



- In a 1949, Popular Mechanics pronounced this: “Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.” What an understatement!
- A Worse Understatement: “Oh, we just went to church today.”

-- Review

- Part 1 – The number one, primary mark of our new community in Christ is that in and for us *Jesus Christ is all and in all*.
- Part 2 – The church is *God’s eternal purpose in Christ*, established to bring glory to God through the exaltation of Jesus Christ.
- Part 3 – The church of Jesus Christ is *the fullness of Christ*.
 - By God’s design and for His glory, the Father’s eternal purposes to exalt His Son are being channeled through the church, which is the epicenter of God’s activity in the universe.
 - Eugene Peterson – “The church is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church.”

As His body, we have been made Christ’s fullness, and as Christ’s fullness, He is gloriously exacting His everlasting purposes through us as we gather together to bring glory to His name. In short, Christ is filling all things with Himself in and through His church.

Q: How is God filling all things with Christ in and through the church?

A: Ephesians 2:1-11 –The church is the masterpiece of God’s glory.

1.) The church is God's masterpiece (v. 10).

- v. 10 – “*We are God's workmanship.*”
- “*Workmanship*” = “*poiema*” = God's making / work
- The word “*poem*” is derived from this Greek word.
- But the original word, referred to more than just a poem. It can refer to any masterful work of art.
- Good translations include “*workmanship,*” “*masterwork,*” or, my favorite, “*masterpiece.*”
- v. 10 (NLT) – “*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*”
- Notice: *We* (plural) are God's *poiema* (singular).

Too often, I believe, we are prone to make God's purposes for us too individualistic. Certainly, God deeply loves each one of us individually just as He has made us. Absolutely, Christ died for each one of us, and He redeems us at an individual level, and His glory is certainly magnified in and through each individual He saves. However, please notice that, in this verse of profound purpose, we learn that God's masterpiece is not just individual believers, but the church as a whole. Notice that God's *singular* masterpiece (*poema*) is composed of a *plural* assembly (we, the church). That is, God's ultimate purpose is not just to save us as individuals, but, moreover, to join all believers into one glorious body (the body of Christ), to fill us with Christ, and to make us the channel of Christ's fullness in the universe.

- Since God is making the *whole* church to be His masterpiece, it should be abundantly clear that following Christ was never meant to be an individualistic endeavor.
- All of us joined together are God's masterpiece, and God is most glorified in us when we are most unified in Him.

- As God's masterpiece, the church is more beautiful than anything else in all of Creation.
 - Driving back from Evansville
 - Perhaps the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen to the west, and perhaps the biggest rainbow I have ever seen to the east.
 - We drove slowly and praised God for the joy and awe of allowing us to drive home at just that moment.
 - However, as beautiful and awesome as any other aspect of God's Creation is, it is secondary to the beauty and glory that God is crafting in and through the church.
 - Psalm 19:1 – *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”*
 - Psalm 19:1 – Creation is God's *“handiwork.”*
 - Ephesians 2:10 – The church is God's *“masterpiece.”*
 - Good Endeavors: Sierra Club, World Wildlife Federation, etc.
 - Infinitely Better: If anyone wants to build something eternally beautiful, he ought to be a part of building Christ's church!

2.) Saved sinners are God's materials (v. 1-3).

- v. 1-3 – Amazingly, the materials with which God has chosen to craft His magnificent masterpiece are ruined, wrecked, and ravaged people who are stuck in sin and worthy of wrath.
 - v. 1 – Without God's artistry, we are spiritually dead in sin.
 - v. 2-3 – Without God's artistry, we are willful sinners – deliberately disobeying God and choosing our own demise.
- The glory of God's masterpiece is magnified because of the ignominy of the people He employs.
 - Junk Art – Bearded Man – Nice picture: Let's just pretend like this is the most astoundingly beautiful piece of art you've ever seen.
 - Junk-Art Close –Up – Our appreciation of the picture grows when we see how it was made.
- God's glory is so great because only He could take objects of wrath and transform us into masterpieces of His mercy.

3.) Jesus Christ is God's means (v. 4-5).

-- Every aspect of God's masterpiece is worked out in and through Jesus Christ.

-- v. 5 – *“God made us alive **with Christ.**”*

-- v. 6 – *“And God raised us up **with Christ** and seated us **with him** in the heavenly realms **in Christ Jesus.**”*

-- As Paul sets forth the doctrine of the church in just the first two chapters of Ephesians, phrases such as *“in Christ,” “through Christ,” “with Christ,”* and *“under Christ”* are used by Paul at least 24 times, lest there be any confusion as to how the church is formed.

-- Today it is popular to believe that there are many ways to get to God. Don't tell that to Paul! That idea is utterly foreign to Scripture.

-- Ephesians 1:22-23 – *“God placed all things under his feet and **appointed him to be head over everything for the church,** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”*

-- Colossians 1:17-22 – *“[The Son] is before all things, and **in him** all things hold together. And **he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and **through him to reconcile to himself all things,** whether things on earth or things in heaven, **by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you **by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.**”*

-- When we say that Jesus Christ is our all in all, we are not just trying to use some cute phrase that might help us get along.

-- We are, rather, straightforwardly stating the most profound reality of our existence: Jesus Christ is our everything in every possible way.

