

Monday, February 9, 2009

Do you like mysteries? Did you know God invites you to LIVE a Magnificent Mystery? Slowly, carefully read chapter 1 of both Ephesians and Colossians...one right after the other, in one sitting, but not quickly...phrase by phrase, slowly, like you are chewing a mouthful of your favorite meal! Savor it! Before you begin, pray, asking God to speak to you with insight you've never had before...then as you read, listen for the miracle as God opens your mind to understand His Magnificent Mystery in a new way!

Citizenship is something most of us take for granted, in fact we rarely think about it. But talk with someone who has immigrated from a fearful place...a war torn African nation; a militant Muslim nation; a Communist nation...and listen to what they tell you about the value they place on their American or Canadian citizenship!

You and I were born citizens of humanity, with all its wonderful privileges, but also its liabilities, among them our sinful nature. Col. 1:13, 14 and Phil.3:18-20 tell us Jesus Christ's sinless incarnation, His powerful atonement on the cross and victorious resurrection, and His return to glorious, Sovereign reign in heaven, have made it possible for us to "immigrate" from living in tormented bondage to Satan and sin, in the "kingdom of darkness/despair"...into the "kingdom of the Son of God"! Now ponder that just a moment. From a concentration camp to a palace! From a dungeon to pampered privilege. From bondage to freedom!

Consider Exodus 3, Moses' burning bush encounter with God, and look closely at God's promise to rescue His people from slavery...but not simply open the gates so they could run free, God would bring them out from slavery and lead them INTO a wonderful, bountiful land! That is a critical concept. As we trust Christ to be our Savior, we are not simply set free from sin, we are "immigrated" from bondage in Satan's dungeon of despair INTO citizenship in God's magnificent Kingdom. It's a remarkable mystery (Col. 1:26, 27). Are you living the celebration this warrants?

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

All this week I'm challenging you to dig deeply into Colossians 1:26, 27...a mystery which had been undisclosed for centuries, now available to you and me!!

A generation or two ago the word "FAMILY" was wonderful and almost always brought a smile to anyone's face when they heard that word. Not so today! For far too many people "family" awakens painful memories of alcoholism which brought child or spousal abuse / absentee dads either working far away or chasing their dreams without their families / single parent homes where daily children live with the pain that their parents couldn't or wouldn't make it work. (I painfully understand there are many exceptions to this very general statement, including widowhood etc.).

What images come to your mind, what feelings overwhelm you when you read or hear the word "family"? Regardless of your "family" experience, God invites you to know He offers you His family!! Yes, Eph. 1:4, 5 tell us before God created the universe, He had in mind that one day He would create YOU, and He'd like you to be His son or daughter!! Your adoption into His family (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1) is made possible by Jesus' full payment of the adoption price for you...His death! When you trust Jesus to be your Savior, God the Father "adopts" you as His 'child', not a nephew or second cousin...His child, and you can therefore call Him "Abba Father". (Romans 8:12-16). "Abba" means unconditionally loving / always trustworthy and faithful / always merciful-forgiving / always compassionate.

Luke 15 is that wonderful story Jesus told of the dad with two sons, remember? Read it again, like it's the first time. Look closely at the Dad's enthusiastic 'welcome home' for his wayward son. Can you make the application to yourself? That is God's desperate desire for a relationship of love with you and He!

Go ahead, begin to dream a little...imagine the ideal, perfect Father-YOU relationship. Write down some of the important aspects (trust / availability / love) it's all yours!

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

Years ago most adults anticipated that their hard working parents might leave them a little something in the "will". In recent years, "estate planning" has become a significant part of American life, as often the accumulated value of family "estates" is far more complex than can be handled in a simple "last will and testament" (recent economic downturn notwithstanding!).

