



WEEK THREE

COLOSSIANS:



JESUS at the
CENTRE

..... of Our Church

Whitehill Church of Christ

July - Sept 2016

JESUS- The Centre of our Church

Whitehill Church of Christ

Pastor Darryl Seip

Sunday 14th August 2016

Sermon Notes



Mission Drift

The Organisation can still exist and be growing
but just not have the original reason for existing.

Deliver us from ME-VIL

24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

2:1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Colossians 1:15-20 (New Living Translation)

HOW TO HAVE A “FULL” CHURCH

1. Having a FULL UNDERSTANDING of GOD’S WORD

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,

Colossians 1:25 (NASB)

2. Reaching our FULL POTENTIAL IN CHRIST

We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can, all that we know about him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ.

Colossians 1:28 (JBP)

Sometimes when we read the words of those who have been more than conquerors, we feel almost despondent. I feel that I shall never be like that. But they won through step by step by little bits of wills, little denials of self, little inward victories by faithfulness in very little things. They became what they are. No one sees these little hidden steps. They only see the accomplishment, but even so, those small steps were taken. There is no sudden triumph no spiritual maturity. That is the work of the moment.

Amy Carmichael

3. Being FULLY UNITED WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

4. Living FULL-ON LIVES FOR JESUS

...because even though I am absent physically, I’m with you in spirit. I’m happy to see the discipline and stability of your faith in Christ.

Colossians 2:5 (CEB)

Human beings grow by striving, working, stretching; and in a sense, human nature needs problems more than solutions. Why are not all prayers answered magically and instantly? Why must every convert travel the same tedious path of spiritual discipline?

Kierkegaard said that Christians reminded him of schoolboys who want to look up the answers to their math problems in the back of the book rather than work them through...We yearn for shortcuts. But shortcuts usually lead away from growth, not toward it.

Philip Yancey



BIBLE STUDY NOTES

(Home or Personal)

INTRODUCTION; How many Churches have you been a part of in your life?

How many years were you there?

What is your earliest memory of church?

BIBLE STUDY:

Go through your sermon notes once again.

Which parts or points stood out for you the most?

Read Colossians 1:24-2:5

In the recent Census we were asked to describe the tasks associated with our job. How does Paul define his job / his role / his commission to the Church?

What was it that was “lacking” in regard to the sufferings of Jesus?

In the New Testament, the term *mystery* refers not to something cryptic or secretive, but something that previously had been hidden or not understood that God now wants to make clear.

What actually is the mystery?

Why was it hidden until now?

Why would this mystery have been a surprise to both the Jews and the Gentiles?

What sort of things go through your head (or your heart) when you consider the idea that Christ is in you?

Where does Paul get his energy from to do all the things his “job” requires of him?

Discuss this balance that he talks about between his own energy he brings and the energy that comes from God.

In Chapter 2 Paul describes some specific things that sum up what maturity looks like in people? Come up with your list from Colossians 2:1-5.

DISCUSSION:

The Melbourne Cricket Ground has one of the largest sporting clubs in the world. The Melbourne Cricket Club has a waiting list of 242 000 at last count. Membership is at different levels, - restricted , provisional, junior, etc. The wait to become a member is also fairly long.

For instance at the time of printing this study, it has been announced that all Restricted Members who were nominated and put on the waiting list in certain months in 1990 will be offered Full Membership later in 2016. That means parents who nominated their children to join when they were born (as many of them do) now could see their 26 year old able to be an MCC members this year!

We know the church is not a club. We don't offer leather seats, a full bar and restaurant, and the best view of the cricket or the football. But why aren't people lining up and on a waiting list to become church members?

We could say it is like Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14.

But that can't be the whole story. Many DID follow Jesus in His time on earth. Many more followed Him and became believers after His Ascension. Many follow Him today.

Read the accounts of the development of the early church in the following verses.

Acts 2:42-47; Acts 5:12-14; Acts 9:31

What stands out to you? What was the attitude of the outsider towards the church?

Is this missing today? Why or why not?

Some things happen (like miracles) only because God shows up and shows His power. So some things are out of our control. But how can we ensure that we are doing all we can to see God add to our numbers?

Why do churches experience health and growth at some times in their history and not in others?

Why do similar churches that are planted in similar locations experience different levels of health and growth?

Thinking of what Paul talked about in Colossians, what are some things we can put in place to ensure that the church stays on its mission and doesn't drift away from its core purposes?

PRAYER

Pray for each other again like Paul prayed for the Colossians.

Also pray for the health and growth of our church.

