for the week beginning ***15th November***

Bible Study Group Notes

Ephesians 3.1–13

THE BIG PICTURE

Paul has described how Christ brings people near to God and joins Jews and Gentiles together as God's household. Yet the man announcing this good news is in prison. Does his suffering cast doubt on his message?

In this passage, Paul explains the work God has entrusted to him and shows how the church fits into God's eternal purpose. He wants his readers to see their circumstances in the light of what God has done through Christ—and so not lose heart.

INVESTIGATE

Read Ephesians 3.1–13.

1. Read verses 1 and 13. How does Paul describe his imprisonment, and what does he want his readers' response to be? What questions might his suffering have raised for them?

2. In verses 2–6, Paul describes a "mystery": something previously hidden that God has now revealed. What is it? Look closely at the three descriptions of Gentile believers in verse 6. What do they now share, and how have they received it?

3. What do verses 7–8 reveal about Paul's view of himself and his ministry? Why is "grace" such an important word in his explanation?

4. What has Paul been commissioned to do in verses 8–9? Why might he describe what he proclaims as "the unsearchable riches of Christ"? Look back at Ephesians 1.7 and 2.4–7 for examples.

5. According to verses 10–11, what is God making known through the church, and to whom? How does bringing Jews and Gentiles together in Christ display his wisdom?

6. What do believers have in Christ according to verse 12? Looking back over the passage, what reasons has Paul given his readers not to lose heart over his suffering?

REFLECT & APPLY

Choose the questions that will be most helpful for your group, allowing time for prayer.

7. Are there times when you feel that God's promises are more for other Christians than for you? How does verse 6 help someone who trusts Christ but feels they do not quite belong? How should it shape the way we welcome and value one another?

8. Which of Christ's riches do you particularly need to remember at present—forgiveness, adoption into God's family, new life, or something else? How might appreciating these riches renew our desire to make him known?

9. What tends to shape your judgement of how a church is doing? How do verses 10–11 help us understand the significance of an ordinary congregation, including one with weaknesses and difficulties?

10. When following Jesus is costly or discouraging, what makes it difficult to approach God confidently? What does verse 12 give us to depend on? Consider sharing something you would like the group to pray about.

PRAY

- Thank God that through the gospel he has brought us into his people, with a full share in his promises.
- Ask him to deepen our delight in Christ's riches and give us courage to make him known.
- Pray that our life together at St Peter's would reflect the unity God has given us in Christ.
- Bring the group's concerns to the Father, trusting the access Jesus has opened for us. Pray especially for Christians suffering because of their faith, that they would not lose heart.

NB The Church Prayer Pointers for November are available in the Hall, via the WhatsApp group, or from the Office.