

Gary L. Bagley
Hilton Presbyterian Church
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Enlightened Hearts
Ephesians 1:15-23

*...so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the **hope** to which he has called you, what are the **riches** of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the **immeasurable greatness of his power** for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.(Eph 1:18-19)*

The story is told of a couple visiting in New York City some years ago. Staying in one of the nicer hotels, they became annoyed by someone "banging on a piano" from the adjacent room. Calling the front desk to complain, the person on the other end of the line apologized and explained that room next to theirs was being used by the famous Polish pianist, Ignaz Paderewski.

"He is practicing for a concert tonight. Would you like for us to arrange another room for your stay?"

"Paderewski. Oh, no," the woman responded. And with that, the couple called some friends to join them as they sat close to the wall listening to Paderewski practice for his performance.

What a difference being enlightened makes. Wayne Dyer once said, "If I could define enlightenment briefly I would say it is the quiet acceptance of what is."

The eighth chapter of Mark's gospel contains a story about Jesus healing a blind man in an unusual manner. Jesus led the man out of the city and put spit in the blind man's eyes, laid hands on him, and asked, "Do you see anything?"

"I see people who look like walking trees," the man said. So, Jesus laid hands on him again. That time he saw things as they really were."

In today's first reading, Ezekiel uses the metaphor of lost and weak sheep that are made strong, and fat sheep being destroyed. The unread Matthew passage has sheep being separated from the goats.

The letter to the Ephesians opens with words of thanksgiving and a prayer for enlightenment for the Ephesians. Eugene Peterson translates it: "I ask God to make you intelligent and discerning...." For what reason? To see things

as they really are can make all the difference in the world.

...so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.(Eph 1:18-19)

What is the hope to which God has called us? It is a world in which we live peacefully with one another...a place of fairness and justice for all...a world in which kindness is exhibited. The hope to which God calls us is a place in which we begin realizing the “eighth day of creation”—using our creative energy to make this world a better place. With enlightened hearts we see the suffering of others and can’t be content merely to live in our own comfort.

In his new book, Thomas Friedman says that when he looks at America today, he see three broad trends—two that are very troubling and one that gives hope.¹

The first trend which troubles Friedman is that as a nation we have put up more walls than ever. We have disconnected ourselves emotionally and physically and no longer embrace the rest of the world. “America has shifted from a country that always exported its hopes to one that is seen as exporting its fears.”²

The second trend is what Friedman refers to as a “dumb as we wanna be” mood. We have indulged in petty “catfights”, postponed shoring up our health care system, postponed maintenance on a crumbling infrastructure, postponed immigration reform, postponed fixing Social Security and Medicare, postponed dealing comprehensively with our energy issues. Published this past May, Friedman included our economic plight in the “dumb as we wanna be” trend. Our nation saw symbolized this past week the completely out-of-touch mentality of our three automotive industry executives testifying before Senate hearings. And in the past few weeks, we seen the arrogance of major company CEO’s instigating \$117 million salaries before leading their companies into bankruptcy.

But, a third trend Friedman holds up as hope is the “nation-building at

¹ Thomas L. Friedman, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York: 2008), 7-12.

² *Ibid.* 7.

home” trend.³ While our major economic management has been anything but responsible—with auto industry management being totally out-of-touch with the arrogance of flying three separate corporate jets to Washington to plead for a \$25 billion bailout—our country is still exploding with innovators and idealists. Though some of the ideas are wacky, the number of people experimenting in their garages and local communities certainly says that this country is still bursting with vitality from below. Our young people are so much more idealistic than we deserve them to be...the broader public is still eager to be enlisted—to fix education, research renewable energy, repair our infrastructure, enlisted to help other...college graduates are lining up to join Teach for America. They want our country to matter again. They want us to restore and revitalize something they cherish and they are willing to help make it happen.

The writer of this letter to Christians in Ephesus is saying, “...I pray that God will enlighten the eyes or your heart—make you intelligent and discerning—so that you may know what is the hope to which you are being called.

This New Testament writer connects his prayer of enlightenment not only to hope of that to which we are being called, but also to the hope that we might see the riches of our inheritance and the greatness of God’s power.

When do we stop looking for someone else’s party to join and start creating our own? When do we stop waiting for someone else to solve our problems and pick up the responsibility of correcting what isn’t right? When do we stop looking to someone else for resources and start recognizing the great resources in our own hands waiting to be shared and applied?

You can make a difference in your place of work. You can bring about change in your neighborhood. You can give birth to innovative leadership within your church. You can mid-wife peace and health in your own family.

An aging pious man, Rabbi Susya, became fearful as death drew near. His friends chided him, "What! Are you afraid that you'll be reproached that you weren't Moses?" "No," the rabbi replied, "that I was not Susya."⁴

Friday, Bob Savage’s funeral took place in our sanctuary. It was a

³ Ibid. 8.

⁴ From “Living the Questions 2.0,” #12 “Practicing Resurrection” Guide, p. 6.

“celebration of life” service more than a funeral or a “witness to the resurrection.” A brass ensemble played two hymns in a New Orleans Jazz style—second line funeral band, as they are called. At one point, Alexis Chappell, Bob and Barbara’s next door neighbor, read a letter Bob had written to her daughter and Bob’s own grand daughter—both born on the same day—September 11 (9/11), 2007. The letter was written this September on these young girls first birthday.

The heart of the letter had to do with the *day* on which they were born—September 11—a day we remember when the Twin Towers, the tallest buildings in New York City, covered the rest of the city with its ashes when they fell after being hit by two suicide airliners. Not only were the innocent passengers in the planes killed, and the innocent people in the Twin Towers killed, many other firemen, policemen, and heroic citizens died trying to rescue others from the burning skyscrapers.

Bob said in his letter to his grand daughter and the “adopted” grand daughter belonging to Alexis: “Some have said, ‘how awful to be born on such a day as 9/11.’ But, I say, “What a wonderful day on which to be born. On this day, seven years ago, the best within American men and women stepped forth. Heroically, firemen, public service people, and average citizens gave their lives in the service of others.” What a symbolic day on which to come into this world.

It’s all about perspective, isn’t it? Rather than seeing the despair around us, let us see the hope to which we have been called. Rather than mourning our losses and disadvantages, let us celebrate the inheritance into which we have been born. Rather than succumbing to the negative powers of others, let us claim the opportunity to bring positive change by exercising responsibility. Maybe enlightenment truly is just the quiet acceptance of what really is. Amen.

Ephesians 1:15-23 (The Message)

15-19That's why, when I heard of the solid trust you have in the Master Jesus and your outpouring of love to all the followers of Jesus, I couldn't stop thanking God for you—every time I prayed, I'd think of you and give thanks. But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!

20-23All this energy issues from Christ: God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

Ephesians 1:15-23

15I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.