

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord
January 6, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl
Mystery revealed

Surely you have heard of the administration of God's grace given to me for you,³ namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation (as I have already written briefly).⁴ When you read this, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.⁵ This mystery was not made known to people in past generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.⁶ This mystery is that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and people who also share in the promise through the gospel.

⁷ I became a servant of this gospel, in keeping with the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power.⁸ To me—even though I am the very least of all the saints—was given this grace: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ⁹ and to enlighten everyone about the administration of this mystery. In past ages this mystery remained hidden in God, who created all things.¹⁰ He did this so that, through the church, the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was done according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹² In him we can freely approach God with confidence through faith in him.

—Ephesians 3:2-12 EHV

I love a great mystery. When I was a kid, my favorite books to read were "Hardy Boys." There is just something about a mystery to solve that is intriguing. It's the unknown. It's figuring something out. And once you know, you just want everybody else to know. "Hurry up and read the book. Hurry up and see the movie." You want to discuss the solution with someone else.

Today is Epiphany. The word epiphany has the meaning "to reveal" or "to show." Epiphany is the season in the church year when God reveals some things about himself, shares with you some of his secrets. Epiphany is that time of the year when God solves some mysteries. Today, as we look at the Apostle Paul's words in the book of Ephesians, we see God revealing things to us that we really need to know, things that are important, and yet things you'll never figure out unless God tells you about them.

One of the great mysteries that our world has wrestled with is this: How do you really bring people together? As you look at our world in general, and our nation in particular, it's pretty obvious that we live in a very divided world.

There are so many things that divide. Ethnic backgrounds, language barriers economic divisions. Religion is a divider too, isn't it? There's the false idea out there that all religions are the same – it doesn't matter what you believe. But if that's true, then why is religion such a divider? People of different religions separate into different groups because they believe different things.

So how do you really bring all these people together? And I mean truly together. How do you unite people together? How do you solve this mystery? How do you really bring people together?

The Apostle Paul reveals the solution to this mystery: "**Surely you have heard of the administration of God's grace given to me for you, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation (as I have already written briefly).**" God revealed to the Apostle Paul how to bring people together. "**When you read this, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.**" So the solution to bringing people together has something to do with Jesus Christ. "**This mystery was not made known to people in past generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.**" Do you see what this is saying here? The solution to bringing people together has always been around, but it was hard to see. But now, the Holy Spirit is working through the Word – the apostles and prophets – and here in the Word we find the solution to the mystery of Christ. Here it is: "**This mystery is that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and people who also share in the promise through the gospel.**"

The mystery has been solved! How do you bring people who are so diverse together? In the first century, Jews and Gentiles were very, very different from each other, and not very fond of each other either. They had different diets, different lifestyles, different everything. And yet, God was able to bring these two opposite groups of people together. How? Through the gospel, the promise in Christ Jesus.

You see, the gospel removes the thing that really divides us. And what really divides us is our sin. Sin always divides. Just go back to the Garden of Eden. Look at what sin did to that perfect couple, Adam and Eve. Once they

sinned against God, they were divided from him. They ran from him. They hid from him. Oh, Adam and Eve thought they could become like God, but their sin only separated them from him.

And look at what it did to each other. Instead of being together, their sin drove them apart. They blamed each other. They shifted the blame from themselves. Sin divides.

You and I can't see it, but there are huge, invisible piles of sin, and that's what keeps people apart. Sure, we have our ethnic and economic differences, but the thing that really keeps people apart are those invisible piles of sin. How do you bring people together? You can't pretend that those piles of sin aren't there! How do you get rid of those piles of sin in your life? How do you get rid of those piles of sin in the lives of the people around you? You can't really get together until that sin is gone. It's an unsolved mystery, until you realize what Jesus Christ has done for you.

Jesus is the key to solving this mystery. Jesus is the great sin-remover. He is the great unifier. He's the only one who can do that. That's why he came! There on the cross, you and I can get rid of those piles of sin in our lives. There at the cross, dump truck after dump truck of sin was piled onto the shoulders of Jesus Christ, and there, he took all of our sins away. And once people realize this and believe that their sin is really gone, really forgiven because of Jesus Christ, then they can really and truly get together, no matter what their differences might be.

We are all in this together. We are all sinners through and through. We are all in deep need of Jesus who alone can give us access to God Almighty.

And who are the ones to reveal this solution? Look at what Paul says, "**I became a servant of this gospel, in keeping with the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power.**" Paul recognized that he is a servant of Jesus. He was sent by Jesus to proclaim only what his Lord and Savior wants him to say. God's grace rescued Paul from being divided from God. And now by God's grace Paul is a messenger to bring that message to unify people into one Christian family.

Paul continues. "**To me—even though I am the very least of all the saints—was given this grace: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to enlighten everyone about the administration of this mystery. In past ages this mystery remained hidden in God, who created all things.**" The only way to unify people is through the proclamation and preaching of the gospel. Look who is to do this.

"He did this so that, through the church, the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was done according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him we can freely approach God with confidence through faith in him."

God intends his church, those who have been called out of darkness into his marvelous light, he intends us to be the revealers of this solution of unity. It's the Word of God which is centered on Jesus Christ.

That's what Mary and Joseph and the wise men from the east had in common. Mary and Joseph – not rich. The wise men – rich. Mary and Joseph – not very educated. The wise men – very educated. Mary and Joseph – Jews. The wise men – Gentiles. Very, very different people. What brought them together? The Christ child, Jesus, the Savior of the world.

One of the main messages of the Epiphany season is that we have a world-wide Savior – that no matter who you are, what your background, no matter how different you think you are, Jesus is still for you. He brings you into a group of people called Christians, people who have all kinds of differences, but people who have one thing in common that binds them very closely together, and that's the most important thing of all – the forgiveness of sins in Christ. It's no longer a mystery. **Mystery revealed.** Today, God reveals his grace to you. Today God reveals his grace *through* you. Amen.