

I was at Lenthall Infant school on Ascension Day and the theme for their assembly I used was look up because that is what the Apostles were doing!! The next day Gilli and I left for the Baptist Together Assembly where we heard again lots of Up language – of baptisms, membership, the number of 18–35-year-olds and giving all being up. On the Friday evening, we saw ‘Stories round the campfire’ which were about how our Northern Association is seeing God at work in their region and we will be seeing more of these great stories in the future!! In today’s text we come across our third verse 10 and this one builds on all that is said in the two previous two verse 10s. In chapter 1 verse 10 defines God’s plans and purposes in bringing heaven and earth together as one. In chapter 2 the church is defined as a group of people justified by grace and who therefore have a role in fulfilling God’s plans and purposes. Here in chapter 3 Paul speaks of a multi coloured and multiethnic church who are commissioned by Jesus to call the principalities and powers to account. Paul speaks of the ‘unsearchable riches’ and the ‘rich variety’, or ‘colour of the rainbow wisdom of God’ and both are ours in Christ. These are to inspire, animate and excite us in our life as a church, or, in other words, to always be a people who look up because you ain’t seen nothing yet!!

Paul, once again if I dare say that, wants to inspire and animate us by the sheer extraordinariness of what the Good News is. He speaks here of how the Gospel has reached into his own life, of his own discovery of the incalculable riches which are also ours in Christ and which are his privilege to preach about. He has incredibly witnessed God fulfil the mystery of Christ, or the new shape God’s plans and purposes have taken in his lifetime, and the incredible vocation the church has been given to fulfil. What Paul says here in verses 8 – 10 is what a ‘look up life’ is all about. The key question we need to think about first is, do you know this life in your life? Has your life been grasped by this incredible Good News and is continuing to be changed day by day by day?

Being part of this Growth Collective has really helped me to again know the unsearchable riches of Christ and the rainbow wisdom of God by reminding me that I am to focus on the here and now and not on my future. I had thought that by focussing on Transition I was helping the church, but I’ve come to realise that it’s not and instead I am to Treasure everything I am and have now to bless the church. I am to treasure this role of Pastor I have here in this church. I am to treasure my ordination and all that this calls me to be and to do; this year is my 35th anniversary. I am to treasure every sermon and the opportunity this gives me to lead you as a church. I am to treasure every meeting I have in this church and to treasure building vision and see it being lived out in this church. I am to treasure every conversation I have with each of you. I am to treasure every opportunity to plan and to administrate. I am to treasure every opportunity I have to proclaim the incalculable riches of Christ and this rainbow wisdom of God here in church and in the community.

What lens then do you use to see, to fathom the incalculable riches of Christ and live out God’s rainbow wisdom in your life and in your ministry? There are many lens we can use. We can be a Child of God, which speaks of the security of knowing you are loved and brought near to God in your life and that to love God is to obey him. It can

be one of the ministries described in chapter 4 verse 11, such as apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher; to be a pastor is my primary lens. It could be as a disciple, or follower of Jesus where you confess him as Lord in your life and your life is lived in obedience to his call on you. It could be through the language of member and though this sounds as dull as dishwater, I have just read about how Wendell Berry, an American theologian changes the focus away from belonging to an organisation to our being part of the body of Christ and I found this to be incredibly liberating and life giving.

We have read about what these incalculable riches of Jesus are in chapter 1 verses 3 – 14 and in chapter 2 verses 4 – 8. These verses have opened our eyes, our heart, our mind and our soul to all that Jesus has done for us and the Spirit in us. This means that we are to be people of praise and worship who give thanks again and again and who are equally enthused to love this God and to serve him in our lives. These riches show the way in which the Father has fulfilled his plans and purposes in the cross and resurrection of his Son and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. These riches are all because of and by grace and not by works, which means that they are forever reliable and dependable.

Finally, the riches of Christ speak of the necessity of the church. Eugene Peterson says it like this:

“Church cannot be objectively described or defined from the outside. Church can only be entered. It is a creation of Christ for growing up in Christ. It is not a museum through which we can stroll and see exhibits of what has happened throughout history, precisely labelled with names, dates and locations. Church takes place in history, just as Jesus takes place in history. But there is more than history here. There is the life of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the plan of God.

Our church is never ‘just’ church, it is always a place of awe and wonder. We should be amazed that I am here and that you are here too, for who would have thought that this would be possible. This is our vocation to live out the unsearchable riches of Christ and the rainbow wisdom of God. It is our call to live out the unsearchable riches of Christ and the rainbow wisdom of God. It is our mission to live out the unsearchable riches of Christ and the rainbow wisdom of God. We should all share in this OMG moment of wow this is what the love of God looks like and the privilege to be his workers in his harvest fields, as in Luke 10 verse 2, and we see in our three E’s.

The best Up in the Bible could be said to be Daniel chapter 7 and the riches and wisdom the Son of Man has won for us in his triumph over the beasts. He is then welcomed into the presence of God as victor which is why we can all dare to say in our lives ‘You ain’t seen nothing yet’. May each of us know this, may we believe this, may we delight in this and may we live this because, guess what, ‘You ain’t seen nothing yet’.