

"Recalibrate Your Tare Weight"

Text: Ephesians 3:1b-12

"May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." - 1 Peter 5:10-11

Dear Fellow Inheritors of the Lord's goodness: One of the many things I so enjoy about going to the doctor's office is when they weigh you. I especially love it in the winter months, when you climb onto the scale, dressed for 20 below, and the scale creaks and groans in protest. The nurse keeps sliding the weights to the left and gives you the old "side eyes" as she records the number. She's usually too polite to say what's really on her mind: *"My but someone seems to have given up."* I usually find myself trying to explain: *"I'm a guy. I've got a lot of things in my pockets. Plus my winter coat and boots must weigh, what, 20 pounds? When do you subtract the tare weight?"* Do you know about tare weight? Do you know your own tare weight? We'll come back to that after we hear our text for this morning, found in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, the Third Chapter:

ESV **Ephesians 3:1b-12** *I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles--² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷ ¶ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*

This is God's Word. Ever aware that these are, in fact, *inspired* words and therefore true and applicable in every regard, so we begin our study with this simple, powerful prayer: **"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

There are many rather strange and delicate tensions in the life of every Christian – opposing forces or extremes between which the child of God must navigate. There is the struggle between communicating necessary and helpful information, on the one hand, and gossip on the other. There is the struggle between sharing good news about yourself and bragging; between charity and enabling sinful laziness; between mission work and sheep stealing, confidence and arrogance, rest and slothfulness. In all these areas (and countless others) we struggle for consistent balance.

This morning we must navigate yet another: the tension that will forever exist between Godly humility and an honest acceptance of the fact that we are personally known by the Creator of the Universe, who also loves us. The Bible, of course, teaches both truths – the need for humility as well as the privileged status that is the possession of every single child of God. The key, of course, is always to acknowledge that everything that we have is only what we have received – which is itself a most humbling exercise. All glory, here and elsewhere, belongs always and only to our God. If we can keep this one fact in the forefront, we will not only better understand that great *mystery* mentioned in our text for this morning, it will become for us all the more spectacular and precious.

The word translated in our text as "*mystery*" actually refers more to a "revelation" than to a great unknown – to information that was hidden but has since been revealed. And here's the troubling part: the specific information revealed in our text ought to thrill us, but probably doesn't. The *mystery* is the fact that the Gentiles were/are included in God's salvation plan.

One would think, since most here are Gentiles (non-Jews), that this sort of news would electrify us. Yet we tend to greet it with a sort of half-hearted, *"Oh, that's nice."* Why do you suppose that is? How could it be possible that we hear such great news about our eternal future with so little excitement or enthusiasm? Our reaction is dulled in part because that "*mystery*" was revealed long ago, and most of us have heard it from the day we were born. That news is, in fact, the heart of the event we celebrate this morning: the Epiphany. The

word "epiphany" means "manifestation" or "appearance" and refers to the revelation of Christ to the *gentile* Magi. Epiphany is God's clear message that you and I, as Gentiles, are also loved by our God and included in his salvation plan.

But there's a problem here that goes deeper than familiarity. The sad fact is it's hard for us to get too excited about the reception of something *we feel we are entitled to*. Our American sense of entitlement bristles at the thought that we could ever be *excluded* from anything on the basis of our race or origin. *"Of course the Savior came also for us!"*

Only he really didn't have to, did he? If our answer to that question is anything other than, *"No, he certainly didn't,"* then we need to reexamine the *undeserved* aspect of God's grace. The love that God showed to mankind collectively, and to each human being individually, is undeserved in every respect. To put it another way, God could have sent his Messiah to save only the Jewish race and we would have absolutely no grounds for complaint. He could have come only for women, only for men, only for children. All would have been "fair," because none of it was deserved in the first place.

Clearly this sort of divine truth flies in the face of our society's sense of "fair." God is not affected by society's ever-shifting sense of justice and equality. That which is created does not get to question or dictate to the one who created it. God communicated this truth through the Prophet Isaiah when he said, *"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"* Isaiah 45:9

So the first thing we need to do to rightly appreciate this mystery of Epiphany is to return to the subject of tare weights. In particular, we need to determine our own personal tare weight if we are to fully appreciate where and what we are now. If you've ever bought or sold something by weight in a container, you know about tare weight. You have to get the weight of the empty container before you can know for sure the actual weight of what you bought or sold. Those big grain trucks hauling wheat to the elevator first get weighed full and then empty. The empty weight is the tare weight, and subtracting that weight from the loaded weight determines the weight of the grain delivered.

Our tare weight was actually less than zero, since we were natural enemies of God. As his enemies we deserved nothing but his anger, displeasure, and punishment. In other words, we brought nothing at all

good to the table. Once we truly "zero ourselves out" in that way, the next step is to get our full or loaded "weight." While the tare weight was less than nothing, our filled weight is off the charts. We are now perfect in God's eyes – filled to the fullest with perfection. That includes you and me. Gentiles. We who had no right or expectation of anything at all from our God, we are now called children of God and heirs of heaven. And unlike a human heir, where a benefactor's last will and testament can be altered, God's will cannot. Forgiveness has been earned by Jesus Christ – a fact that can never be repealed, altered, or nullified.

