

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

April 26, 2026

Unpuzzled

“The Purpose of the Church”

Ephesians 3:7-13

Rev. Neal Avirett

I don't know if you've ever noticed, if there's any talk among everyday people about heaven, Christian or not, someone will quote a verse from The Book of Revelation about how they've heard the streets are paved with gold. That's always been a head scratcher to me. What's the benefit of gold covered streets?

Then when Pastor Fordham lead us through the sermon series “A Heart After God: The Story of David,” I read along in the Bible each week and kept reading about the construction of the Temple and how the walls, ceilings, and yes even the floor, was covered with gold (because what would anyone do with left over gold and what else will color coordinate?)

But really, it's about God's Presence and the holiness of God, so why streets of gold if God Presence isn't everywhere we travel in heaven. So what about the here and now, what about God's Presence and The Purpose of the Church in this Puzzling world we live in...that's what Paul writes to the Ephesians beginning in chapter 3 verses 7-13.

Ephesians 3:7-13

⁷ By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

⁸ Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. ⁹ I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

¹⁰ God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. 13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

UNPUZZLED: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS PUZZLING WORLD?

Responding To God's Grace

7 By God's grace and mighty power

8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people

In the midst of this crazy, confusing world in constant conflict news

God's Grace Still Saves

In the early 1990s, CNN reported during Gulf War coverage in the deserts of Kuwait and Iraq that American troops had come across nomadic families living/traveling in the desert including disciples of John The Baptist. That really surprised me.

Spending God's Grace (Privilege as a 2-sided coin)

First Privilege 7b I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. (Farming, Scattering Seed, Sowing God's Word)

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers.² "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them.

"No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John." ⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."

⁵ As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them

Second Privilege ⁸ telling the Gentiles (Christians) about the endless treasures available to us in Christ.

John Wesley wrote to Francis Asbury in 1788, Let (other groups of people) do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better."

Putting Christ First - Instead of working the puzzle by finding the edges (world)

- Work the puzzle from the inside out: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Putting God's Grace Into Practice

- Passing The Peace of Christ (Practice here so you do it out there)

- Speaking to Toluba to Ask Me about two relationships on Tuesday
- I also Tabled it with my family

Discipleship Is Not Tea & Sympathy

10 God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety

"In Paul's case, he concerned that the little house church scattered around western Turkey, must not lose heart just because the lead player in the game is in prison. They must see that fact as the sign that their very existence has rattled the cages of the powers that think they rule the world. They don't. The church, in all its rich variety (social variety, ethnic variety, and so on) is displaying the creator's new creational wisdom to the world, making it clear that God is God, that Jesus is Lord." - N.T. Wright

At end of life, "I love you, I forgive you, please forgive me."

- I am on the clock right now

Your Cost of Discipleship UnPuzzles The World

10 ...to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

- John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, 3 "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?" - Matthew 11:2-3

- The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him. - Mark 15:31-32

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Unpuzzled*, J. D. Walt *
- *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer
- *The Gospel According to Jesus*, John MacArthur
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande
- *Respectable Sins*, Jerry Bridges
- *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Icebreaker Questions

1. When you hear the phrase “the purpose of the Church,” what’s the first image or idea that comes to mind and why?
2. Think of a time when something confusing or difficult in life later made more sense. What changed your perspective?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Paul describes himself as “the least deserving,” yet entrusted with a great mission (Ephesians 3:7–8). How does recognizing our unworthiness shape the way we respond to God’s grace?
2. The sermon describes grace as both something we receive and something we “spend.” What does it look like in everyday life to actively “spend” God’s grace on others?
3. The idea of “working the puzzle from the inside out” (starting with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) challenges how we often approach life. What would change in your priorities if you truly lived this way?
4. The Church is called to display God’s wisdom “in its rich variety.” How can diversity within the Church (backgrounds, experiences, personalities) actually strengthen its witness rather than divide it?
5. Paul’s suffering is presented not as defeat but as part of God’s plan. How does understanding the cost of discipleship reshape how you view hardship in your own walk with Christ?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week’s sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?