Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – October 27, 2019

**The Mystery and Majesty**

**of Jesus Christ**

*How God’s Glory and Promises Find Fulfillment in His Son*

Exploring Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians

***Holiness: Off with the Old, On with the New Life in Christ!***

***Ephesians 4:17-32***

 Many assume that God’s will is some kind of torture, that God wants us to abandon our own best interests for a stodgy, joyless existence. Does following Jesus mean giving up our dreams and desires? It is true that taking up our cross to follow Jesus comes with challenges and even persecution. But it is hardly joyless, and leads to eternal joy!

 Our mistake begins in our thinking, when we buy into Satan’s lie that life is better when we live independently and self-sufficiently apart from God. That is the lie Adam and Eve believed in the Garden, and we know how that worked out, don’t we?

 Jesus embraced the Cross “for the joy set before Him,” because He understood that there is no real life outside of God’s love and dependency on His grace. Humans are neither independent nor self-sufficient, and acting as if we are is rooted in self-deception.

 In today’s passage, which begins the final section of the Ephesians, we discover that *we don’t give up anything good in order to follow Jesus*. We only exchange the deceitful desires of a hard heart for the life-giving choices that come from God’s will and Spirit. And in turning our backs on selfishness, we, in turn, build up one another and delight our Father.

***How can we become more like Jesus?***

***First, refuse to remain in your unconverted thoughts and ways.*** vv. 17-19

 All we left behind us was a downward spiral of unbelief. . .

 From hardness of heart to willful ignorance to leaving God out. . .

 From futile thinking to darkened understanding. . .

 From insensitivity to sensuality. . .

 From impurity to evil-addiction

 This is the pattern of the unconverted Paul details in Romans 1.

***Instead, exchange old ways for the newness of Christ’s life***. vv. 20-24

 The promises of God reshape us by *replacing deceitful desires with holy desires*. Mind renewal must precede holy behavior. God does not drag us kicking and screaming. He woos us with new joys. Rom. 8:29

***Then you can live/model true righteousness and holiness.*** vv. 25-32

Speak honestly to one another because we are one.

 Shut out Satan by a calm, healthy airing of differences, not anger.

 Share with the needy by working hard, not stealing from others.

 Guard your tongue, knowing harsh words wound God Himself.

 Forego bitterness and rage in favor of forgiveness.

***How do evil desires deceive us? What lies do we believe when we sin?***

 1. Our own lusts incubate off-limits temptations via fantasy. Jas. 1:13-15

 2. We want to believe that the forbidden thing will satisfy us. It won’t.

 3. We believe that we are somehow entitled to what is forbidden.

 4. We tell ourselves that although it is wrong, it’s not a big sin.

 5. We grossly underestimate the possible consequences.



***Why it matters. . .***

*Why must change of heart come before real change of habit?*

*Consider 1-5 above. Explain how each of them plays into a sin scenario.*

*Is all anger sin? How does James 1:19-21 help us sort this out?*

*Why do we believe that things of the world satisfy more deeply than God can?*