

January 24, 2010

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Ephesians 3:12-21 (NIV)

### **A Love Like No Other**

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole 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 saints, 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.

This past Christmas there was a commercial by Target of Christmas morning, where a little girl was so overwhelmed by all the gifts. She said, “I don’t deserve this...you did too much for me this year. I read sister’s diary, broke mom’s favorite necklace, never really did my chores...” and then her parents chimed in and said, “Honey, it didn’t cost that much. We went to Target.” The girl zipped her lips and said never mind.

In this passage of Ephesians, Paul reflects on the awesomeness of God; who we were without Jesus; and where we stand because of Christ’s amazing love for us.

Paul says that Christ’s love is so amazing that he needs to pray that they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help them grasp the love of Christ.

When was the last time that you just stopped whatever you were doing and were just overwhelmed by Christ’s love for you, where you were like that little girl on the Target commercial, saying, “I don’t deserve this! I’ve been bad?” When was the last time you fell to your knees like Paul?

I fear that we have grown numb and so easily move on to other things. “Jesus loves you” bears as much weight as “have a nice day.” It is just a nice little thought. That’s messed up.

So, what I would like us to do is take a moment and reflect on this. No matter how great a job I do, it will never be enough. But, my hope for us this morning is that you and I will both experience a moment where we stand in awe of Christ’s love for us. More than that, that we embrace it and let this love radically change us.

Paul compares who we were outside of Christ with who we are in Christ in the first three chapters of this letter to the Ephesians.

Here is what Paul says about who we are outside of Christ:

2:1-dead in our sins and trespasses;  
2:2-sons and daughters of disobedience;  
2:3-living in the passions of our flesh;  
2:3-children of wrath;  
2:12-separated from Christ;  
2:12-aliens of God's promises and covenant;  
2:14-divided from God by a wall of hostility.

Why would Christ love us? We have been beyond bad. You know what, Jesus does not love us because we are loveable. Would you love someone who was described like this if you were God? Jesus loves us because his nature is love. He loves us even when we are rebellious and have rejected Him to chase after something that could never compare to Him. What's disturbing to me is that Jesus faced a brutal and excruciating death on a cross, knowing that we would reject Him thousands of years later.

Jesus didn't just come here and die because he felt sorry for us and didn't want us to go to hell. He didn't save us from Hell and say, "do you see how much I love you?" But, there is more to this love that He has lavished upon us. No, the gifts of love keep coming:

2:19-we are no longer aliens, but children in the family of God.  
2:14-that wall of hostility is broken down;  
2:14-we have peace and oneness with Christ and God;  
2:5-He made us alive in Him;  
1:7-we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins;  
1:4-we are made holy and blameless;  
1:5-we are adopted as sons and daughters;  
2:10-He created us for good works, that he prepared for us beforehand;  
2:13-He brought us near to him'  
2:18-we have been given the Holy Spirit which means we have instant access to the Father. ;  
1:11-we have an inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Paul writes in our passage today, in verse 18, that he prays for everyone to grasp how wide, how long, how high, and how deep Christ's love is.

Some of you this morning might be thinking that there is no way that Jesus could love you like we have been exploring in scripture, let alone loving you beyond this. I am here to tell you and to remind myself that we couldn't be any more wrong. It is true, we

don't deserve it. And it seems over the top, too much. But remember, Christ's love is because of his nature, not because of our loveliness.

Christ love is so **wide** that it goes beyond the width of the universe. Do you realize that in order for you to exist, God had to make the universe? That's how much he loves you now and before he made you. His love is so wide that it crosses all boundaries.

Christ's love is so **long** that you could never run too far from him. No matter how much of a rebel you think you are, you haven't gone too far. In fact, in scripture Jesus tells of a beautiful story about a son who exploited his father, left home, and wasted all his inheritance on sex, getting drunk and partying. One day his son decides to return home and be a servant in his father's household, because he remembered how well his father treated his servants. When this father sees his son returning in the distance, the father makes a fool of himself by running towards his son with undignified love.

Christ's love is so **high** that no other love could make you feel the way his love can make you feel. There is no high that can compare, whether chemical or relational. And, instead of leaving you heart broken, empty, or feeling like a piece of you has been stolen, he fills you up more than you could ever hope for.

Christ's love runs so **deep** that whatever hole you have dug for yourself, his love runs deeper. There is no slimy pit too deep and mucky that he cannot or will not rescue you from.

Puritan pastor Tom Shepard once wrote about the vastness of Christ's love. **“We cannot drink in all that goodness and love in this lifetime; hence he gives eternity to us.”**

We could go on and on this morning in trying to grasp the love of Christ. And wherever we stopped, we could never do it justice. You all have a Bible. I challenge you to dig in the gospels and look at how Jesus loves people and how the other books in the NT describe and explore the love of Christ. If you don't have a Bible, let me know, I will personally make sure that you get one and I will show you how to get started.

Lastly, Paul didn't just want us to acquire more ideas about the love of Christ. He prayed that we would know it. In scripture, to know means more than collecting ideas in our cranium. Knowing is more like intimacy. Knowing means to embrace something as your own, to embody and identify yourself to it. Knowing means that it is subjective and relational.

There is an eternal difference between knowing about and knowing Christ's love.

When we begin to know Christ's love, it changes us. We can't help but be sucked in. The more we know and live out, the more we become overwhelmed and continue to grow in our knowledge of Christ's love.

Here is a test to see if we know Christ's love:

-We begin to love like Jesus.

-We love the unlovable; even our enemies.

-We love by giving others what they need, not necessarily what they want.

-We love others because we are loving, not because they deserve our love or we hope to be loved back.

-We love by laying down our physical life or even our will, which may be harder, for what others need.

To know is progressive and developing. We can't just have one moment and think we know Christ's love.

Brothers and sisters, my desire is that we, as individuals and as the body of Christ, would grow in our knowledge of Christ's love for us and others. That we would daily learn how big Christ's love is by continually extending his boundless love to others who are all around us, above us, and below us.

