

**September 15, 2019**  
**Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**21 Church Street**  
**Pittsford, NY 14534**  
**[www.pittsfordpres.org](http://www.pittsfordpres.org)**  
**(585) 586-5688**

**Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Weenink**

## **Having the Eyes of Your Heart Enlightened**

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Prayer for Illumination

Shine within our hearts, loving God, the pure light of your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds and hearts that we may understand and embrace the message of the Scripture. Amen.

Having the Eyes of Your Heart Enlightened

Ephesians 1:15-23

The first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians demonstrates well his ability to combine the general with the specific. The first fourteen verses trawl through a travelogue of heavyweight theological themes—adoption, grace, sacrifice, salvation, redemption, forgiveness and Christ's ending glory. Verses three through fourteen, in fact, compose a 203 word sentence. Encapsulated with it—a condensed Reader's Digest version of Christian theology. Paul piles word upon word describing the richness of Christ's grace. His enthusiasm evidently ran away with his pen. The effect, however, serves to heighten the excitement and expectation Paul wanted to convey to the Christians in Ephesus.

The verses we have heard today tumble together into one long, jumbled, exhausting and somewhat convoluted rush of words. [Something like a sermon, I suppose] But a sermon, it is not. It is a spontaneous prayer full of thanks for the Ephesian Christians and an articulation of hope for their continued growth in faith.

If the structure of Paul's prayer overwhelms the reader, its content overloads the believer with the abundant blessings Christ brings. Paul stretches for language to convey his conviction that the Ephesian Christians must know, understand, experience, and see God fully and first hand.

Paul uses a hauntingly beautiful, powerful, and unforgettable phrase incorporating three images: Eyes (ophthalmos), Heart (Kardia), enlightened (photizo) as the foundation for his prayer.

The eye (ophthalmos) in Scripture represents access to the intellect. It is the direct line to thinking and reasoning

The heart (kardia) in Scripture is the seat of the will, intellect, and emotions. Biblical writers saw the heart as the central and unifying organ of personal life. It was the innermost spring of individuality; the ultimate source of physical, intellectual, and emotional energies; it was the residing place of thoughts, plans, attitudes, fears, and hopes. It is the source of volition and conscience. It is the center for decisions, obedience, devotion, and intentionality.

To be enlightened (photizo) in Scripture speaks to those moments of special transparency when inalienable truths become self-evident with stunning simplicity and elegance. Every one of us has known the joy of enlightenment; an epiphany; the keen pleasure that comes when revelation leads to realization and new insights, a raised consciousness, and a heightened awareness

Like a lamp plugged into an electrical outlet, the power is there. All we need to do is turn it on. Faith is the switch. That is why Paul prays for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened. Because when we begin to see by faith, our outlook and perspective is transformed. When we begin to reason by faith, our conduct is changed. When the life-blood for our heart is faith, our very beings find new formation, focus and fulfillment.

It is upon this three-way image that Paul's constructs a threefold prayer.

Paul requests for the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ that they might know three things: the hope of God's calling, the richness of their inheritance, and the greatness of God's power.

### The Hope of God's Calling

First, the hope of God's calling. Paul wants the Ephesians to claim with all the hope of their being, God's invitation to become sons and daughters, and therefore heirs through Jesus Christ. In Paul's mind there could be nothing anyone could hope for more than salvation from sin, reconciliation with God, and adoption into God's family.

## The Richness of Their Inheritance

Second, this hope takes shape in the form of a "glorious inheritance" shared among all the "saints"—that is, all those who respond to God's call. Paul's phrase here in verse 18 combines both "richness" and "glory" to convey the point that not only is this promised heritage divine, it is exceedingly profligate in its abundance. God not only accepts us as we are. God assigns dignity and worth to those who believe, and treats the faithful with extravagant attention and lavish affection.

## The Greatness of God's power

Third, part of this wealthy inheritance is the unfathomable greatness of God's power working on our behalf. This is the very same power, Paul insists in verse 20, that was capable of raising up Christ from death. If Paul's talk of "call" and "inheritance" impressed upon the Ephesians the abundance of God's gifts, the apostle now focuses on trying to get these believers to grasp how vast is this divine power exerted on their behalf. This is a power "above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (v.21).

Paul prays that his readers will know the vast resources, the exceeding greatness, the transcendent might of God's power to all who believe. He prays that we might experience a revelation that will bring us to a deep and intimate knowledge of God. He prays that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened. He desires that the light of God's countenance will shine on our souls so that we may know all that God has done for us, in us, and through us.

Have you considered what seeing with the eyes of the heart can do for you? Seeing the revelation of the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward all who believe, every imaginable need is fulfilled. When the eyes of our heart are enlightened, there is an urgency to reorder and reorganize our lives so that we may find a foundation for fulfillment and meaning and become empowered to be instruments of God. The eyes of hearts enlightened can transform need into plenty, conflict into reconciliation, and apathy into empathy. The eyes of hearts enlightened enable Christ's image to be stamped upon our daily rounds in the way we care for ourselves, manage our time, and allocate our resources.

## CONCLUSION

Having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, unexpected truths about our world and ourselves filter through.

Let the eyes of your hearts be enlightened and your beings empowered through the inheritance we have received through the abiding presence of the living Christ.

## Closing Prayer

In this time of worship open our hearts, ready our minds and uncloud our eyes that we might receive you into our lives anew, know the truth of your Word and see the path you set for us.