Several interesting Scriptures tell us we are "heirs" and have a "spiritual inheritance"! What is that? Consider Romans 8:17 and especially Galatians 3:26-4:7. You see in the Galatians passage, the contrast between slave and free / child and heir. Can you grasp it? When living under Satan's dominion, we had no rights, no privileges, no inheritance other than sin bondage and painful hell. Living as citizens of God's Kingdom, the inheritance which awaits us is eternity in God's presence... heaven, angels, Jesus, all the Bible heroes and millions who have trusted Christ! Even a "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1), a place of no tears or pain, only the unimaginable delight of living in the visible presence of God with not even a hint of evil! A God designed perfect environment!!

Ephesians 1:14 speaks of an "inheritance" which is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. Peter calls it "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4), and Hebrews calls it a "promised inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Our inheritance is not dependant upon a fickle will or the generosity of a wealthy ancestor...it has been earned by Jesus Christ, designed by God the Father and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit!

Also, note please there are some special, individual "inheritances" awaiting each believer. 2 Tim.4:8 speaks of a "crown of righteousness", that Jesus Himself will award to sons and daughters of God. Jesus spoke of a "great reward" which awaits us (Matt. 5:12). In Matt. 16:27 and 2 Cor. 5:10 there awaits us a "reckoning" when rewards will be given according to how life was lived here. Inheritance...wonderful!

Thursday, February 12, 2009

I wonder how many of us have a "best friend"? What's the criteria? Probably you'd trust them with any secret, any problem. Maybe you'd even "take a bullet" for them, right?

Ephesians 2:1-7 tells us we are 'by nature objects of God's wrath', because we 'naturally follow the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is at work in those who are disobedient', of course meaning Satan. Colossians 1:21 says we are 'alienated from God and enemies in your minds because of evil behavior.'

2 Corinthians 4:4 says 'the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the Gospel...'. Romans 1:18-32 says "the wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of those who suppress the truth." WOW! Strong language!

Yet Jesus Christ's purchase and rescue of us, draws us into a new relationship with God, one that moves us from rebel all the way to friend! Note John 14 and 15 and look closely at how Jesus spoke with His friends that last night together. Jesus explained He so loved them, He would lay down His life for His friends! In John 17 when Jesus is praying just prior to going to the cross, He prays for His disciples with profound statements of close friendship!

Do you recall that 5 times John refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? (John 13:22; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20) What do you suppose John felt from Jesus that led him to this conclusion? Look at each of those five situations and see the evidence of their friendship. Do you recall Abraham was actually referred to as the "friend of God" (James 2:23). Why do you suppose? (Romans 4)

What does it take to build a strong friendship? Time, honesty, vulnerability, trust etc. Are you developing those and other ingredients of "friendship" with Jesus?? When, how, what is inhibiting such a deep relationship between you and Jesus? Remember Psalm 46:10/51:10, 12?

Friday, February 13, 2009

Of all the aspects of our "new identity" in our forgiven relationship with Christ, the one which most amazes me is "Ambassador". 2 Cor. 5:20 is the core verse..."we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God is making His appeal through us."! Remember the horrible descriptions of our sinful lives (Gal.5:19-21; Rom. 1:18-30, etc.)? We deserve at least to be locked up, isolated from society, rejected by God...and maybe punished for eternity for such behavior. Instead, in His great love for us, God went all the way to the cross to pay the full price so we could be transformed by His power into entirely new people! (2 Cor. 5:17) Then, filled with the Spirit of God we live new lives (Gal. 5:22,23; Eph. 2:1-10).