Let there be no doubt among us this morning: We are forgiven only because Jesus was forsaken, and we are accepted only because He was condemned in our place. We are rescued only because He became our ransom. And we can live only because He loves us... Only by His righteousness can we be redeemed. Only by His propitiation can we be pardoned. Only by His sacrifice can we be saved. And only by His resurrection will we be raised. Jesus Christ is the means by which

God is forming His masterpiece because Jesus Christ is everything for the church. We have no other hope, and there is no other hero, because the Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely glorious above all, and all things find their fulfillment only in Him.

4.) The church is entirely God's making (v. 8-9).

- v. 8-9 – We contribute nothing whatsoever to our redemption.
- The way Paul structures these verses is almost like a legal brief aimed at completely removing all human boasting.
 - v. 8a – *“It is by grace you have been saved...”*
 - v. 8b – However, lest anyone think that God's grace is awarded to those who earn it, Paul says that saving grace comes *“through faith.”*
 - v. 8c – And now, lest anyone boast in his ability to believe, Paul stresses that this whole process is *“not from yourselves,”* adding, *“...and **this** not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”*
 - Some say it refers back to the word “grace” (feminine). Others say it refers back to the word “faith” (also feminine).
 - The word “this” here is in the neuter case – Paul is referring to everything he has said so far in chapter two.
 - This entire masterpiece is *God's* masterpiece alone so that no one and nothing else can claim any credit for its glory.
- v. 9 – Paul explains why God is making His masterpiece in this way: *“not by works, **so that** no one can boast”*
 - The means of God's masterpiece are entirely God's making so that every bit of magnificence is ascribed to Him and Him alone.
 - Only God is worthy of praise, and He is crafting His masterpiece so that every bit of glory will go to Him, for He alone is glorious.

5.) God's glory is God's mission (v. 7, 10).

- v. 7 – *“In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”*
 - *“...in order that...”*
 - The making of God's masterpiece, described in verses 4-6, comes with a purpose. God has crafted it *“in order that...”*
 - *“...He might show the incomparable riches of his grace...”*

Often, I think, this verse is misunderstood to mean that one day we will stand with God in His kingdom, at which time He will let us see “*the incomparable riches of his grace.*” Now, please don’t get me wrong. I believe all that will certainly happen, and we know this from other passages, such as 1 Corinthians 13:12, which says, “*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*”

However, as wonderful as that wonderful truth is, verse seven is not primarily about what God will reveal to us. Notice, Paul doesn’t say that God has raised us up with Christ in order that He might show *us* the incomparable riches of His grace. Rather, he says “*In order that in the coming ages [God] might show the incomparable riches of his grace...*”

You see, Paul is not talking about God showing *us* something, but rather about God showing something *through* us. The New Living Translation brings out the meaning of this verse quite well, saying, “*And so God can always **point to us** as examples of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus.*” Thus, God’s main purpose in crafting the church is to display His glory *to* us by displaying His glory *through* us.

Therefore, the church is no man-made establishment; it is the very masterpiece of God... It is no experiment of society; it is the very expression of God’s glory... The church is no institution of man; it is the very fullness of Christ, and, in the coming ages, the church of Jesus Christ will stand as an eternal display of the incomparable riches of God’s kindness and grace.

-- Well, what does this mean? How does God intend to display the church of Jesus Christ as His masterpiece for His glory.

-- **Ephesians 3:8-11 has the answer to that fantastic question.**

-- Ephesians 3:8-9 – Paul says that He has been called to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and reveal the mystery of Christ.

-- Ephesians 3:10-11 – “[*God’s*] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1.) God is making His wisdom known to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

- These are satanic spiritual powers that war against God.
 - These are the same powers that Paul says Christ are now beneath Christ's feet in v. 1:20-22.
 - Thus, God means to fill even the dwellings of demons with the wisdom by which He is molding His masterpiece, the church.
 - Not even the place of demons will be left without a revelation of the glory of Christ, the wisdom of God.
2. This all-encompassing revelation is happening "*through the church.*"
- Eph. 3:10 – *[God's] intent was that now, **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*
 - When Scripture tells us that we, as the church, are the fullness of Christ by which God is filling all things with Christ, we see here that God really means *all* things—even the dwelling places of demons.
 - Even the darkest of unseen heavenly realms are being filled with the light of God's wisdom and purpose through what He is doing in the church through Christ.
 - Here is the short of it: God is filling the universe with the glory of his Son by making the church to be the showcase of Christ's perfections.
 - In other words, God means to fill everything everywhere with the glory of His Son by putting the church on display as the embodiment of His Son.

Allow me to say this same magnificent truth in yet a third way with the hope that it will sink deeply into our hearts by the power of God's Spirit. Here is the progression of God's masterpiece: Jesus Christ fills the universe with His glory by pointing the universe to His body (the church). He demonstrates how He destined us... how He came for us... how He taught and guided us... how He suffered and bled for us... how He died and was buried for us... how He rose for us, reigns for us, and will return for us... how he calls us, justifies us, cleanses us, keeps us... and how He will raise us and glorify us and fill us forever and ever with Himself—His all-sufficient, ever-sublime, entirely satisfying Self.

-- Summary

What, then is the church? It is the fulfillment of God's design to bring glory to His name by exalting Jesus Christ. It is the masterwork of God in Christ by which He is saving sinners from depravity and death and filling them with the life and the

glory of Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is the canvas of God's grace through which He is revealing the masterpiece of His glory to all people and all powers in all places for all time by filling utterly empty slaves of sin with the all-surpassing glory of His Son. And we thought we were just going to church!