TITLE: A Great Mystery

TEXT: 1 Tim 3:16; Col. 1:24-29; Mt. 25:21, 31-34;

Jn. 17:20-26; 2 Co. 5:16-20; Jn. 12-14

INTRODUCTION: Everyone loves a good mystery don’t they? Mysteries are among my favorite genre of books and movies.

 One thing that makes a good mystery is a plot that is hard to figure out, one that takes you by surprise at the end of the story. When it’s over you say: “Man, I never saw that coming!”

 Do you know the greatest mystery ever written?

I think, hands down, it would have to be the Bible!

God’s Word can be very mysterious at times can’t it?

 In which testament do you think the word mystery is used the most often in Scripture, the Old Testament or the New Testament?

 It surprised me to learn that the word mystery is used more times in the New Testament. In fact over three times more often.

Greek word for mystery is:

***moos-tay'-ree-on***

 **(to *shut* the mouth); a *secret* or “mystery” (through the idea of *silence* imposed by *initiation* into religious rites):—mystery.**

Dictionary--

**1 a : a religious truth that one can know only by revelation and cannot fully understand: a Christian sacrament; specifically : EUCHARIST c (1) : a secret religious rite believed to impart enduring bliss to the initiate 2 a : something not understood or beyond understanding**

Do you know what the great mystery of the Bible is?

 The greatest mystery of the bible and to that which the Bible most often uses the word mystery is about Jesus and the relationship between Christ and the Church and Christ and the individual believer.

**1 Timothy 3:16(NIV)
16Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.**

**Colossians 1:24-29(NIV)
24Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.
25I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—**  **26the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.**  **27To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**  **28We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.**  **29To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.**

 The greatest mystery of the Bible, the greatest mystery in our entire world I believe is this:

 **26the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.
27To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

The great mystery of God is-- **Christ in you, the hope of glory!**

The Greek word for glory is:

***dox'-ah***

***glory* (as very *apparent*—dignity, glory (-ious), honour, praise, worship.**

Christ in you the hope of glory--the hope of true dignity, the hope of being honored by God, receiving praise from Him!

I believe the realization of this is revealed to us in:

**Matthew 25:21(NIV)**
**21“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! --.Come and share your master’s happiness!’**

And in:

**Matthew 25:31-34(NIV)**
**31“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.**  **32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.**  **33He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.**  **34“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.**

**Christ in you, the hope of glory!**

 The Glory of Heaven, the glory of spending eternity with God is only for those who have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, who have Christ in them!

Christ in us is a great mystery in itself isn’t it?

 This is revealed to us in a very dynamic way in a prayer that Jesus once prayed for you and I.

Did you know that Jesus actually once prayed for you and that prayer is recorded in the pages of Scripture?

 Jesus has just prayed specifically for His 12 disciples and then prays for you and me in:

**John 17:20-26(NIV)
20“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,**  **21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**  **22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:**  **23I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**  **24“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.**  **25“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.**  **26I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”**

Wow! Do you get what Jesus is saying here?

**21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us-- 22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:
23I in them and you in me.**

**26I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”**

As a Christian we become united with the Godhead!

We become united, are to become one with Father Son and Holy Spirit!

**That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us!**

 I believe that this is a mystery that we cannot fully understand, comprehend and appreciate in this life, but the implication of Christ in us the hope of glory is still pretty amazing!

**That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us!**

So why would God do this? Why would we be given such an invitation as to become one with the Father and the Son? Why would Jesus literally place His Spirit within us?

I believe we find the answer to that question in:

**2 Corinthians 5:16-20(NIV)**  **16So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.**  **17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**  **18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**  **19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**  **20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

This is the “why” of the mystery “Christ in you the hope of Glory”.

**17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

**18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:
19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

 We were given the hope of glory; we were filled with the Holy Spirit of Christ for a very specific purpose, a purpose that is the same for each and every one of us as a Christian and that is to become an ambassador of Jesus Christ in our world!

