

April 12th, 2026

Ephesians 3:14-20 “Imagine More”

I turn 60 this year. They call people born between 1965 – 1980 Generation X, and I wear that badge proudly. We are the generation that got front row seats to some *major* advancements in computing, engineering, media and communication which is why many of us are able to keep up with the most recent technological advances, but we still know cursive writing, we can change the ribbon of an IBM Selectric typewriter and we know how to run a mimeograph machine. I noticed that when I said, “mimeograph” everyone over 50 closed their eyes for a second to take a deep breath through your nose. You remember the distinct smell of that ink don’t you? It’s not an unpleasant odor, but there is nothing else like it. For those of you who are under 50, a mimeograph is what we used to make multiple copies of documents. This was before photocopy machines and printers became available to the general public. By the 1980s, copy machines were more common, but I served a church that was still printing their bulletins with a mimeograph in 1991. We like to keep things old school in the church sometimes.

Since we’re on the subject of keeping things old school, is there anyone in this room who lived during the time when there were only three channels on the television? You had CBS, NBC and ABC. I grew up 12 miles outside of Eugene, Oregon which had NBC and ABC transmitters, but the closest CBS station came out of Medford, so if you wanted to watch 60 Minutes or Hawaii Five-O, you had to be okay with fuzzy reception. Dad was always having to climb up on the roof to adjust the antenna to try to make the picture clearer. Our Millennials are thinking, “What?!” The best thing happened around 1972 though – We got a fourth channel – PBS. For little kids, that was a bonus because we got Sesame Street. But the adult programming was pretty boring in my opinion. There were a *lot* of talking-head news shows. For entertainment there were these slow-moving historical drama programs starring people with British accents. Except on late Friday nights, you could watch *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*. I loved that show. There was a lot of

slapstick humor, but as I got older, I started catching on to the more sophisticated adult humor. And some of it was rather naughty! But PBS pulled out all the stops four times a year when they had their pledge drives. They would show un-edited British comedies like *The Life of Brian* and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The station's rationale was to use this special programming to encourage viewer donations. The more viewers, the more potential donors.

But what do churches do when it's time to raise money? Depending on the flavor of the church the "special programming" is often guilt, fear, or a combination of the two. PBS motivates you with bawdy British humor, but the church dangles you over the pits of hell and makes you feel bad. Well. This week, we're launching a three-year capital campaign— the first one since the early 1990s when we made some major renovations to K-Hall and the chapel. Now ... I'm sorely tempted to go the bawdy humor route, but this is church and that just doesn't look good, even though it seems to work for PBS. I can promise you, however, that I won't be preaching any hellfire and brimstone. Threats and guilt are the tools of the lazy preacher.

Most of you probably received a letter in the mail already about the campaign itself and what we're trying to raise money for. My job is to help you understand why and how we're doing it. Our scripture this morning comes from Ephesians 3. The Apostle Paul is writing to a network of house churches in the region of Ephesus. The big question that this letter addresses is, "How do people from different backgrounds, in this case Jews and Gentiles, become one in Christ?" Paul's answer is: Because God is creating something new in Christ. Barriers that once divided people have broken down. The church is now meant to be a living expression of God's unity, love, and purpose in the world. The book of Ephesians isn't like some of Paul's other letters where he's trying to solve a problem in the church. He's saying, "This is who you are – let's learn to live into it."

He breaks his letter down into two sections. The first three chapters is all about what God has already done. Chapter 4-6 is all about how we live our daily lives. Our passage here in chapter 3 today is the bridge between the two. Before Paul tells the Ephesians what they should do, he pauses to pray.

If you'll notice, Paul isn't praying for success, or resources, or growth. He's praying that they might be strengthened inwardly and that they might invite Christ to dwell in their hearts. He prays that they might be rooted and grounded in love so that they can experience how vast the love of Christ is. Then he hits them with this very important phrase: "Now to him who is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we ask ... or imagine." In other words, before you can *live* differently, you need to *imagine* differently. And that's kind of tricky when it comes to the church, especially the church here in modern/post-modern era.

You know how I said that the church likes to keep things "old school" by using mimeographs long past their time? That's also the case in the way we govern ourselves and do business. The church uses this post-depression era business model that focuses so much on master plans, and sustainability, and having the right formula and right programs in place to grow and expand because that's the point. That's the goal. Get more resources to grow and sustain the institution. To get there, we need to follow Roberts Rules of Order and form committees and build business models. And please understand, I'm not knocking this. We're in better shape than a lot of churches in our region because our past and present leaders had the wisdom and foresight to make good investments using these tools.

The problem is that's not the way the world does business these days. Many of the most successful businesses today are focused on *vision* which takes *imagination*. Which is what Paul was trying to get the churches in Ephesus on board with. See where I'm going here? We keep trying to do what we've always done, using the same old models—but when those models don't work like they used to, we begin to doubt

ourselves. And instead of asking what a new path might look like, we start longing for the “good old days,” and we end up feeling stuck.

This may sound strange, but this morning I *do* want you to go “old school.” *Really* old school. I’m talking first century church old school. I want to expand your imagination for what God can do through us. What would it mean for *this* church—not the church back then, not some other church somewhere else—but *this church...* to imagine more? What if we imagined a space that’s not just used on Sunday mornings, but every day of the week. A place where people come not just to attend, but to belong. A place where someone walks through the door and immediately knows, “I’m welcome here.” What if we imagined a church where the building itself doesn’t get in the way of ministry, but actually supports it? Because that’s what Paul is getting at here in Ephesians. “Now to him who is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...”

And then he says this— “according to the power at work within us.” Not someday. Not somewhere else. Not with some other group of people. **Within us.** That means whatever “more” God is going to do... God is going to do it *through people like us*. So before we talk about plans... Before we talk about projects or numbers or anything else, We start here: **What is God already doing among us... that we haven’t fully imagined yet?**

Because if we can begin to see that— if we can begin to *imagine* that— then everything else starts to fall into place. So this week, let this passage from Ephesians shape your imagination and trust that God can do far more than you’ve asked or imagined. Then ask, how can that more begin with me.”