

JULY 13, 2025

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S PLAN



What is the secret purpose of God? What is his plan? If there is any point to creation, can it be known? Has God revealed his purpose? How? Is it given to us? Paul and his fellow Christians in the early days of the church certainly believed that there was a plan and that God had made it known to them. It was to gather up all things into a unity in Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

The mystery of his will or his secret purpose had been hidden for long ages before it was revealed in Christ (Ephesians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Colossians 1:25-26; 2:2-3). Jesus himself had spoken of the hidden secrets of God which were being made known. (Luke 19:42; 18:34). Jesus described the kingdom of heaven as like a hidden treasure and he even rejoiced that the secrets were hidden from the wise and revealed to the simple, but it was the task of his disciples at mission to make the secret known (Matthew 13:44-46; Luke 10:21; 8:16-17).

Why was it hidden? What made it hard to see? How was it that the disciples of Jesus were able to see it? There might be a clue in the Garden of Eden story. Trying to outsmart God is not the way to useful knowledge of things that matter. People were to learn that rather than competing with God, they would do better if they would co-operate with God. It was in such a relationship of trust that the truth about God's great secret was to be revealed. (1 Corinthians 1:26-27; 2:1-2).

The secret of God's plan and purpose for us is to be found through faith in Christ crucified. Remember the woman who reached out and touched his clothes. (Mark 5:28-34). Through this faith in Christ we are made whole in body, mind and spirit, and we are restored to a good relationship with God and with one another. So we are reconciled into unity in Christ. (Ephesians 3:5-6; compare Ephesians 1:10 with Colossians 1:20). And the cross? Because it was there that sin, the futility of human pride, which separates people from God and from one another, did its worst and failed to defeat the love of God. God's purpose that his human creatures should achieve their potential to become children of God was to be revealed and fulfilled. (Ephesians 1:5-10).

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

GATHERING AND WELCOME *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*

PRELUDE *Hymns of Praise* – Don Wyrzen

Jessye Whitis, pianist

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;
for he has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, (Psalms 24:1-4a)

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. (Psalms 24:7-10)

HYMN # 620 *Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven

CALL TO CONFESSION

Our world and our human desires often lead us to oppose God's way.
Before we hear the Word read and proclaimed, let us confess these sins
before our God.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have left undone what we ought to have done, and we have done what we ought not to have done. We have followed our own ways and the desires of our own hearts. We have broken your holy laws. Yet, good Lord, have mercy on us; restore those who are penitent, according to your promises declared to all people in Jesus Christ our Lord.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them...."
-- John 20:21-23

By the authority of Jesus Christ, I declare that God has mercy on you, pardons you and sets you free. Know that your sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ our Savior. God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life.

Thanks be to God.

SPECIAL MUSIC *Idylle – by Benjamin Godard*

Celica Castro, flautist

SERVICE OF THE WORD

INTRODUCTION OF THEME: The mystery of God's plan

PSALM 24 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it

EPISTLE Ephesians 1:3-14 A plan for the fullness of time

GOSPEL Mark 6:14-29 John the Baptist is beheaded

REFLECTION *The Story of Us*

Rev. Kathy Vineyard, H.R.

HYMN # 291 *Spirit*

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

Let us generously share of the gifts we have been given. Let us present our offerings to God.

OFFERTORY *Blessed Assurance – arr. John Carter*

Jessye Whitis, pianist

***DOXOLOGY # 606** *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Most generous God, you have blessed us with gifts to serve and share. May the offerings we present today be used to further your Kingdom and build your beloved community. Amen.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH - THE APOSTLES CREED** (GTG pg. 35)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

For all people in their daily life and work;

for our families, friends and neighbors, and for those who are alone.

For this community, our country, and the world;

for all who work for justice, freedom and peace.

For the just and proper use of your creation;
for the victims of hunger, fear, injustice and oppression.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;
for those who minister to the sick, the friendless and the needy.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;
for all who proclaim the gospel, and for all who seek the truth.

For our own needs, and for others for whom you have called us to pray. [Silence]

Hear us, Lord
for your mercy is great.

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of life. We exalt you, O God our king;
and praise your name for ever and ever.

We give thanks for all those who have died in the peace of Christ, and for the promise of your eternal kingdom. [silence]

In Christ you have called us to eternal glory;
to you be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

COLLECT FOR THE DAY

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. May we find peace in your service now, and in the world to come, see you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

HYMN #100 *Canticle of the Turning*

BLESSING

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ.

POSTLUDE *O Worship the King* Jessye Whitis, Director of Music and pianist

+Adapted from liturgy written by the Rev. David Beswick, Uniting Church in Australia.