

God's Mysterious Wise Plan

1 Corinthians 2:1-13

⁷ Our words are wise because they are from God, telling of God's wise plan to bring us into the glories of heaven. This plan was hidden in former times, though it was made for our benefit before the world began.

When the Apostle Paul first visited the gathering of believers at Corinth, he made a decision NOT to try to impress them with sophisticated language. He made NO attempt to WOW them with religious knowledge, nor did he try to play the expert in all religious matters.

RATHER, he chose to proclaim the message of God in plain and simple language.

So ... following Paul's example ... today's message will be plain and simple.

Why? Because plain and simple – is usually what we all desperately need to hear

And – plain and simple - is also what usually is the most profound and powerful.

Paul wanted the believer's faith to rest, not in his exceptional knowledge of theology, but in the power and hope that comes from knowing God's eternal message.

Knowing the confused and chaotic world in which we live, I can think of no better time to be reminded of what is plain and simple.

- what is plain and simple is what we need
- to know, hear, and keep our eyes fixed securely on.

When confusion, division, and political agendas are constantly screaming at us from the television screen – our heart longs for someone to say

... listen, the plain and simple truth is this ...

So that's what Paul does ... he writes that he is going to make his message plain and simple, he is going to focus on God's pure message.

Today we are going to concentrate on one sentence from Paul's letter - verse 7. He writes,

"the wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God – his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began."

Paul speaks of God having a mysterious plan.

In fact, Paul refers to God's mysterious plan in almost all of his letters. It becomes one of his favourite themes, which he teaches all the believers.

I believe, once Paul received from the Spirit of God, the revelation of God's mysterious plan, it became like a fire burning within his heart ... it was his passion, his driving force - so he spoke of it everywhere he went – to the Jewish leaders, to the Greek philosophers, to the shop-owners in the marketplace, to the jailers when he found himself in prison.

– anyone who was prepared to listen to him ... He spoke of God's mysterious plan that had now – finally - been revealed.

I have found in my life ... that children's stories are one of the most insightful vehicles through which God's plain and simple truth can be heard.

In fact, I was once told that unless you can explain something to a five-year-old, you don't really understand it all – you learn this fast when you teach kindergarten kids!

I wonder if this is what Jesus meant, when he thanked his Father for hiding God's wisdom from those who think they are wise, yet revealing it to innocent children. (Matt 11:25)

So ... I'd like to tell you a story – It's a story about when five-year-old Timmy goes for a short stay at his grandparents' place. (S)

(S) Timmy saw Grandpa's bushy eyebrows scrunch even further together.

Then he heard a sigh escape from Grandpa's lips.

He tried to distract Grandpa, but Grandpa's gaze did not move away from the screen.

Timmy tried again ... But Grandpa responded

"Not now, Timmy, I'm watching the news."

Timmy let his tower crash to the floor. That was sure to get Grandpa's attention.

"Timmy, Shh! It's important I hear what they are saying."

Later at the dinner table Timmy listened as Grandma and Grandpa discussed the worries of the world.

"I don't know what this world is coming to," Grandpa complained, "It's going from bad to worse! It was never this bad in my day."

Grandma gave a stern look in Grandpa's direction, then glanced at Timmy. But added,

"It's a confused and chaotic world we live in, Timmy. I fear for what the future holds."

It is very easy to become discouraged and disillusioned about the state of our world. I have found myself uttering the words "I can't watch the news, it is just too depressing."

Apart from hearing about soaring temperatures, homes devastated by fire, earthquakes and volcanos, heroes who die valiantly while trying to save others We constantly hear our leaders argue over the best way to prepare for the future.

In fact, I believe, it is Australia's future – or more broadly, the world's future - that has everyone worried.

Like the Grandpa in the story, we too can become worried about our future ... especially when we are bombarded by what the world is saying about the future.

If we believe the news reports, believe the newspapers, trust in *A Current Affair* or follow the example of those featured on *RBT* ... there is every reason to fear the future.

Another way to put it is ... if we believe the story the world is broadcasting ... the story in which we came from nothingness and end in nothingness the future does indeed seem utterly hopeless.

But, what if the story that the world is constantly commenting, debating and reporting on - is not the real story. What if, the world's story is actually - fictitious - a story built on one big, fat lie.

If, that be the case ... that the world's story is not the real story ... then we need to hear again God's true - plain and simple - story.

Let's return to our story about Timmy and Grandpa ...

Later that evening Grandma tucked Timmy into bed.

She reached over and handed Timmy a gigantic book with a heavy red and gold cover. The book was so big, Timmy had to lie it on the bed.

"I found a very special book for us to read while you're staying with us."

Timmy ran his fingers over its intricate design.

In large embossed letters, they both read "The Eternal Love Story."

Timmy opened the cover to reveal the first page. It was entitled "The Eternal Author's Mysterious Story."

The wise eternal Author pondered the great expanse of his imagination. In every direction light beamed infinite possibilities.

He ran his fingers through his golden hair and imagined one of his greatest stories.

"I wonder," he sighed.

The angels drew closer, hoping to catch a glimpse of the vision that filled his mind.

The Author sat for a long time, years perhaps, thinking, pondering, wondering.

"I want to tell you a story," the Author started.

More angels gathered until a great company were assembled to listen as the wise eternal Author shared his plan.

