

## A MYSTERY

*Now to him that is a power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest and by the scriptures and the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known unto all the nations for the obedience of faith to God, only wise, be glory to Jesus Christ for ever and ever.*

*Romans 16:2-27*

I don't know who coined the term that, "everyone loves a mystery," but I bet if you called any book store the top sellers are mystery writers...Agatha Christie, Sherlock Holmes....spy thrillers. Every television program we watch, the underlying current or theme is that we don't know what's going to happen. We wonder who the villain will turn out to be...or when the good guy is going to turn into the villain and on and on and on.

We're drawn by mysteries. We look at our children and we wonder,

"What will become of them?"

And our children look at us and say,

"How did they get like that?"

The turmoil in the world, right now, holds a great mystery. Everything has questions marks around it.

You'll find the word "mystery" only in the New Testament... not in the Old Testament. It's in the New Testament about 27 times. As we just read, when Paul states the word "mystery" normally, not always, it means a revelation of Jesus Christ...that God has revealed to us a living gospel which was at one time a mystery. Jesus used the word mystery in three places..... and uses it in the same way.

To you (meaning his disciples) it is given that you should know the mystery of the kingdom of God.

And when Jesus took them aside and explained to them a parable, which to most people, made no sense at all, to his disciples it made all the sense in the world.....godly wisdom.

**Paul uses the term "mystery" when he talks about the Gentiles...**the mystery of the Gentiles being given the gospel...not only to Jews. We really can't understand this in this day and age, but back then to say that a Gentile has tasted salvation and was shown favor by God, that was unheard of...it was a mystery.

**Paul also uses the word "mystery" about how the dead in Christ shall rise first.**

**Revelation uses the word "mystery"** about the mystery of the seven stars... the mystery of the woman...the mystery of Babylon... on and on and on we have this mystery.

Granted, there are some things we cannot and never will understand, but there are many things that God has given for us to understand that aren't mysteries.

And often we wrestle with the mystery and refuse to take hold of the cold hard facts that Jesus is Lord and that we're loved by our heavenly Father.

I'm going to give you a mystery. A loving father was raising his six sons by himself. This father struggled to make ends meet, but

- he fed his children as best he could,
- he sheltered them as best he could in a home that was sufficient....the rain didn't come in, the snow stayed out.

He showed by everything he did that he cared for them. He withheld nothing from them that was for their good....

nothing. But, he most certainly disciplined them because he knew it was for their good. At the end of the day this father, with his meager means, would encourage his children...bind their wounds...delve to see how their day went because he really cared for his children and what they were going through.

—He listened to them....

—He tucked them into bed....

—He encouraged them with a word every night...

“Whatever you go through, wherever you are, whatever the problem is, I want you to know I will be there.”

Every night these were the closing words ringing in his children’s ears.

The strange thing was that when these children were not around their father but were out with their friends, the first words out of their friend’s mouths were normally something like,

"I wish I had a Dad like you. Someone who cared for me, someone who looked out for me, someone who wanted the best for me. Man, you guys got that."

But these children, as they shared about their loving father, seemed to criticize his means. They seemed to give an opinion that he’s not all that caring. To them, his discipline sometimes seemed severe....painful. They even questioned their father’s motives....

"Why is he being so good to us?"

They really wanted to know what was lying under his skin. And these children who seem to have nothing but benefit from living with this kind of father seem to be questioning the good that’s right before their eyes.

The friends of these children could not, in any way, shape or form understand how a family with such a caring father could be so cruel, so criticizing, so condemning of a father that they saw as nothing but merciful, kind, and just.

The mystery is that we are children of exactly that kind of father. And the mystery isn’t that Jesus is Lord....I don’t think we struggle with that.

The mystery for us is that we have a loving, caring, gentle, compassionate, kind Father in heaven and we walk around questioning his love, wondering about his mercy, questioning whether he hears, wondering whether he cares.

To me, that is the mystery we need to struggle with. Why we live like such a rebellious people when we have a loving and caring Father who wants nothing but the best for his children.

