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A Meditation on Christ

Annette Hill Briggs

Ephesians 1:3-14

Some of us are growing up. All of us are growing older.

Among us, *in whom* is Christ growing? And is Christ growing greater, larger, deeper, more pervasive, in our life together? Are we kinder, meeker, humbler, gentler? Are we more peaceful, more graceful, more compassionate? more generous, more thankful, more prayerful? more courageous, more joyful? Are we less fearful -- of death and trouble? Are we less tolerant of injustice? Are we less anxious, less worried, less stressed -- as believers and as a community -- than we were one year ago, five years ago, ten years ago?

These are the measures of faith, friends, of Christian life, of life together as the church. And all these measures, hopefully, are less a reflection of outward behaviors than an inward reality: a reality no less real for the difficulty we have, forming the words to talk about it. I mean the reality of knowing the living Christ, of being known by Christ, and of knowing we are known.

Thankfully, our poor, stammering tongues have the scriptures to do the hard work for us, this hard work of putting faith to language. David Bartlett wrote that Ephesians, chapter one, "sings instead of discusses, praises rather than tells." Always, though, the work is authenticity, right?

Is the faith of the Bible my faith or something I claim without doing the actual work to make it my own? Anybody can buy and wear a Peyton Manning jersey. But that doesn't make her a star quarterback -- or even a highly paid average one. But then, no one gets those two confused either: Peyton Manning and a 5-year-old girl wearing a jersey with his name on it. While I confuse myself ALL the time when it comes to faith, and to the church, imagining myself as faithful as Paul because I can quote him, assuming we are a good church because we worship and give to missions.

But is my heart being upheaved by the same things as Paul's, which he writes about here? Upheaved by the ever growing knowledge

- that this little life of mine was fore-destined by the Creator of the universe?
- that I am a child of the Creator?
- that in Christ, my destiny was sealed: an adoption that cannot be undone, not even by death? chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, privy to the divine mystery of God's will, an inheritance beyond my imagination, genuine hope, the reassurance of God's presence?

All this, Paul says, is the everyday reality around which my life is organized. But is it?

Is it as real to me as the bills I pay and the news I read? Does every thought that crosses my mind, every duty and responsibility, filter through the reality of Christ in me? And does the mesh of that filter get finer and finer as I grow in Christ, and as our life together grows in Christ?

To the degree I've grown so far, I've discovered this: In a very stingy world, we have an extravagant God. Among very discouraged people, we have cause for great, great courage.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 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 redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished 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, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory. [Ephesians 1:3-14, NRSV]

And again I see that in Christ we already have absolutely, positively everything we need. It's here, within reach. All that is left is to choose: to reach out, and to take it, and to be changed. Would you pray with me?