

Sermon: Immeasurable Greatness

Scripture: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Ephesians 1:15-23

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Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

Today's Old Testament Scripture comes from Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24. Ezekiel paints a vivid picture of God's unwavering promise to guide and restore God's chosen people as a Good Shepherd, extending God's compassionate embrace to each of us. God seeks the lost, tends to the wounded, and strengthens the weak. Let us listen to the Word of God, where God's immeasurable divine care is not restricted by time or circumstance.

<sup>11</sup> For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep and will sort them out. <sup>12</sup> As shepherds sort out their flocks when they are among scattered sheep, so I will sort out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup> I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them into their own land, and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. <sup>14</sup> I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup> I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup> I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strays, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup> Because you pushed with flank and shoulder and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, <sup>22</sup> I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged, and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

<sup>23</sup> I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

Amen.

Today's New Testament reading comes from Ephesians 1:15-23, where Apostle Paul fervently prays for the church in Ephesus, desiring that they may fully comprehend the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards believers. This power, as Paul illustrates, is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Christ above all, making him the head of the Church, his body. Hear the Word of the Lord.

Ephesians 1:15-23

<sup>15</sup> I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know Christ, <sup>18</sup> so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which God has called you, what are the riches of God's glorious inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of God's power for us who believe, according to the working of God's great power. <sup>20</sup> God put this power to work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and seated him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. <sup>22</sup> And God has put all things under Christ's feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is Christ's body, the fullness of God who fills all in all.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## Sermon: Immeasurable Greatness

Let us pray. Holy and loving God, we are here because of your immeasurable grace and mercy that breathe new life into us this morning. As we dare to approach you closer, open our hearts and minds to your Word and care, may we be empowered and nurtured through your love. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

I hope that your Thanksgiving was a great one, giving thanks for the many blessings that we have received. On this post-Thanksgiving Sunday, before we think about putting up the Christmas decorations in the cold, I would like for us to take pause and remain in the spirit of thanksgiving for a moment longer. If you have already put up your Christmas decorations outside, you have additional things to be thankful for this morning.

We learn to give thanks no matter what circumstances we might find ourselves in. This year, one of the joys I have in my current circumstances is that I got to spend some time with my father who is soon to officially retire from being a pastor in Korea. He has faithfully led 1,000 people each week in the pews for the past twenty years of his overall 45 years of ministry at this particular church founded by the Presbyterian Church in the United States missionary Eugene Bell. Presbyterian Church in the United States is a legacy denomination which later becomes today's Presbyterian Church U.S.A. As I make the complete circle of God's ministry – God moving a missionary's heart to travel from the United States to Japan to Korea, moving my family through my dad's call to come to United States and then going back to Korea to continue his ministry while myself remain here, once again, completing the circle, creating something new, yet same ministry. What I am thankful about his retirement is that I no longer have to be in his shadow of being the younger pastor in the family. In all seriousness, sharing the joys and hardships of ministry, many experiences that this vocation that enriches our lives, and many life lessons that we have learned in a way that only a father and son who are in same vocation can openly share and fully understand has been immensely rewarding and valuable. This is why I respect and revere all pastors and saints who have gone before me. The times have changed, culture may have shifted, yet the ministry and the contribution each person/saint has made in one another's lives are often immeasurable and unseen.

In the world where empathy for one another is dwindling and where the candle of humanity seems to get dimmer and weaker through division, injustices, and wars, we need to once again fix our eyes to the One who has been watching over us and who has granted us countless blessings.

Often, the world highlights and talks about who is the greatest. Using sports as an easy example, many discuss and debate based on the statistics, who are the GOATs – Greatest of All Time. How each person impacted the game, how they have shown innovation and creativity, how they led their team into championships with their passion and dedication to perfecting their craft, how they had to overcome their shortcomings and bounce back from setbacks and injuries to inspire others.

Yet, there is another metric that people do not usually talk about or have a hard time measuring: the intangibles. Something that cannot be measured because it is indescribable, something unique, that transcends all the measurables to say that person has "it." Each of the greatest or someone who is renowned for greatness also has this intangible character. Our King of kings is not an exception.

Theologian Karl Barth poignantly captured this truth when he wrote, "The love of God toward us becomes evident in Jesus Christ. It's immeasurable, incomprehensible, but undeniably transformative." The depth of God's love, unveiled through Christ, is beyond measure, beyond our human calculations, yet we can see the result by seeing our lives changed, being transformed.

Imagine a boat amidst a stormy sea. Though the waves our circumstances may buffet it fiercely, yet boat remains steadfast when anchored securely to a rock (Jesus) beneath the waters. Our faith functions as that anchor, grounding us amidst life's tempests, enabling us to experience the immeasurable greatness of God's love and power that shelters us from bottoming out and fall into despair.

The immeasurable love of God is not an abstract concept but a vibrant reality that shapes our lives. It's a love that surpasses understanding, yet it's meant to be experienced and embraced daily.

Living in the reality of God's love involves opening our hearts to receive it, allowing it to shape our perspectives and interactions – everything that we see and do, we must see it through God's lens. It's a daily commitment to being mindful of God's presence and experiencing God's love in every facet of our lives.

Let us not be constrained by our limited understanding or doubts. Instead, let us anchor ourselves in faith, acknowledging that in Christ, we have access to immeasurable greatness.

Scripture teaches us that even the disciples grappled with faith. In Mark 9:24, a father cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" This candid plea underscores the tension between belief and doubt. Yet, it's within this tension that our faith can mature, enabling us to grasp the immeasurable greatness of God more fully.

As we navigate our lives, let us rely not on our own strength but on the immeasurable power available through faith in Christ. We are all called to be saints, God's witnesses, and our intangibles are through having faith, knowing that we can move the heart of the Creator who has created all that can be seen and unseen. Through our faith that we are called to be conduits of God's love to others, to share the gospel and the good news of the cross and what it symbolizes.

This love is not limited to those who are easy to love; it extends to everyone—neighbors, colleagues, even those who may have wronged us. It's a love that knows no boundaries, transcending differences and reaching out with grace and compassion.

Therefore, let's make it a daily practice to intentionally spread immeasurable love, not just through grand gestures but also through the simple acts of kindness, forgiveness, and understanding. And return all the glory to the God who dispenses God's unfathomable amazing grace upon us and be thankful for all that we have and all the blessings we have received in our lives. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.