless others.

Our fourth faith goal is to grow our relationships with God and each other through community, prayer, study of the Bible and worship.

And so in 2011 we will seek to increase the number of small groups from 39 to 48.

As God by his grace grows us larger we also must grow smaller. We are not a church with small groups but a church of small groups. Growing our small group ministry is critical to the health and vitality and mission of our church.

Our fifth and final faith goal is to challenge people to live authentic, Christ-like lives.

And so in 2011 we will seek to establish a Vision 1000 fund with \$180,000 to invest in church planting on the northern Gold Coast.

Freely God has given us an abundance of gifts, including the gifts of the financially resources entrusted to us.

Freely we have received, and to be a follower of Jesus, freely we must learn to give.

Every time we give we turn from the god that most competes for our time and attention – we turn from the god of money– and we turn to the God of Jesus Christ. For God to increase in our life, the god of money must decrease.

We have the privilege and unbridled joy of participating with our time, our talents and yes, our finance in God's mission in the world.

God is able to do immeasurably more than we ask for or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us.

We live in the fullness of God when as we look forward with faithful anticipation, confident in what God can and will do.

Last week you should have received an envelope that contained this magazine. It spells out in detail the vision of our church for 2011. Please, please read it. After the service, feel free to grab a spare copy to give to a friend or neighbour.

With the magazine is this pledge card. It invites two responses.

The first is to indicate what your normal and regular tithes and offerings will be for 2011. We would love for you to prayerfully fill this out, tear off the response portion, place it in this envelope and then either hand it in next Sunday or send it in to the church. It will help our planning enormously.

The second response we are inviting you to make is for the Vision 1000 appeal. You make this response on the same pledge card. Over the next two years we are asking for giving above and beyond our normal offerings to help establish the new church plant. This will involve sacrifice. But as we sow generously, I am sure we will reap generously in the form of lives changed and transformed by the gospel.

God is able to do immeasurably more than we ask for, or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us.

Will we be open to the power of God that can work through us?

Will we be people that look back and celebrate what God has done in and through us?

Will we be people that look forward in anticipation to what God can and will do in and through us?

Will our lives resound with a loud 'Amen!' as we declare that our lives are overflowing with all the fullness of God?

As I was preparing this talk I felt God speak with unusual clarity to me. I believe it is God's word for me and for us.

I believe that as we enter 2011, God want us to be people of soft hearts.

Hearts that are constantly amazed and transfixed by the grace of God and which grasp how high and wide and deep and string is the love of God for us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I believe that as we enter 2011, God wants us to be people with sharp minds.

Minds that seek to love God with all that we are and which are ready to give reason to all for the hope that is ours.

I believe that as we enter 2011, God wants us to be people with hard feet.

Feet calloused as they travel wherever, whenever and to whomever God calls us to go.

Soft hearts – Sharp minds – Hard feet.

Lives filled with the measure of all the fullness of God.

God is able to do immeasurably more than we ask for or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us.