

Second Hand Preacher

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2014

Romans 16:25-27

Prayers are powerful! They help us to see how God sees and to build our faith so that we can come to know God in a deeper, more personal way. In prayer we can ask God's intercession, praise, thanks, and confess our most intimate details of our lives. If you are reading this, you probably pray and have a wonderful knowledge of just how important prayer is. One of the greatest things a parent can do for a child is to teach them how to pray.

This week's passage is a prayer. St. Paul inserts this beautiful prayer into his letter. He wants to build the faith of the Christians in Rome so they can remain strong against the pressures of the day. To insert prayers is something Paul often does. One noted example is the prayer in Philippians, Chapter 2 where the prayer ends with the verse, "JESUS CHRIST IS LORD." This powerful statement tells of the importance of Jesus with this being a very creedal statement.

Here in Romans, Paul again uses prayer to project a universal truth. Mainly, to proclaim Jesus who is the mystery of all ages. He acknowledges the strength that God gives in this bold proclamation. He proclaims that all of God's Word leads us to a loving Savior who is Jesus. Jesus is the center of everything. When I was teaching Confirmation before I went to seminary, I relied on a style of teaching that provoked questioning in an attempt to keep the students engaged. I wanted them to discover the right answers - this showed they were tracking with me. If they couldn't answer the question, perhaps I could use a different approach. I used to say, slightly in jest, that if they didn't know the answer they should just say "Jesus" and they would be right most of the time. It is true that Jesus is our ultimate answer. Paul knew this and because the letter to the Romans was seen as a universal letter, most of the Christian world knew this truth as well.