

“It Is All So Overwhelming To Think About”

February 20, 2011

Grove Presbyterian Church

Elegant, eloquent, and beautiful this reading.

And very, very difficult.

Very rich.

Listen to Paul’s lovely song about who Jesus is and what we receive because of him.

3 Blessed be [eulogia – good words spoken about] **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,** [those blessings found in heaven are come to us right now, to be experienced now]

4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. [not because we deserve it or have earned it]

5. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6. to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

7. In him we have [literally, hold, possess] **redemption** [those held in captivity released because a ransom price was paid] **through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace**

8. that he lavished [given abundantly] **on us. With all wisdom and insight**

9. he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ,

10. as a plan for the fullness of time [kairon – divinely appointed time as opposed to chronos], **to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**

Reflection

To summarize: these are what have been brought to us:

Blessed by Jesus himself

Spiritually blessed

Chosen

Holy and Blameless

Adopted

Redeemed

Forgiven

Grace lavished
The mysteries of God's will revealed to us

I know, I know, all this God talk can get really confusing. Heads swimming.

Which might explain your confirmation question for today:

It is overwhelming to think about.

Which actually is more a statement than a question.

It is overwhelming to think about.

Good.

Welcome to the club.

Get use to it.

It means you're growing up.

It's how we grow up.

It's a good thing.

It is the pain required of becoming an adult.

You're beginning to see how big and confusing the world is:

So many strange things

Strange people

Strange ideas

Strange beliefs

All sorts of conflicting beliefs invade and disturb your previously secure mind. You can feel as if your head is going to explode.

Which means you no longer are the child who believes the world is all like you and you cute little room or playground, safe and fun. It will happen to all the little ones.

You mean not everybody thinks the way I do?

You mean not everybody is nice?

You mean sometimes those I respect can be wrong?

By this tension we get shoved into maturity.

It is overwhelming to thing about.

Yes, it is.

Like opening up a text book and looking at all the strange words or formulas
Like visiting New York City for the first time.
How am I ever going to manage? How am I going to make it?

This happened just the other day. I had to take phone calls from persons needing shelter. Desperate people. Angry people. Sad people. I wasn't ready. I was in over my head, so I quickly cut back on what I thought I could do.

Sometimes that's the best. If the book confuses you, intimidates you, take the book one page at a time.

It is like turning on a faucet to fill a glass. What's happens when you turn the knob fully clockwise, to its highest volume? Splashes all over the place. So turn the knob down. A trickle will fill the glass better than a fire hose.

Take it in small doses. Take it in small steps. Then you can amaze yourself when you look back and realize how far you have traveled.

Yes, sometimes it is like getting knocked over by a wave.
Overwhelmed.
On overload.
Leaving you frustrated, rolling around upside down, exasperated from the too much, too much.
Getting out of hand.

How can I ever get a handle on this?

That's when it can be time to re-treat. Time a time out. Shelf it. Head out to Camp Krislund and walk about the hills.

I remember a little boy who would get so agitated, so frustrated, that the only thing that could calm him down and stop him from hyper-ventilating was for his mother to give him a gentle back-scratch.

Wouldn't that be nice for all those times when it gets too much.

Back scratch time. Calm down time.

So there, so far, are three things you can do when it gets so overwhelming.

First, realize it is a good thing. It means you're growing up.
Second, take it in stages. Chew what you can.
Third, know when its time to set it aside until you're ready.

There's a fourth thing you can do when it seems so overwhelming.

Stop thinking big. Think small.

Stop thinking abstract. Think particular.

Simply put: all this stuff – from life, to algebra, to trying to figure out how to file your 1040 tax form to God and faith -- gets overwhelming to think about when you think about things overwhelming.

My trick? I try not to.

Think not of what is beautiful, think of Van Gogh's "Starry, Starry Night."

Think not of the idea of love, think of the person beside you

Think not of the theology of compassion, think of a lonely child at Head Start.

Think not of the concept of redemption and salvation, think of a young man who needs someone to care, someone to walk with him and give him a chance

Think not of God, think of Jesus.

This is Paul's message. All things, all the mysteries of God's will are made crystal clear, revealed for all to appreciate, in Jesus. All things about God are brought to a head in him, Jesus sums up everything.

No mystery this. The whole point of Christianity is to make sense of all this God and Bible stuff. Intelligible. We reject a faith that is so esoteric, so overwhelming, that only a select few can appreciate it.

No secret passwords or handshakes.

So, friends, stop thinking about God, think of Jesus.

Think not of God, think of Jesus touching lepers.

Think not of God, think of Jesus curing the bleeding woman.

Think not of God, think of Jesus taking on the powerful men of war and money.

Think not of God, think of Jesus hugging giggling children.

Think not of God, think of Jesus teaching tough words in the temple.

Think not of God, think of Jesus on the cross.