

## **Ephesians on the Air: Masterpiece Theater Sunday July 18, 2010**

Last Sunday while I was away at camp Todd Krost gave the message. He is on the path towards ordained ministry. I serve as his Candidancy Mentor. Since preaching is a big part of all a pastor does, I like giving those I mentor the opportunity to do so.

I know you were gracious to Todd. I'm sure he was a bit nervous and the message not as polished, but I bet what was said came from the heart.

When I think back to my first few messages, I cringe. Like Todd it was before I went to Seminary. I was nervous. I stumbled over the words and skipped part of my manuscript. Those poor parishioners.

I'm sure Todd did better than I did so long ago.

If you have any comments you would like to share, either good or bad, let me know. I will be meeting with him soon. I can use these critiques as a learning tool.

As I think back to the days before seminary, the question I struggled with was the focus of my sermons. Its one thing to be asked to preach once, it's another thing to preach week after week.

How do you decide what to preach on?

This question was answered in seminary. In a Preaching Class, I found out about the Lectionary - three year cycle whereby you can preach through the Bible. Each Sunday there is an Old Testament reading a Psalm, an Epistle and a Gospel reading.

I followed this practice my first 14 years of ministry.

My lectionary preaching changed when I moved to the Tawas United Methodist Church. One of the services was contemporary. The planning team for that service shared with me the concept of series

preaching: One theme being preached over a period of three to six weeks.

As I began putting together several sermon series I realized how creative and fun they could be. I enjoyed doing them and the congregation seemed to enjoy hearing them.

This morning I am beginning one of these sermon series. From now until the end of August we will be going through the Book of Ephesians. I encourage you to read a chapter each week as we move through this letter.

I am calling the Series “Ephesians On The Air”. Each week I will take a television show and use it to lift up lesson from Ephesians. This week it’s the long running PBS show Masterpiece Theatre. You know the show!

(The opening music was played - [http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=mZloNyv1R\\_o&feature=related](http://il.youtube.com/watch?v=mZloNyv1R_o&feature=related) ).

The premise of the show is they take a classic work of literature and make a movie of it.

The reason I chose this show to begin my series on Ephesians is because there is no Literary Masterpiece greater than the Bible.

In this Bible we have 66 Books, 39 in the Old Testament 27 in the New Testament. Of the 27 we find Ephesians. Through our Bible state it is Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, most biblical scholars believe someone other than Paul wrote this letter. They point to the literary style and vocabulary that is used in the letter. Both of these are different from other letters attributed to Paul. For example the term “heavenly places” is used only five times, all five in Ephesians.

Another difference between Ephesians and say the first and second letter to the Corinthians is that the letter does not address any specific issues. Rather than addressing a problem it is more of a general essay on the nature of the Church.

I will say more about the style of the letter of the Church of Ephesus next week.

Right now I want us to get into this Masterpiece. Let me continue reading where Ann DeBoer left off (Here I read verses 4 - 5). Another translation says "in love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons."

In literature one story line that comes up from time to time, is that of an adopted child. I can't tell you stories they have had on Masterpiece Theatre that include an adopted child, but I know there have been several.

In many cases the adopted child gets the Cinderella treatment. In those cases it not a great thing to be adopted. In Ephesians it is quite the opposite. God adopting us is a wonderful thing. The adoption theme is very relevant considering that the Church in Ephesus was made up of Jews, as well as Gentiles. The Jews were considered the first children of God. The Gentiles came along later, by the Grace of Christ, to be family with God is an awesome thing.

Years ago my daughter enjoyed watching the Disney movie *Lilo and Stitch*. Lilo was a young Hawaiian girl and Stitch was her adopted alien friend. An important theme in the movie was family. The Hawaiian word for family is "ohana". In the movie Lilo would say "Ohana means family - family means no one gets left behind."

Being in God's family means we are not left behind. We have full privileges, full access to all the benefits of God's love.

One of those benefits is mentioned in verses 6 & 7.

*So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his son, and our sins are forgiven.*

We have received a number of gifts over the years. We have gotten gifts for our birthday, gifts at Christmas, and gifts at other special

occasions. Though wonderful they might have been, those gifts can't compare with the gift God has given to us.

Being freed from sin not only allows us to let go of the heavy baggage that we have been carrying around for years, it also helps us feel like whole new persons.

As I said I was at camp. One day I was helping move wood chips. I would help load them onto a trailer at one location and dump them out at another location. It was hot & sunny. As I was using my pitch fork to move the chips I was getting hot and sweaty.

I was feeling gross. Just my luck it was swim time when I finished my work. I changed into my swim suit, went to the lake and dove right into the water. Wow did that feel great!

God's love washes our sins away. What a refreshing feeling to know your sins are forgiven. It is not an accident that water is used in baptism. When we baptize a baby, a child or an adult, we use water to illustrate the cleansing power of God. Whatever the sin, it is washed away.

This cleansing, the refreshing removal of our sins can happen any time we come to God asking for forgiveness. This morning I would like us to remember baptism. I want us to remember what God did for us then and what God continues to do for us now.

I invite you to come up to the baptismal font and feel the water. As you touch the water, know that you have had your sins forgiven. God has done this for you because of "ohana". We are family! No one gets left behind!

(The congregation renews their baptism as music plays, "We Are Family" - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Oiu9jW-VyE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Oiu9jW-VyE))