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Church

Day 1

Colossians 1:24-27 (NIV)

[24] Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. [25] I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- [26] the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. [27] To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

SUFFICIENT

One of the things Paul has been at pains to get across to the Colossians is how all encompassing, all powerful and all sufficient is Christ and His action on the cross. That is what makes verse 24 one of the most perplexing passages in the New Testament. "what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions"

If this statement is mis-understood, it makes Jesus death on the cross somehow inadequate. Is Paul really saying that the sufferings of Christ are not enough to save us? Do we have to do something else in order for us to make up for what was lacking in Jesus ability to save us?

What Paul is saying here is not in conflict with his earlier message. Paul is saying that as an Apostle he has suffered and continues to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. This suffering is an extension of the sufferings of Jesus not merely an addition to them because they were inadequate. What was "lacking" in a sense was Christians, including him, who need to get in and 'do the hard yards' as the footballers say.

J.B. Philips comments on this verse saying that Paul, rather than complaining about his sufferings saw that it gives him a chance to complete in his own body some of the untold pain that Jesus suffered on behalf of His Body the Church. Christ's suffering and death on the cross is sufficient for us. But what is needed is more people willing to make the sacrifices necessary for the message to be spread to even more people.

Christ's death was wholly sufficient. But that's not the end of the story. That's not the only suffering that has to be experienced if a lost world is going to be saved. The Church, the body of Christ may have to undergo suffering of its own to get the message out there. The New Living Translation tries to make this point when it translates vs 24 like this....Col. 1:24 (NLT)

I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am completing what remains of Christ's sufferings for his body, the church.

Do you seek too easy a lifestyle as a Christian? Are you likely to complain if a Christian activity interferes with your schedule? Are you gladly willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel? Are you prepared to go without? Would you put yourself out so that someone else could be helped?



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Church

Day 2

Colossians 1:24-27 (NIV)

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. [25] I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness- [26] the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

CUT AND PASTE BIBLE

Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States of America and influential in the ideas of the Declaration of Independence. He was criticised for his beliefs even though he supported freedom of religion. He was called a “howling atheist” in the Presidential Campaign of 1800 (Think of the things they call each other in the Presidential Campaign between Clinton and Trump today!!)

Jefferson was devoted to the teachings of Jesus Christ. But he wanted to pick and chose which ones. He didn't agree with the writers of the four Gospels, whom he considered to be untrustworthy correspondents. So Jefferson created his own Gospel by taking a sharp instrument, perhaps a penknife, to existing copies of the New Testament and pasting up his own account of Christ's philosophy. So we not only have Matthew Mark, Luke and John but we have the Gospel of Thomas! (That's not where another book called Gospel of Thomas comes from though)

Jefferson suffered from what a lot of people suffer from—They like to pick and choose the things that they believe or follow. Jefferson cut out certain teachings, many miracles, references to Jesus as God's Son and the resurrection.

There's just no way around it. Spending time reading the Bible is hands down the spiritual practice that has the greatest impact on a person's spiritual growth. This is true from people who are young immature Christians, to fully devoted Christians and everyone in between. Reading the Bible can help bring a person to faith in Christ. Reading the Bible helps Christians grow. Getting back to reading the Bible is also what helps people who are stalled or stagnant in their faith get re-energized.

Paul says here in vs. 25 that one of his aims is to present the Word of God in fullness to the Colossian Christians. He doesn't leave anything out. He's not cutting out the things that are hard to believe or hard to follow. He is giving people the truth, whole truth and nothing but the truth.

That's why this practice of personally taking time every day to read the Bible, reflect on it and apply it, is so important. The responsibility for spiritual growth lies with you. There are no shortcuts to spiritual growth. Even a great sermon once a week (or less) isn't going to do it.

Paul's aim to give us the Word of God in its fullness still applies today. Let's make sure that we are as ready, willing and able to receive the word of God in its fullness as Paul (and the other Bible authors are) to present it. Don't cut out what is too difficult!



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Church

Day 3

Colossians 1:24-28 (NJB)

It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church, [25] of which I was made a servant with the responsibility towards you that God gave to me, that of completing God's message, [26] the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his holy people. [27] It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory: [28] this is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom, to make everyone perfect in Christ.

MYSTERY

There are some great mysteries in our world. What was Stonehenge? Are UFO's real? Did Atlantis ever exist? Who really killed J.F.K.?

We can get into all sorts of myths, conspiracy theories, speculations and guesses as to what was the truth. Maybe sometime, somehow there will be a definitive answer to some of the great riddles.

Paul says here in verse 26 that the message of the Gospel was once a mystery. It was the belief of the Jews that God has a secret plan that he was storing up to be unveiled one day at the end of the present age. They hoped that the plan was that God was going to restore the fortunes of the Jewish people. Once the nation was so strong (think of the times of David and Solomon) but their own homeland was now occupied territory having been invaded by the Romans.

