

Ephesians 1:3-14
Pentecost 8; July 18, 2021

He had his eye on this grill for a while. It had 4 burners and 620 square inches of grilling surface. He was a developing grill master and he deserved the very best. This grill was going to change his life. So after weeks of comparing models and talking it over with his wife he decided to make the purchase. Three days later it was on his deck. He bought some meat and started grilling. And boy, did he grill. Brats, steak, BBQ chicken. No meat in the house was safe. He cherished that grill; it was just what he wanted. But as the days went by the initial rush of excitement began to fade. The once amazing new grill wasn't so amazing any more. Soon it became just one more thing in the garage. Given a little more time, things began to pile up on it. Some years later as he was cleaning out the garage, the once amazing grill was now hauled away to the dump to be buried under even more trash.

He stood there in the car showroom. He just couldn't take his eye off of it. Right there in front of him, was the most amazing car he had ever seen. He knew had to have it. Money wasn't even an object. He would pay anything to get it. He begged them to take the car out of the showroom so that he could take it out for a test drive. It was everything that he expected it to be. As he came back to the dealership, he took out his pen and began to sign on the dotted line. As the years would go by, it just became another car on the road. The harsh winter and salt in Wisconsin began to take its toll on it. The rust began to eat through the body. It wasn't that he hadn't tried to take care of it. But finally he lost the battle, and it would be hauled off to the boneyard and sold for scrap metal.

Ever had that happen? You've been there, right? The thing that you wanted so badly, became the thing that you couldn't even give away to someone. What would happen if God would feel the same way to us? God had given Adam and Eve everything - a perfect home, a perfect garden, a perfect creation. It didn't take long for them to mess it all up. God would have had every right to just simply throw it away. But he didn't. He wanted them and us so badly, he would pay everything to get us back into his family. He would even give his very own Son to make us his children once again. That's what the Apostle Paul wanted the Ephesians to know and to treasure.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us.

Who are you? How do you answer that question? *"Hi, My name is Brian, and I'm a pastor," or "I'm a teacher," I'm a stay home mom," "I'm a farmer."* Who are you? We define ourselves by what we do. This morning, Paul changes the answer. We are a child of God. You are a forgiven child of God. God has chosen you. He has not chosen you because you have done something to earn it. He has chosen you because you are **"in Christ."**

If you wanted to write a letter encouraging people toward unity, how would you start? Pointing out their errors and weaknesses? Offering a step-by-step "how to"? The apostle begins in a most unexpected way, with a hymn of praise! He starts, **³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.** (Ephesians 1:3). But he doesn't stop there. In fact, he bubbles over with so much excitement that verses 3 to 10 of chapter 1 are one, long, run-on sentence in Greek. **In Christ**, we have everything that we could ever hope for or imagine when it comes to our relationship with God. Paul wants the Ephesians to know that they have everything **in Christ**.

As we begin to look at the book of Ephesians, that phrase – **"in Christ"** – will be used 150 times. In these opening 14 verses of Ephesians, Paul will use that phrase 10 times. God didn't decide to choose us in the way that children might choose players for a ball game. He didn't just pick the *"best"* players for his team. All the credit for our forgiveness of sins goes to God. He is the cause of it. He is the reason that we praise him. Did God do all this because we are that wonderful? No. He did this purely out of his grace, his love. What a blessing we have **"in Christ."**

Have you ever played the “*what if game*.” You know how it goes: *What if* I had made a better choice, life would be different. *What if* I had taken that new job, instead of passing on that opportunity. *What if* I had just stayed with that other company. *What if* I had done something different with my life. You know what I mean. We’ve all played it. The result will always be the same, right? We will never be content. We will always be looking for the next bright shining grill or a dream care. Instead of play the *what if* game, Paul wants us to take a step back and see and simply marvel at what we have ‘**in Christ.**’ **“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us.”**

We have been adopted by God for **“son-ship.”** We are children of God, and we are brothers and sisters **“in Christ.”** That is your life, that is our life, that is THE life that we have in Jesus. Amen.