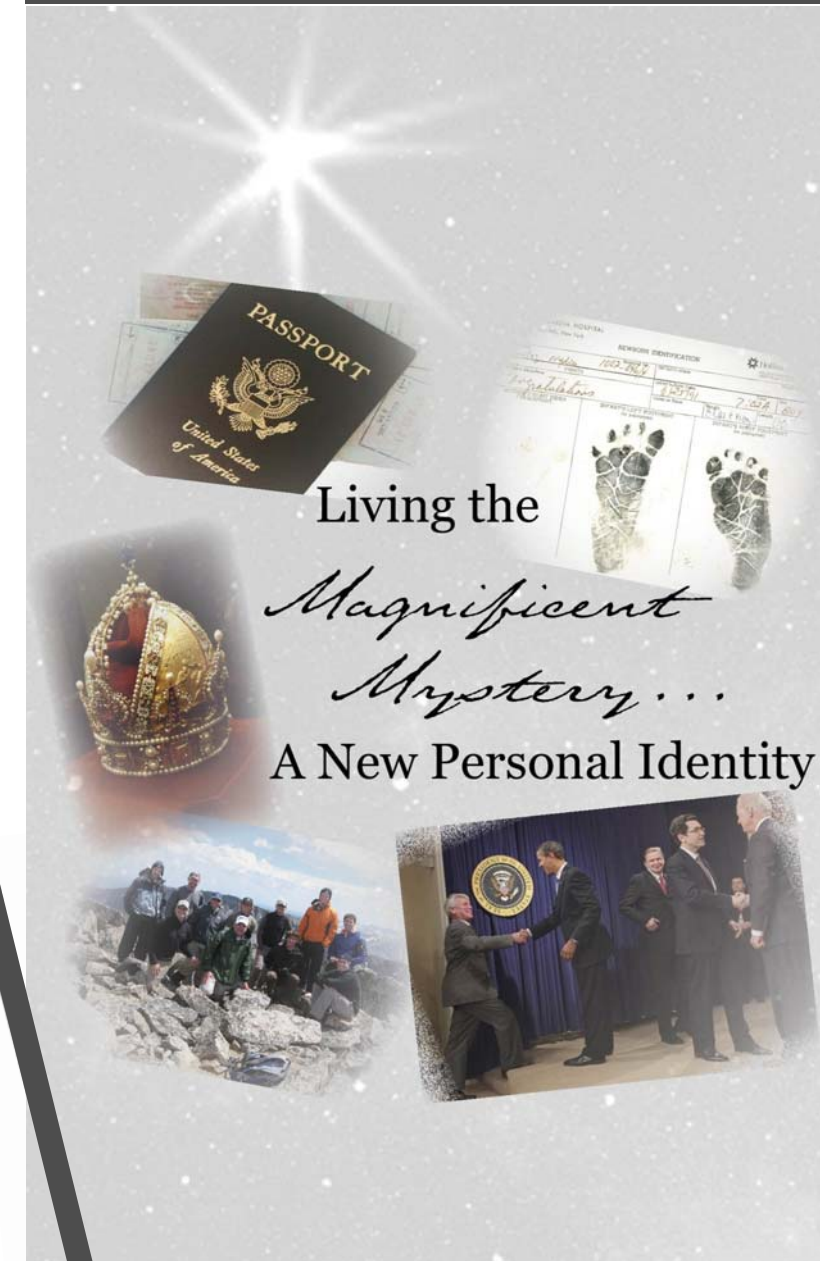
In recent days we've see the new US President stand before a podium with the insignia of the US Presidency, and surrounded by US Flags. He has introduced to the world new key US leaders, and extended to him or her the hand of "commissioning" as they are sent out to represent him, our Congress and the entire US population, as they serve in a Cabinet level role, or an ambassador to the UN or some foreign nation. From that moment forward, it's not just what they say that represents us...it's WHO they are, how they behave, what they wear and eat, where they live, how they spend US tax dollars etc. The people with whom they relate view them as official representatives of our people, our nation, our culture, our values, our beliefs!

So, when God says He moves us from being rebels, enemies of God, to being His friends, and more...He commissions us out as His representatives to our world, "as though God were making His appeal through us.". Are you humbled by that? How well do you think you represent God? Your marriage, your family values and function, your personal habits and attitudes, your financial management, your integrity, your trustworthiness, your kindness? Oh friends, it's not about how often you're in church, or how many verses you have memorized...it's living ambassadorship!



Pastor Doug Anderson

February 9 - 13, 2009



Living the

*Magnificent
Mystery...*

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