But the real answer to the mystery was one they hadn't been able to guess. God's purposes didn't just extend to the Jewish people. Everyone from every tribe, tongue and nation on earth should have a share in God's plan. God's purpose was to work through his own Son Jesus Christ and through Him to extend God's promise of salvation to all people.

Christ then gets to live IN us. Christ the Son of the most high God, the one who created everything and the One for Whom it was created, lives, not just with us, is not just for us, above us or around us, but is actually IN us. That is the mystery that God had been keeping in store to be revealed in these last days. We get to share in it.

This then is the hope of Glory. Christ living in you is the foundation cause for your hope that you will one day enter into the presence of God Himself. This is what makes the suffering we undergo, the disappointments we face all pale into nothing compared with the glory of the person and presence of Jesus Christ. We have hope.

Forgiveness of sins and the promise of guidance on this earth and all the other blessings of God are great. But these wonderful things make it possible for us to experience the permanent presence of Jesus Himself. Our hope is a real and genuine expectation of what is to come. He lives in us now. This is the foretaste of what it will be like to be with Him forever.



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Church

Day 4

Colossians 1:27-29 (The Message)

God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. It's that simple. That is the substance of our Message. [28] We preach Christ, warning people not to add to the Message. We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity. To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less. [29] That's what I'm working so hard at day after day, year after year, doing my best with the energy God so generously gives me.

BUCKET LIST

In the movie *The Bucket List*, two characters played by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman, play cancer patients. One writes a “bucket list”; a list of things to do before they “kick the bucket.” Nicholson plays a millionaire who finances the trip for both men. They see the Himalayas, visit the pyramids, see the French Riviera and go on a lion safari amongst other things.

The movie has been criticized by people for its unrealistic portrayal of those with cancer. Who would want to climb a mountain when you are that sick? But it raises a great question. What do we do with our lives? What are the goals we set for ourselves? Is it all self-centred or focused on other people?

Paul writes his bucket list in verse 28. Bottom line – bring people to maturity. Make sure that whatever encounters they have with him, if he has any influence at all, that they are as grown up and as close to their potential in Christ as they can be.

I gather Paul was a pretty intense sort of guy. He was focused on a big picture goal. But I also think that he was a regular guy. He was aware of the sports played at the time, (and blended these as illustrations into his letters.) I guess that he could indulge in chit chat at times too.

But when he had the chance, through personal conversation or like in these letters, he took the opportunity to press people about their spiritual health. He did it in his preaching that is called in today's translation '*profound common sense*.' He always held up Jesus as the example to aim for. This is one of the big ideas in the Bible. Just as Jesus is the best example of God we have, he is also the best example of how a human life is to be lived.

A Bucket list is not a bad thing to make. Whatever things we want to achieve though, let's make sure we include the goal to be mature on it. To have the aim of being like Jesus is a must-have on any list of achievements.

Are you as interested in helping others towards maturity? Are you as concerned with people's spiritual health as much as their physical health?



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Church

Day 5

Colossians 1:26-29 (New Jerusalem Bible)

..... the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his holy people. [27] It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory: [28] this is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom, to make everyone perfect in Christ. [29] And it is for this reason that I labour, striving with his energy which works in me mightily.

POWER

It is human nature to go to extremes. People throughout history have tended to latch onto a certain idea and run with it to its logical (or illogical) conclusion.

I tend to think that life is about getting the right balance. One of these balance issues has to do with the source or responsibility for the energy that we need to throw into our Christian lives.

On the one hand some people go to the extreme of thinking that it is all and only up to God. I have known people over the years that take that point of view. They are good faithful people who say they pray, seem very spiritual but get nothing done, and in practice, help no one. "If it's all up to God then I don't have to lift a finger" They might not say it as bluntly as that but they certainly live like that is the case.

I have known people on the other hand that live as if it's ALL up to them. They throw themselves into tasks like they are doing God a great favour by being there. They burn themselves out in service for their Lord. It's just that they leave God out. They rely on their own strength so much they get angry and bitter and twisted in trying to sustain the pace, frustrated that others don't have the same commitment as them.

Paul had the balance right. He found as he poured all his energy into the task, being aware that Jesus was with him, Christ added His supernatural power as well. "*/ struggle...with His energy...in me*" verse 29. That's getting the right mix of personal responsibility and Divine power.

Sometimes, Christians balk at getting involved in ministry or serving God somehow, because they don't think they have the strength. However, if everyone thought like that, nothing would get done.

Paul threw his heart and soul into everything he did and found that the energy of Christ matched his effort. He poured out into helping people the spiritual power Christ had poured into him. Don't get so busy doing the work of God that you neglect the work of God in you. How balanced is your approach?



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Changing



with Jesus



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