

Lavish Love: an Advent Celebration
Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Reminder: Paul is probably writing this letter from a Roman jail cell, possibly while chained to a guard. "Not even chains could keep his spirit from soaring free and no Roman oppression could stop his ministry of prayer."¹

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

"There is nothing wrong with praying for help in the outward circumstances of life. But God's primary intention is to work within us."

God grows our inner strength to trust him, know him, and follow him.

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

"Christ lives in us by the Spirit he sends, who takes the things of Christ and works them into our hearts."

"No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in."

"Oh come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel." –O Little Town of Bethlehem

"Be with me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray."

–Away in a Manger

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power,

Christ's love is the soil in which our life is to be rooted and the foundation on which our life is built. As we grow in his love, we become increasingly strong and steady, not so easily shaken and tossed about.

together with all the Lord's holy people,

We grow in comprehending the greatness of Christ's love together.

to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Wide – Jews and Gentiles and all kinds of people are brought in – his love reaches across the world and across all of our differences.

Long – "The length of the love of Christ is the length of eternity and out-measures all human sin. (Alexander Maclaren)

¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotations in this handout are from *Ephesians: A Mentor Expository Commentary* by Richard Phillips.

High - Christ's love raises us up to dwell with him in heavenly places where he gives us every spiritual blessing. (Ephesians 1:3)

Deep - "My sins are deep, my helpless miseries are deep, but they are shallow compared to the love that goes down beneath all sin." (Alexander Maclaren)

and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—

"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known." (Eph 3:9-10)

The knowledge of personal experience, not just intellectual assent.

that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,

The circumstances of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus were far beyond what anyone would have asked or imagined. We can expect him to keep doing more than we ask or imagine in the present and future.

according to his power that is at work within us,

to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The good news has been passed down from the time of Jesus until now, and we continue passing it to the next generation - this Advent, Christmas, and beyond.

.....
"The measure of love is how much it gives, and the measure of the love of God is the gift of His only Son to be made man, and to die for sins, and so to become the one mediator who can bring us to God." (J.I. Packer)

"Does Jesus love you? If not, it is hard to explain why he left the glory of heaven to take up flesh and enter into this world of sorrow and woe to be our Savior. The height and depth of Christ's love is the distance between heaven and the manger of Bethlehem, the difference between the eternal riches he left and the poverty he undertook in order to make us rich. Jesus humbled himself by coming into this world like us, and in this he shows his love."

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor,
so that you by his poverty might become rich.
2 Corinthians 8:9*

*We love because he first loved us.
1 John 4:19*

(see also Psalm 103, John 14:18-31, John 15:9-11, 1 John 4:9-16)