Just what is an ambassador?

The Greek word for ambassador is:

***pres-byoo'-o***

***act* *as* *a* *representative* (figuratively *preacher*):—be an ambassador.**

The dictionary defines ambassador as:

**1 : an official envoy; especially : a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment**

**2 a : an authorized representative or messenger: an unofficial representative.**

 An ambassador does not represent himself but he represents the one that sent him, whose ambassador he is.

 As Christians we have all been called to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ, not representing our interest but representing His interest within our world!

**Illustration**

 Ben Kingsley starred as the main character in the motion picture Gandhi. He spent months preparing for the role, visiting the various Indian locales Gandhi had frequented. He even learned to spin cotton thread on a wooden wheel while holding conversations as Gandhi did.

 The physical resemblance between Gandhi and Kingsley was almost startling. After filming a scene in a village south of Delhi, Kingsley stepped out of a car, and an elderly peasant knelt to touch his feet. Embarrassed, Kingsley explained that he was merely an actor playing Gandhi. "We know," replied the villager, "but through you he will surely live again."

 Why would Jesus come and indwell us? Why were we given an invitation to become one with the Father and the Son?
**21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us-- 22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:
23I in them and you in me.**

 Why would Christ make us His Ambassador, giving us the high privilege of representing Him and His Kingdom within our world?

**20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

The answer is really quite simple----That through us He will surely live again!

That through us He still walks the earth today!

**John 14:12-14(NIV)**
**12I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**  **13And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.**  **14You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.**

Did you catch that?

 **Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.**

How can we do greater things than Jesus did when He was here?

The Greek word for greater used here is:

***mide'-zone***

 **greater, larger, stronger**

When Jesus lived here on this earth He was pretty much limited by the dimensions of time and space just as we are.

 In His humanity if Jesus were in Jerusalem He could not be in Bethany at the same time, such as the case when His friend Lazarus died.

 All of that changed after the cross when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven.

 For He then sent back His Holy Spirit to come into the hearts of all true believers.

 In doing so he multiplied His presence here on planet earth.

So what we find today is wherever it is that we go Jesus goes with us!

 I can be in Des Moines and Jesus is with me there, and at the same time, you can be in Winterset and Jesus is with you there. Jesus is with the Christian in Japan and the Christian in Honduras all at the same time.

That is why we can actually do greater things than Jesus did while He was here on this earth because He has multiplied the presence of Himself here on planet earth.

The Hindu woman seeing Ben Kinsley’s striking resemblance to Gandhi said: "but through you he will surely live again."

 Maybe Gandhi did live again on the screen for a couple hours through Ben Kinsley’s performance.

 But I can assure you that Gandhi himself is still in the grave and will not live again on this planet.

 Jesus rose from the grave! Jesus conquered death!

 Jesus ascended to Heaven and then sent back His Holy Spirit to live again within us!

Let me ask you, "Does the Son of God live again in and through you?

 Are people today seeing Jesus alive within us?

 When they see us do they get a glimpse of Him?

Are we allowing God to make His appeal to a lost world though us?

That is our calling, the reason that we are here and not at home with the Lord.

 Ben Kinsley played the role of Gandhi while that film was being made and then he moved on to play another character in another movie. A couple years later he played Willian Snow in the Turtle Diaries.

 A guy that tries to steal captured sea turtles and releases them back into the ocean.

 As Christians we have been given a lifelong role to play. To play the role of an ambassador of Jesus Christ to our world, taking Jesus with us wherever we go and allowing Him to be seen in us….

 How is your and my ambassadorship going today?

Are we allowing Jesus to be revealed in our life in the part of the world that He has placed us?

 As a Christian we have become a part of the great mystery---Christ in us the hope of Glory.

 Are we allowing that mystery to be revealed in us in the lives that we live?

 **Christ in us the hope of Glory!**