

January 3 & 4, 2026 – Epiphany

Ephesians 3:2-12

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

When I was a kid, I loved watching Scooby Doo on TV. As the gang got in the Mystery Machine and drove to their destination, they were sure to see some creepy monsters with some diabolical plot. But Fred and Daphne, Velma and Shaggy, with the help of his dog, Scooby Dooby Doo, would follow the clues, pull the mask off the villain in the final scenes, and solve the mystery.

Then, as I got older, I loved reading books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. There was always at least one murder, often many. And I, as the reader, got to try to figure out, along with Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, who the culprit was while there were still victims left. I loved trying to solve the mystery.

I love a good mystery. And I hope you do too, because today we've got a mystery on our hands. And the solution to this mystery is more important than any other mystery real or imagined. Whether we follow the clues to solve this mystery or not has consequences that are far greater than life or death. We must solve it or else! So, come, dear Watsons, the game is afoot! **The Mystery Is Revealed** by the Apostle Paul in our text.

And what is the mystery? The mystery is that Jesus died to pay for our sins. Well, that wasn't much fun. We all knew the answer already. So, now what am I supposed to talk about for another 10 minutes? Should I just say, "Amen," and sit down? Some of you may wish for that. But no.

I think we've heard the solution to this mystery so often that at times we can really take it for granted just like I used to take for granted that Scooby and the gang would solve the mystery within 30 minutes (commercial breaks included) and the good guys would win in the end. So, to really appreciate this mystery, maybe we need to back up a bit...

The mystery before us is really a murder mystery. And it's not just one we watch or read. It's one we're a part of. The villain, the murderer, isn't just out to take human life, but to kill souls. That's what Satan and his demons do: they try to kill souls—separate them from God and his love for eternity. And this isn't just some horror movie. This is real life—the life in which we live.

The murderer was on the loose and seemed to be winning. He still does. Not only does he take countless souls every day, but he's also succeeded in getting us to join his side. He had Paul on his side. That's why Paul admitted that he was **the very least of all the saints**, once arresting and murdering any who sided with Jesus.

And you and I have sided with Satan too. How many times haven't we stood in the way of the gospel instead of sharing it with others? How many times haven't we ignored the clues that God has dropped into our lives nudging us to do his will? How many times haven't we acted more like Herod than the Magi, opposing Jesus and his will instead of worshiping him with our lives, our time, and our gifts?

Why do we act that way? Every good mystery needs a motive, right? Well, our motive was simple enough: like Satan we didn't want anyone to tell us what to do. We wanted to be in control of our lives. We wanted to be in charge. And so, our selfishness led us to sin against God and side with his enemy. And you know what we deserve for siding with the enemy. We deserve to have God abandon us to the enemy. We deserve to be eternally tortured and killed by Satan—but without ever actually dying—forever in hell.

The mystery that we all once faced was this: "How can I be right with God?" We had the clues of his justice and his righteousness written on our hearts, revealed by our consciences, but we could never figure out a way to make things right. We could never solve the mystery on our own. The best guess we could come up with was to earn his love by attempting to do more good than bad. But it didn't work. It never could. For starters, we could never do more good than bad because the bad we do is so great. But secondly, even if we could do more good than bad tomorrow it wouldn't undo the bad we've done today or yesterday or last year.

So, we were stuck with this unsolvable mystery, and it looked like the murderer would strike again with us. It looked like he would get away with another murder. Things were hopeless.

Now, I love a good mystery. I love hunting for the solution, exploring every angle, searching for the clues. But I admit that I get frustrated when I can't figure it out. But the truth is that no one can figure out the truth about salvation by their super sleuthing, no matter how good they are. It's an unsolvable mystery. Unless God chooses to reveal the answer. And thank God he has. And thank God he's revealed the answer to you.

Throughout the centuries God's people searched the Scriptures—the writings of Moses and the Prophets—looking for the clues to see how things could be made right. For they knew that God had left many clues there for them to see. But it wasn't until Christmas that the solution began to be seen clearly. And there, God, the author of the greatest mystery story ever, stepped into the story and revealed the solution to the mystery. He revealed it to Mary, and Joseph, to the shepherds, to the apostles, to Paul, and through all of them to us.

Paul tells us in our text: **Surely you have heard of the administration of God's grace...for you, namely, that the mystery made known...by revelation...the mystery of Christ...as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.**

You know the solution to that mystery of how to be right with God. You know how the God/man, Jesus, had come to make things right. You know how God took on flesh so he could live a perfect life in your place and die an innocent death in your place. You know **the unsearchable riches of Christ**. You know the peace of forgiveness because the mystery has been revealed to you.

And why did God do it? Every good mystery needs a motive, right? Well, God's motive was nothing in us, nothing we did or would do. God's motive was his great love for us. His love moved him to act and rescue mankind from sin, death, Satan, and hell.

But there was another mystery for God's people to solve in Paul's day—another mystery we so often take for granted. And it was this: **For whom is this salvation?** And while some thought it was only for God's specially chosen people, the Jews, Paul acted like Sherlock Holmes and, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, he solved the mystery so many others could never solve: **This mystery is that in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and people who also share in the promise through the gospel...To me...was given this grace: to preach to the Gentiles.**

Mystery solved! God's grace isn't just for the Jews. And in hindsight (just like reading a mystery novel) the clues were all there: God's grace was given to Ruth, from Moab not from Israel. It was given to Magi from the East. That's why Epiphany is called the Gentile Christmas. But now, through the apostle Paul, it couldn't be spelled out more clearly: God's grace is for Gentiles! God's grace is for non-Jews! God's grace is for you! Jesus died for you! You are forgiven! The murderer of souls can't hurt you! You belong to God, Gentile that you are!

Thank God that he has revealed the solution to these mysteries to you. These mysteries are solved. The problem of sin is solved. The problem of death is solved. The problem of hell is solved. The problem of who this is all for is solved. It's for you!

But it's not *just* for you. It's for the whole world. And there's no way that others can figure out the solution on their own. They need someone to reveal the mystery to them. **"Through the church,"** Paul said, **"the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known."** That is to say, through you and me.

So that leaves us with a few new mysteries to solve, mysteries that haven't yet been revealed. And in these mysteries lies all the fun: How can I advance the Kingdom? What can I do to further the cause of the Gospel? How can I help others see the solution to the great mystery that's already been revealed to me? How can I share God's grace with my neighbor, my co-worker, or friend? Where are they hurting? What needs do they feel that God's Word addresses? How can I use those to build a bridge for Jesus to cross over from my heart into theirs?

Talk to them. Ask them questions. And listen for the clues they give. And listen to God as he speaks to you in his Word. For these mysteries, while yet unknown, can be solved with God's help. So ask him for it. **In him we can freely approach God with confidence.** And you know he'll give you the help you need.

Go solve those mysteries, super sleuths, to bring glory to God for the mystery he's revealed to you: That in Christ, and by his work for you, your sin is forgiven. The enemy can't kill you. You will join God in his paradise. That this salvation isn't just for a few, or just for the Jew. It's for Gentiles too. It's for you and me. It's for everyone. So, go reveal the mystery to them, so they too can say, "Mystery solved!" Amen.