"Who will be in the story?" enquired Gabriel.

"Just watch and wait to see what I have planned," whispered the wise Author.

"Every part of my story will reflect my goodness. It will have a grand beginning, perfectly ordered to display my love and faithfulness through all eternity.

I will create a glorious light which will shine continually of my warmth and truth.

Flowers abounding in colour will reflect my creativity and diversity.

Tiny creatures, with intricately complex bodies, will creep and scurry in hidden, dark places, while gigantic sea creatures will frolic through the deep, shooting fountains high into the sky.

There will even be creatures who will be just like me. They will be my family. They will be creative storytellers, just like me. They will have families like mine, live in gardens, build cities – they will shine my glory and blessing throughout all the universe.

Everything will reflect glimpses of the magnificent future I am planning."

The angels gasped, "You mean, you already know how the story will end?"

"There will be no end. It is an everlasting story. And even though I'm planning every detail, I will share my plan with my family, at the right time.

I'll even let my family share in writing my story. It will become our story."

The Author paused. His face showed a fleeting shadow of grief.

"What is it, wise eternal Author? What will happen?"

"Because my family share my likeness, I must give to each one the freedom to choose to love me.

They must be allowed to damage my magnificent creation. And I know that they will.

They will reject me and try to run my creation on their own. I see that they will pollute my beauty, and twist my words, until they completely forget that I created it all for them to know my love and goodness."

The Author's face grew serious.

"It will be messy. There will be days of sorrow, days of evil, days of confusion. A great sacrifice will need to be made."

The Author looked further into the future, and a broad smile returned to his face.

My love and goodness will triumph over all the mess my creatures cause. I will restore it so that is even better than it will be at the beginning."

"Oh my," the angels gasped, "may we watch it all unfold? Do tell us how the story begins."

"All in good time," the Author leaned back in his chair, "All in good time."

(S) Grandma closed the book and tucked Timmy into bed. As Timmy closed his eyes, his mind was filled a picture of the wise eternal Author telling the angels his grand mysterious story.

Transition: This year we are going to learn, read and be reassured by "God's mysterious story."

God's story has been called "The greatest love story ever to be told."

We can summarise the story in three sentences:

God's story begins with God creating a magnificent kingdom, placing humanity to live within his 7th day of rest and blessing.

Humanity chose to reject God's design, sending them out of God's rest and blessing into a polluted world.

The rest of God's story tells of His rescue mission to bring his people back to remember his 7th day Sabbath rest and blessing.

In today's reading Paul reminds us that the plot of God's story climaxes in the coming, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus.

God's story, encompasses many sub-plots, is penned by weird and wonderful characters, has the drama of a family saga, yet the passion and intensity of a romance

- tells one long and epic story.

There are **THREE** things of which we can be very confident about God's mysterious plan:

Firstly, we know that the story is written and PLANNED by an eternal Author:

- the One who planned the beginning,
- the One who knew humanity would cause the messiness of the middle,
- the One who always knew he would need to come on a rescue mission to save his broken world;
- the One who has a plan for the future and is guiding everything so that his plan is fulfilled.

Secondly, we know the story is an EVERLASTING story

- God's story has no ending
- Even now God's story shows glimpses of "a world to come"
"the world without end - life everlasting"

Thirdly, we know that the story is driven by LOVE.

"For the eternal Author - so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, so that whoever may believe in him, shall not have a perilous end, but will receive everlasting life."

Let's return to our story and find out which story Grandpa will trust in ...

The next morning it was raining. No park for Timmy and for Grandpa no golf. It was a day in the garage for Grandpa, and a day drawing for Timmy. He chose to draw a picture of the heavenly scene he'd heard about in Grandma's big decorative book.

When the three met for lunch Timmy showed Grandpa the picture that he had drawn.

Grandpa spent a long time looking at Timmy's picture.

He said it reminded him of a story he had heard before. A story he had not read for a long time.

"I know the wise and eternal Author. Your picture reminds me that although I do not know all that the future holds, I know the one who holds the future."

That night, instead of watching the world news, Grandpa listened as Grandma read the next chapter from The Everlasting Love Story.

... and Timmy noticed the smile on Grandpa's jovial face had returned.

Point 3: Our future is secure because we know the One who holds the future

There are two stories circulating in the world today

The eternal Author's true story; and
The fictitious story that is built on lies.

- Which story will capture your heart?
- Which story will capture your mind?
- Which story will guide your decisions?
- Which story will dictate your future?

What's our take home truth?

1. Be assured of God's plan
2. Be at rest in God's ability to bring his plan to pass
3. Be alert to asking God to open your eyes to how God is bringing his plan to pass
4. Be proactive in shaping our lives according to the pattern God designed in his story.

Later in the service we are going to sing a song about God's Eternal story. I sing this song to myself whenever I'm discouraged by the world's fearful story:

*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because he lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know he holds the future,
Life is worth the living just because he lives.*

Prayer:

Thank you Father God, for your mysterious plan, that was once hidden, but has now been revealed. Thank you that you chose us, who the world calls foolish, to be wise.

Help us to learn your Everlasting Love Story. May we become so familiar with your story, that it begins to shape our lives – our thoughts, our speech, our relationships. May we become living letters of testimony to our community here at SouthLakes – may our lives be an advertisement of Jesus' heavenly kingdom.

Amen.