This is the mystery or revelation that Paul talks about in our text: ***the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.*** ⁴ ***When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,*** ⁵ ***which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*** ⁶ ***This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.***

If this revelation ever begins to dull in your ears, know that it's time to take your own personal tare weight – time to think about exactly what you were before you were filled by the Holy Spirit with his grace and forgiveness.

Paul goes on in our text to talk about what all of this meant to him, personally: ***Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.*** ⁸ ***To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*** ⁹ ***and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.***"

Paul was shown his own tare weight on the road to Damascus at his conversion. What he was shown shook him to the core. Not only was he a natural enemy of God in his heart and in his thoughts, he had been living as an enemy of God in his actions. He had personally and actively persecuted the Church of God. It was therefore never with false humility that Paul said things like he did in our text: ***To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given...***" Paul felt his natural deficiency deeply. It truly terrified him when he learned the truth about himself. In fact his terror was made all the more profound in that he had previously considered himself to

be God's righteous servant, doing the will of God by terrorizing the Christian Church. Paul (then Saul) had been so convinced of the rightness of his actions that he was willing to dedicate his life to his focused mission of eradicating the Christian Church. He staked his eternal future on the rightness of his actions. Imagine the trauma of discovering that that on which he had been staking his eternal future was in fact grounds for damnation in the sight of the One who would one day judge him for all eternity. It's not hard to imagine Paul mentally carrying out his former life to its only possible conclusion, and then shuddering with relief in the change God had brought about in him, and in the mystery revealed to him.

You and I ought to be able to relate. You and I ought to know the feeling well. Apart from Jesus Christ, you and I were – and still would be today – on the same path as Saul and doomed to hear that same pronouncement from God on the day of our judgment. The fact that you and I are not daily flooded with relief and gratitude at the ***"revelation of the mystery"*** and the message of Epiphany is the exact problem we continually seek to address not only on this Epiphany Sunday but every day of our lives.

Paul was able to renew his sense of gratitude by recalling his former condition, by reminding himself of when he was washed spiritually clean by the blood of the Lamb and how shocked he had been to then recognize his former filth and unworthiness. We today must simply take God's Word for it that we were once exactly as Paul was. We were born sinful, unclean, and unworthy. That also means that the rescue the Holy Spirit brought about in our lives was every bit as miraculous, every bit as undeserved, as was Paul's.

Let this then be our prayer on this Sunday after the Epiphany – that the Holy Spirit would strip us of all of our natural sense of entitlement, reveal to us all that is foul in our lives, and then renew for each of us the joy of the forgiveness and salvation that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Amen.

ESV **Isaiah 60:1-6** Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

ESV **Matthew 2:1-12** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' " ⁷ ¶ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

ESV **Ephesians 3:1b-12** I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles-- ² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷ ¶ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.



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The Sunday after Epiphany – January 11, 2026

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 276

"Hail, O Source of Every Blessing"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. *(Blue Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The First Lesson: (Isaiah 60:1-6) How clearly the Prophet Isaiah here foretold the events of the first Epiphany or manifestation of Jesus Christ as the Savior of all mankind – Jews and Gentiles alike. We take for granted that those of us who are not of Jewish descent were included in God's salvation plan. We have no such right to assume such grace, yet we thank our God for extending his love to us all.

Psalm 100 *(Hymnal page 90)*

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 2:1-12) Our Gospel lesson serves as the centerpiece for our entire Epiphany celebration. Though the Promise of a Savior was repeated in the Old Testament to both Jews and Gentiles, this text reveals without question that God has invited all men to share in the salvation that Jesus came to earn. In Epiphany we celebrate how God made known his salvation to an undeserving world.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed *(Projected on Screens)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 281 *(Stanzas 1-3)*

"How Lovely Shines the Morning Star"

The Sermon – Text: Ephesians 3:1b-12 *(Printed on the back page)*

"Recalibrate Your Tare Weight"

The Offertory – *(Blue Hymnal page 7)*

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 281 *(Stanzas 4-5)*

"How Lovely Shines the Morning Star"

The Prayers of the Day

The Preparation for Holy Communion *(Blue Hymnal page 9)*

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimitis and Thanksgiving *(Blue Hymnal page 14)*

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 279 *(Stanzas 1 & 7)*

"The People Who in Darkness Walked"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time.

A note on Communion: It is a matter of conscience among us, drawn from God's Word, that communing together is an intimate expression of the unity of faith and confessional fellowship. We therefore ask that only those who have publicly declared their unity of faith with us through membership in a CLC congregation approach the altar. Please speak to the pastor after the service for the information you would need and want before communing.

Attendance – Sunday (33) Average (37)

This Week at St. Paul:

	Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
		-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Communion
		-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
		-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
	Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
		-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
		-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting

CLC News – Pastor Emeritus John Schierenbeck has received the vacancy call to Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Spokane, WA. Mr. Peter Reim has received the vacancy call to Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Red Wing, MN. Pastor Michael Wilke has received the part-time call to Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Red Wing, MN. Pastor Joe Naumann has received the call to Holy Cross of Phoenix, AZ.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet next Sunday during the fellowship hour.

Christmas Flowers – Please feel free to take a Christmas flower home with you this morning, or share one with someone who would appreciate it.

Saint Called Home – Alice Naumann, grandmother of Justus Naumann and aunt of Pastor Roehl, was called home peacefully by her Savior on Monday after 90 years of grace. Her funeral is planned for Jan 24th in Eau Claire.