

20251116 FEFC:FC “Him We Proclaim” Colossians 1:24-2:3

INTRO:

[TURN] Colossians 1 → [READ] Colossians 1:24-2:3

Introduction

[Illustration] Wizard of Oz

-love Going to movies (describe why)

→ Popcorn Smell, Dimming the Lights, intro videos (though Corny)

→ There is excitement in the anticipation of hearing a new story

→ Stories don't just give us a spectacle or plot – they say something

-one of the big movies this week → reimagining of the story of “Wizard of Oz”

→ Made me think of the original...

*In the movie The Wizard of Oz, it isn't just about a girl who is whisked away to a mystical technicolor land in pursuit of a magic solution while being chased by an evil villain... The Wizard of Oz, through this magical story of munchkins, scarecrows, tin-men, lions, and tigers, and bears (oh my) helps us see that their **pursuit** of something more ignored that they already **had** what they were looking for – Scarecrow had a creative mind, Lion had courage to act when afraid, and the Tin-Man was kind and caring... all to show Dorothy (and Us) that running to a magical land never acquires what she most desired – the home she had been running away from.*

As we return to **Paul's** letter to the **Colossian Church**, we see that for **his** ministry – and by extension the ministry of the **Church** – as a central message that sometimes gets lost in the lists of do's and don't's, the spectacular miracles, even when we tell the **true history** of **Jesus of Nazerath**.

Paul's instruction to **them**, and for us as well... is to return to the **heart** of the story – the **central theme** in **ALL** of History – The Good News of Jesus Christ. As we turn to scripture, let's first turn to God in prayer...

[PRAY]

- Free our minds of distractions

- Even as our mind is on the coming week...

- pray for those who are out hunting

- pray for family who are traveling (or our own travels)

- pray most of all that we are transformed, not by clever preaching

but through the truth of **your** word

-AMEN

(insert “preacher went out huntin'“ reference...)

We have a **CHOICE** when it comes to what we do...

- Remarkable amount of *freedom* here...

- If we have the resources, we can move to another apartment/city/state (without needing government approval)

- A *huge* amount of options for leisure

→ Activities previous generations could only dream of

→ Instant streaming – endless content creation

→ Video games (Pong, now whole photo-realistic worlds to explore)

→ Even in work, limited by education or opportunity → no one says

“no you can't have a lucrative career as a plumber unless your father was one.” (I found out this week there is an impending Plumber shortage, btw)

- We have the freedom to attend the Church of our choice

*We also have a huge amount of choice when it comes to what we do on **Sunday Mornings**. Unless your parents forced you to come (and yes, they have the right to do that), it means giving up something – even if it is only time – to come and gather at 9am on a Weekend morning! And since we are not **REQUIRED** by law to do so, we can in fact ask the question “**WHY**” do I go to church? Why do I call myself a Christian?*

NOT a minor question...

PAUL's "Why" Question

- Sometimes wondered about "Paul's" why moment...

- Did He ask...

"Why do I follow Christ?"

"Why do I travel around the world setting up churches?"

"Why do I put up with all the drama and pain?"

1st Century Costs (for Paul):

- Branded a Heretic by the Jews *and* the Romans (common view of Christians)

- Ran out of cities by a mobs

- Stoned nearly to death (some theologians think he *might have* died and was resurrected, btw)

- Often (usually) had to work to support himself while *also* serving the churches he went to

- Imprisoned multiple times (not cushy 21st Century Mid-America jails)

- Eventually **beheaded** for his faith

*Thankfully, we don't have to wonder to hard... because over and over in his letters, **God** prompted **Paul** to share with us that he was able to endure all the **hardship** (and it was real hardship) for the sake of the **Gospel** and the **Change** that it brings in the lives of Christ's followers.*

[READ] **Colossians 1:24-26** (NLT – sometimes it's clearer)

I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the **sufferings of Christ** that *continue* for His body, the church. God has given me the responsibility of serving His church by **proclaiming** His **entire message** to you. This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people.

*When **Paul** asks... when **we** ask the question of **WHY** do we gather as a church, plan events, live godly lives... why do we put ourselves, individually and collectively, in danger of mockery and at some point persecution... **Paul** does it, and **WE** do it because:*

1.)_The PURPOSE of the Church is the Proclamation of the GOSPEL (Colossians 1:24-26)

-Holding to the **Gospel** (all of it) will lead to persecution...

