

*They Are Looking at Us?*  
Ephesians 3:1-20  
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This comes to you courtesy of Rockwell, the rock band from the 1980's who penned that very well known song *Somebody's Watching Me*.

"I'm just an average man with an average life, I work from 9-5, hey I pay the price, all I want is to be left alone in my average home. But why do I always feel like I'm in the twilight zone? And I always feel like somebody's watching me and I have no privacy. I always feel like somebody's watching me, tell me is this just a dream, who's watching me? I don't know anymore, are the neighbors watching me, who's watching me? Is the mailman watching me tell me who's watching! I don't feel safe anymore, oh what's the mess, who's watching me now, WHO?! The IRS!" Rockwell, *Somebody's Watching Me*.

Have you ever felt like that, have you ever felt like though maybe nobody's around somebody is watching you? Maybe you've seen too many horror movies, as we have, and you find yourself some evenings standing in front of the kitchen sink and it's completely dark outside. Nobody's home but you and somewhere in the midst of all of the clattering of the dishes you get the sense that somebody's watching you. A little bit frightened you comfort yourself and you remind yourself that nobody's watching me I'm just being paranoid. Then you remember you're not paranoid if people really are watching you.

Welcome to Epiphany Sunday. Today's the day that we celebrate the manifestation or the unveiling of Christ's identity to the entire world. Traditionally, on this Sunday we would read the account of the Magi, of those wise men who followed that star from the Far East and found themselves in Bethlehem, seeking the Christ child. We would remind ourselves of the way in which the mystery was unveiled to them, we would hear about their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh and we would be reminded once again of Christ's kingly majesty, of his royal priesthood, of his atoning sacrifice and with all eyes on him we too would see afresh that the babe in the manger really is the Son of God, the bright and morning star illuminating the way for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.

And it is in this spirit that we approach our reading from the book of Ephesians but it is my prayer that the epiphany would continue, that the scales would fall from each of our eyes and that we would see not only the Christ child more clearly but that we would have eyes to see the people that we are becoming as those who would follow in his footsteps. Throughout all of Paul's writings the apostle is just consumed with, he's obsessed with, the death of Christ and he says even at one point that when I was with you I determined to know nothing else save Christ

and him crucified. And throughout his letters the theme of Christ's death and its implications for those who would follow him in faith stare us in the face and we find peculiarly absent any details about Christ's life. Certainly Paul would have known stories about Jesus' teachings, about his healings, about other miraculous acts but somehow, somehow those find themselves apart from the stories that Paul tells. Absent as if he doesn't even know about these events, like us, Paul never met Jesus in the flesh, he never smelled the fish or smelled the bread that fed the 5000 people. Paul never saw the eye's of a blind man open, Paul never witnessed Lazarus stumbling out of that tomb. Paul never handled with his own hands the dusty feet of the one they had come to know as Rabbi. But on the road to Damascus Paul met the risen Savior and from that first moment Paul himself was stricken. He was held captive by the very one whom he had always unwittingly sought to undo. But now under a sense of a kind of Holy compulsion, something outside of himself, Paul found himself in a new world. He found himself bound to one who quite literally captured his very soul and refused to let him go. In fact Paul knew himself as he describes in Ephesians 3:1 as a prisoner of Christ. He knew himself as one who had been locked up and detained by the risen Lord. The one who's demands upon his life were non negotiable, even more following that life changing encounter on the Damascus road and the removal of scales from his eyes Paul began to see more clearly than ever. He saw for the first time that the one born in Bethlehem really is the Son of God and he began to proclaim it openly to those who still had their doubts. With the venom of King Herod those earliest hearers sought to destroy him, determined that the world must be rid of this radical preacher. As the story unfolds in the book of Acts we see that guarding the gates day and night there were would-be assassins who were charged with killing the Apostle Paul on sight. And as you remember the story of his ministry and all that came his way you know that things hardly got any better for this one who was determined to claim from the rooftops salvation in Christ and Christ alone. Proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God was dangerous enough but Paul became captivated by another mystery. The mystery he insisted that had been hidden for ages, the mystery that God himself had concealed within his very heart, and only now, Paul says, was beginning to let the world in on the secret God held, the mystery that though God had elected the Hebrew people as his chosen family of faith he was now grafting new branches onto that family tree. Branches that would include those who had always been on the outside, non Jews, Gentiles, people whom Paul had described earlier in Ephesians chapter two as aliens, they were strangers to the covenant promises of God, they were people who were without hope. Paul said they were people who were without God in this present world. They were now people who were drawn into the family of God accepted not only, not merely as step children but accepted as children with the full rights of the family of

God. They were accepted as those who had rights as fellow heirs, shares in the promises of God and the one to blame once again is the babe in the manger, a defenseless, vulnerable, innocuous kid from Bethlehem. For as Paul understood it, in him, in spite of all of his detractors all who would believe, Jew, Gentile, male, female, slave or free. Everyone who would believe in his name would be made one. They would be joined together, they would be cultivated, they would be grown, he says, into a holy temple; they would be built into the very dwelling place of God. The very place where God lives, it's like they're on one of those Hollywood tours riding a bus around the streets of that famous place, "coming to the one house a block up on the left you'll find the home of Bob Barker and everybody is standing up looking, down here on the right and one block away Zsa Zsa Gabor lives there." God lives here! In this family of people? In this group of those who would name Christ? God lives here. Paul says that's part of the plan of this mystery that's hidden for ages yet now it's been unveiled that through the church through this gathered body of believers through this company of people who've been called out from the rest of the world because they name the name of Christ. In this group of people the very wisdom of God in all of its riches is on display for the rulers and authorities of the universe. Looking at us? For all creation to see, the church is on display, manifesting not only to those around us who are outside the family of faith but manifesting to the very powers and authorities of the spirit world. The cosmic powers Paul says of this present darkness, manifesting before them the very power of God to redeem a lost world. The power of God to create one body out of despairing groups of people, the power of God to draw all men and women, boys and girls, unto himself, regardless of their bloodline, their ethnicity or anything else that may keep them apart from the family of faith. The power of God to create a new home for himself, a new home within the hearts of all who would believe upon the name of his Son. He would make his home in the hearts of all who would build their lives upon the foundation of Christ and Christ alone. We? We were the dwelling place of God? The place where even the spiritual forces of wickedness in this universe, look, to find and see God? No way! No Way! Yes, yes way. And Paul's prayer for us would be kind of an epiphanal prayer, a prayer for God to do something and reveal something in us that we could never do or understand or know on our own. He would ask that God would enable us to live lives worthy of this highest calling. In the final verses of chapter three Paul's prayer for us is this, that there is a spirit God would strengthen us in our inner being that Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith as we are being rooted and built up, grounded in this life of love that we have for one another. That God would grant us the power to know when to comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth of the love of Christ. A love which he says is beyond our natural ability

to know or even imagine. "I always feel like somebody's watching me...." They are, are you ready? Amen