Everyone of us struggles with God’s love for us because it doesn’t come down to us the way we want it to.

We struggle with his time schedule...which is usually much slower than we expect.

We struggle with his revelations...he always gives to others but never to me.

We struggle with his way of leading his people...it seems....

- he never avoids leading us through a furnace...
- he never avoids a storm...
- he never avoids leading his children through some tough times.

It seems he’s always dragging us through this stuff. So we walk around continually criticizing, murmuring, complaining....being spiteful of a loving, gentle, kind, merciful Father in heaven who cares for us.

Today, as you ponder the events of the world, keep three things on our minds.....

1. *“Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in me.”*  
-John 14:1

The key word here is “let.”

We can let ourselves be troubled by anything.

“Goodness gracious, I lost my first issue of Spider Man Magazine...tragedy has beset me.” We can be troubled by sour milk, troubled, that we were shortchanged by a dollar, troubled by so many little things.

I think one of the most used word in the English language is the word “trouble.” Also the letter “T”...

trouble,  
torment,  
trials,  
tribulations,  
temptation,

And we tend to focus on that.

What does the Lord say to us...I’m going to change the word “trouble” to the word “trust.”

“Let us **trust**...let us not be troubled. You have a Father who sees what you’re going through... a Father who cares.”

Let’s not be troubled...let’s be **thankful** that we have a Father we can trust.

2. *“And I say unto you, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be open.’ For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be open. If a son asks for bread of any of you, that is, the father, will you give him a stone? Or, if he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent? Or, if he asks for an egg will you give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask.”*  
-Luke 11:9-13

It’s amazing how we as Christians ask God for so little. And it’s even more amazing that we expect even less than what we ask. It’s time that we ask a loving Father to give us what he sees best for us to receive. And the first thing we need to ask for is the Holy Spirit

to guide us,  
to rule us,  
to touch us.

When you’re in dire straights, I don’t know about you, but when I’m hitting empty on my gas tank and have about four cents in my pocket, I’ll grab a stranger and ask him for a dollar. And somehow with our Father in heaven, he becomes the stranger. I ask everywhere else but to the one person who is so anxious to hear from me. Ask him...ask him...keep asking...don’t ever stop. He isn’t a Father who makes sure you ask just right. When your child says,

“Mommy, help me, my stomach hurts,” you don’t say, “Let me correct your English...Mother, please help me, my stomach hurts me right now.” When your child comes to you bruised or bleeding, your first reaction isn’t to ask him how it happened. You first deal with the wound, then you ask.

We have this image of God our Father as being

so studious,  
so right in his English,  
so proper in the etiquette we must use.

He wants right and proper hearts...that can never change. But a heart that cries, stumbling and stumbling in its anguish...a heart that cries out, “Father, hear me, I’m desperate,” he will hear and he will act.

3. ***“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”***  
***- Luke 12:32***

Did you ever notice how we, as Christians, fear?

Now granted those who are disobedient and live in sin, they should fear.

But Christians who are so gentle, so kind, so tender-hearted, who have really laid down their lives for Jesus....and all of us have struggled with this...feel like we’re headed for an electric chair instead of the Kingdom of God. And you feel like condemnation upon condemnation has been heaped upon you.

But those of us who believe in the mercy of Jesus and in his love and in his forgiveness are told by our Lord,

***“Fear not, little flock...”***

....it is God’s pleasure. That’s what the gospel is about.

Do you know what the gospel is?

Obviously, Jesus and him crucified. But remember that the gospel is God saying to us,

“Where I am, you will be also because of Jesus.”

We’re not headed for a dead end...the world’s headed for that.

We’re headed for glory, a crown of life.

That’s the kind of father you and I have.

The mystery to the world is that we as Christians run around so haggard, so fearful, so condemned, so brutalized  
....when we should be, of all people on the face of this earth, envied by most. Not because of what we’ve accomplished, but because of the Father that you and I have... a loving, compassionate and merciful Father who gave his only Son. And we can glory in that.

Meditate on this,

***“Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”***

***John 14:1-3***