→ Internationally, Christians are being killed or harmed for their faith at an increasing amount (especially in Africa)

-Between October 2023 and September 2024 (according to the Open Doors World Watch List)

- nearly 5,000 people were killed for their faith (70% in Nigeria)

- Nearly 15,000 churches were damaged or attacked

-380 Million Christians are facing high persecution – 1:7 Globally

*While here in the states we don't see that, we have seen an increase in discrimination, targeted litigation, and other types of "soft" persecution throughout the last year – including the categorization of many historic teachings of scripture as **hate speech**. It's not out of the question to wonder why we still meet. Why do we still promote the **Gospel** as a church, and encourage our members to do the same in their families, among their friends, and in their workplaces and community?*

- May have noticed the theme in the last month

- There are a **LOT** of things the church **COULD** be about

- Lots of churches functionally make something *else* their purpose

→ Community Service

→ Counseling

→ Education

→ Moral/Ethical behavior modification

→ Political/Social Activism (I really don't understand *this* one...)

→ Fostering a Social Community

*All of these things are actually largely good, important things... and things we as a church should be putting some of our attention and effort. But the theme that runs through the entire letter to the **Colossian** church is that **JESUS** is the foundation, the center, the*

reason the church exists. There isn't any problem, circumstance, hurt, or pain that isn't addressed through the preaching of the **Good News of Jesus**. All of those **good things**, on their own worthwhile endeavors, become infinitely (**literally** infinitely) more when they are seen through the lens of the **GOSPEL**.

Part of our problem is that we have too limited of a view when we say the word **GOSPEL**. For many, we echo what D.A. Carson said in an excellent sermon from 2007:

[QUOTE] **D.A. Carson**

For some Christians, — the “gospel” is a narrow set of teachings about Jesus and his death and resurrection which, rightly believed, tip people into the kingdom. After that, real discipleship and personal transformation begin, but none of that is integrally related to — “the gospel.” This is a far cry from the dominant New Testament emphasis that understands — “the gospel” to be the embracing category that holds much of the Bible together, and takes Christians from lostness and alienation from God all the way through conversion and discipleship to the consummation, to resurrection bodies, and to the new heaven and the new earth.

*In short, the **GOSPEL**, the **GOOD NEWS** of Jesus Christ isn't just the fundamental instructions on how we become a Christian – it's the sum total of how the world really works... how we fit in the entire scheme of history... how we can understand when life gets more difficult than we can face without a perspective that looks **beyond** what we see into what **GOD** has promised.*

The **GOSPEL** is recognizing that when **ADAM** sinned, he didn't just make a mistake – he willingly violated **God's** loving restriction and brought calamity on the entirety of creation.

[READ] **Romans 8:19-22** (CSB)

For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility – not willingly, but because of him who subjected it – in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children.

1a) Preaching the **GOSPEL** helps make **sense of our Broken World**

- Creation itself has been corrupted because of Sin

- Not **one** area of life has been left un-touched

→ Did it hurt when you rolled out of bed and it sounded like bubble wrap? – a result of the fall

→ **Having** children, and **raising** children is full of heartache and disappointment – a result of the fall

→ Did you have a difficult or stressful week at work? – Your labor has been cursed because of Sin

→ Have you ever had financial troubles? – Resources are scarce because of the fall

→ Have you ever had heartache when you think about your parents, or your spouse, or your children? – Every relationship you've ever had, even with other Christians, has been tainted and disrupted because of **SIN** in the world and in our hearts

*When we preach **Christ and Him Crucified**, we understand that there is a **REASON** why things are so difficult... why there is real **suffering** in the world, and in our own lives. Without the truth of the **GOSPEL**, we are left saying if there **IS** a God, He either **hates** us or **doesn't care** about us. Instead we say that in the **horribleness** of our sinful condition, God **planned** – knowing that for millennia man would continue in Sin – God **PLANNED** to redeem his people through the death of His son. This is why we say **John 3:16-18** is at least **part** of the Gospel presentation:*

[READ] **John 3:16-18**

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

*If the **GOSPEL** is true, and we believe that it truly is... the chaos and pain, the hurt and the disappointments, the abuse and neglect, everything that truly matters finds its healing, its hope, its **reason** in the message of Jesus Christ who came to seek and save the lost. When we are frustrated that we **still** struggle with Sin, still **doubt** or question... the continual refining work the **SPIRIT** in our lives is the **GOOD NEWS** of the Gospel.*

- We are all dealing with **REAL** problems → sometimes they seem insurmountable

- The Good **NEWS** tells us God has dealt with it... and is **dealing** with it in our own lives

*This is why we can say with **Paul** we rejoice in our struggles, individually and as a church, because we know that **GOD** is doing a work in our lives to make us into the image of His son... His **suffering** was for our sake... and has been revealed through **HISTORY** as His plan*

2a) Preaching the **Gospel** helps us understand our **History**

[READ] **Colossians 1:25-26**

(for the church) I became a minister...

