

Sunday January 3, 2021 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Ephesians 1:3-14
“Living the Celebration”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants share what they are looking forward to the most in 2021.

Ephesians 1:3-14 Context: Most scholars believe that the letter to the Ephesians was written by a disciple of Paul who drew heavily on Paul’s letters to the Colossians and to the Romans. Originally the letter was likely sent not just to one Christian community (Ephesus), but was circulated to many churches in what is now western Turkey. In the first part of the letter, the author invites his readers/hearers to join in praising and thanking God for the plan of salvation that has united them with Christ: how God has reconciled all humanity in Christ, and all who have believed and been redeemed are one in Christ’s body. Today’s lesson is actually one long sentence in the original Greek, blessing God and what God has done in Christ: God chooses us, forgives us, makes known to us the mystery of God’s will “with all wisdom and insight,” so that we all might live for God’s glory. The opening words echo the opening words of a standard Jewish prayer: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God” – replacing what would be the next phrase, “King of the Universe,” with: “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Notice the repetition of the phrases “in Christ,” “in him,” “through Jesus [Christ],” and “on Christ.” What do we learn about Christ from this passage?
- Notice that we have been “blessed” (v. 3). What do we learn about humanity from this passage? [We are chosen (v. 4) to be holy and blameless in love; we have been destined for adoption (v. 5); God’s grace has been freely bestowed on us (v. 6); we have been redeemed and received forgiveness (v. 7); we will know more fully the mysteries of God (v. 9); we have obtained an inheritance (v. 11); we have hope in Christ (v. 12); we are marked with the seal of the Holy

Spirit (v. 13).] Write down or print these phrases as a reminder of who you are. Refer to them at least daily over the coming week (or even throughout the year!).

- Which of these speak most deeply to you as you seek to live the celebration of the company who have come?
- How might you live in celebration of the hope we have in Christ this coming year?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of all wisdom and truth, our minds cannot grasp the enormity of your love. As we begin this new calendar year, help us to live into the calling you have given us. Enable us to embrace the hope that comes through Jesus Christ that others might know your love. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.