*When we look at scripture... when we look at all of History, we see the Gospel anticipated. We've already read that from **ROMANS 8**. All the **New Testament** points back to the Cross and how it has changed us! In the **Old Testament**, everything looks **FORWARD** in anticipation of*

*the Cross. Even in General Revelation – that is what God reveals about himself in **Creation**, we see things that point towards its creator and towards the hope of the cross.*

*There's a great song by one of my favorite worship leaders, **Matt Boswell** called “Christ the True and Better.” It traces some of the ‘types’ of Christ (that is things that divinely point towards, or are an “image” of Jesus yet to come). Two examples are from the first and last verses:*

Christ is the **true** and better **Adam**: Adam was tempted and sinned, bringing all creation into a fallen state. Jesus was tempted and did not, bringing redemption and the promise of a new creation

Christ is the **true** and better **David**, who was the conquering King – facing the great Foe of Sin and ruling in our lives as the **Lord of Majesty**.

Chorus: Hallelujah, Amen! From beginning to end. Christ the story, His the Glory! Alleluia, amen!

*As this passage continues, we see that **the GOSPEL** not only helps us make sense of the world, not only helps us understand our History, but:*

1c) Preaching the **Gospel** helps us understand our **Future Hope**

*We talked about this in our very first message from Colossians – we saw evidence in their changed lives because they heard and **understood** their future hope – hope that is tied up in the person and work of **Christ** – our “**Hope of Glory**.” (v27) The Colossian believers could have confidence in their future because **Jesus Christ** lived in **THEM** – the Holy Spirit transforming them into **Jesus' image** so that when the God looks upon us at judgement he sees **Christ's Righteousness** and not our failure.*

Is it any wonder that **Paul** rejoiced in his suffering, as we can in ours, because the preaching of the **Gospel** brings that hope of a transformed life, an understanding of how we fit in the grand timeline of history, and brings understanding to the world that so often seems nothing but chaos. **THIS** is the **Gospel** – not just the gateway into a better way of living, but the declaration of **God’s** good work, our future hope, and out of that comes our growth into maturity.

It is for this reason, the **preaching of the Gospel** that God gave Paul the care of his church in the first century – and that same commission is placed on **US**. The **purpose** of the church must be to preach the Gospel – and so too must...

2) The **Practice** of the Church is to **Preach the Gospel**

(Colossians 1:28-29)

[READ] **Colossians 1:28-29**

-What does Preaching the Gospel look like in the church today?

From the **Pulpit**:

- **DOESN’T** mean you just hear “the Gospel”

- You should expect any pastor to preach the **WHOLE** Gospel – all of scripture (not just their favorite passages)

[TURN] -keep your finger in Colossians **2 Timothy 3:14-4:5**

- Trend in many churches to bend to the cultural pressures, only preach what is acceptable

[QUOTE] **Tim Keller** (served in New York City the majority of his Ministry)

New Yorkers love what the Bible says about forgiveness and reconciliation and caring about the poor.

They hate what it says about sex and gender and family. Go on to the Middle East and find people who love what the Bible says about sex and gender and family, but abhor the idea of forgiving people, 70 times 7. (I think what 1 Peter 2:12 is trying to say is) in every single culture, if

you actually live distinctively in an engaged way, you will get persecution AND you will get approval. It will always be different depending on the culture. You will attract people, you will influence people. You will be salt and light and at the same time you will get punched in the mouth.

*Church, Being a **church** that practices preaching the Gospel means preaching the **WHOLE** Gospel... all of it. Whether it’s an easy thing to tell others – like we need to **love one another** like we’d like to be **loved**... or a hard thing, that says we are to forgive one another when we **DON’T** love. It means being **unwavering** on standing on what **scripture** says about cultural issues that are opposed to them – but it also means we don’t look for every opportunity to poke at pressure points with those around us...*

2 Timothy 3:16

- Scripture is good for Teaching, Reproof, Correction, Training

2 Timothy 4:2

- Reprove, rebuke, and exhort **WITH COMPLETE PATIENCE and TEACHING**

[Turn back to **Colossians**]

[READ] **Colossians 1:28**

-Warning everyone and teaching everyone with **WISDOM**

*This charge isn’t just to the pastor – it’s to the church. Every time we open our doors, or head out into the community, or pray through the neighborhood, or talk in your workplaces – many of which a **Pastor** can’t usually go... we are to be declaring the **Gospel**. But first and foremost, our **Church** is a place where the practice of preaching the **Good News of Jesus** is the **main** thing we are known for.*

*We do it gently, with patience, with understanding, lovingly insisting on the truth of scripture – but we never stop **PROCLAIMING JESUS** and the **CROSS**. Never stop calling them to the **Cross**. Never stop declaring the **promise** of the transformation that comes when the **Holy Spirit** works in our hearts. We do this with the very same power that **GOD** provides through the **Spirit** working in **US** that stilled seas, formed mountains, raised the dead, and takes broken hearts and makes them whole.*

[READ] **John 6:68-69** (when the teachings got “difficult” and many left Jesus)

Simon Peter answered, “Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

*Church, if we do **anything** other than make the **practice** of the church the **Preaching of the GOSPEL of Jesus Christ**.... It's like offering 100% real fruit juice and then serving **Kool-Ade**. It may taste good for now, but lacks any of the nutrients we need.*

*The **Gospel** is the only hope we have... it's proclamation is the **Purpose** of the church, the **Practice** of the church, and if we are faithful in doing so – it's the **Promise** of the Church as well.*

[READ] **Colossians 2:1-3**

(I really wanted to fit everything with a **P** word, but I think that was a stretch...)

3) When the **Purpose** and the **Practice** of the Church is the Proclamation of the Gospel... we can expect Changed Lives

-Paul is **struggling**, not just for those he's seen but for **ALL CHRIST-FOLLOWERS** (including you and me)

- World around us is discouraged, suspicious of each other, doubts that **anyone** knows them or has their best interests...

*God promises us that the labor of proclaiming the **Gospel** – of Preaching **CHRIST** - results in being encouraged, being **unified** in love (which is **NOT** our natural reaction to one another!), to grow in the knowledge and understanding of the promises of **Christ**... in short, everything **Paul** has been praying for them earlier in the letter...*

[READ] **Colossians 1:9-12**

*Church... when we have been changed by the **Gospel**, when we believe, repenting of our own **SIN** and rebellion – recognizing how **far we are from God** without the work of **Jesus** on the **Cross** for our sake... we have **hope** for tomorrow – even when we fail...which we will do. When we are **AFRAID**, we know that God is and always has been **in** control. We have assurance that **GOD** loved us enough to redeem us through **CHRIST'S DEATH**... even when we don't feel loved or cherished here on earth. When things seem **unjust**, or **unfair**... and sometimes they **are**... we glory in the **Gospel** that says the cries of the brokenhearted and downtrodden are heard by the creator of the universe.*

*It is **only** in Christ that anything makes sense in this world... and as a **church** we miss the point if we make anything else the center of our lives and of our ministry.*

We're about to start a new season that is a perfect opportunity to put this into practice!

*Next **Sunday**, we begin **Advent**. For the most part, churches tend to get the “true meaning of Christmas” right. We recognize that it isn't about getting gifts from a mythical (if historically based) jolly man in a red suit dropping gifts into stockings. It's not about families gathering for meals or sleigh rides or chestnuts and fires or perfect snow... although all of those things can be fun and good.*

Friends, we start **ADVENT** recognizing that more than any other time of year people are willing to hear that **2 millennia ago** the **Son of God** came down to dwell with us. That at the thought of the **Gospel**, angels sang Hallelujah and Shepherds heralded the arrival of the king of kings and Lord of Lords. That all **creation** yearned for this event, and today all creation declares the **Glory of God** bound up in the **Creator Crucified** in the place of sinners like you and like me. Because our greatest need was, is, and ever will be **Jesus Christ**.

Dorothy, Tinman, Lion, and Scarecrow learned through their journey – and we learned through their story that the thing we yearn for the most we already have... and ultimately that is a **FALSE GOSPEL**. It's not **Good News**. Church... the world is hearing that from the World, and **WE** have the only real good news... we have the words of life, the words of Jesus. Where else will they go but here?

[PRAY]

- Confess when we've made other things the focus
- Confess we ne need to have the Gospel preached to our own hearts
- Pray that God will make us a people that is **KNOWN** for our passion, our labor, our struggle to proclaim the Good News – whatever the Cost
- Give us endurance to face the challenges that **will come** if we faithfully and boldly declare the Gospel.

“Let us be rooted and built up in the Good News of Jesus and nothing else.”