

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Read Colossians 1:1-2

### A Letter to Colossae

Paul wrote this letter likely in Rome around 60 AD (Anno Domini—*In the Year of our Lord Jesus Christ*) to the saints in Colossae. Paul wrote, **“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father”** (Colossians 1:1-2). Colossae is where Epaphras the faithful fellow slave and servant of Christ had taught. Epaphras was a fellow prisoner with Paul at this time (1:7; 4:12; Philemon 1:23). These letters were written around the time of Paul’s letters to Ephesus and Philemon. Colossae was a region of Phrygia in the Roman Province of Asia, where Ephesus was the capital.

“About a year after the writing of this epistle, according to the historian Eusebius, it was destroyed by an earthquake, which also laid a large part of the neighboring cities waste. At present the site of ancient Colossae is occupied by a small town called Konos, or Chonas.” (*Kretzmann Commentary, Colossians*)

We saw in Acts how there were people (Jews/proselytes-converts to Judaism) in Jerusalem from Phrygia; perhaps, some from Colossae heard the mighty works of God in their own language at Pentecost (Acts 2:10-11), and after hearing Peter preach, repented and were Baptized into Christ and received forgiveness of sins and were saved (Acts 2:38-41). Paul, Silas, and Timothy went through the region of Phrygia and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia (Acts 16:6), yet, later, Paul went through the region of Phrygia **“strengthening all the disciples”** (Acts 18:23).

Paul writes of the word of truth the Gospel, and of the oneness of Jesus Christ with the Father, teaching the divine nature of Christ by whom all things were made for Christ is the image of God and fullness of God reconciling all things to Himself and making Peace by the blood of His cross, and of our dying and being buried and raised with Christ in our Baptism, and that this Jesus paid our debt of sin on the cross, and against Judaizing practices and shadows of things to come that belong to Christ that was being imposed on the Colossian Christians to submit to regulations and human precepts having the appearance of wisdom but are of no value stopping the indulgence of the flesh, but to rather put on the new self in the image of the Creator, Christ Jesus, to forgive as God has forgiven us for Christ’s sake, and instructions for living peaceably with each other and listening appropriately (in *obedience*) to our parents continuing in prayer and walking in Wisdom toward all graciously speaking always seasoned with salt to know how to answer others for our hope and faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer – We give thanks to You Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for all things, as we live in You, one eternal and Holy God, now and forever. Amen.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch*

Thursday, March 9, 2023  
Read Colossians 1:3-8

### Back to the Basics

Paul's letter to the Christians at Colossae is a beautiful work. Few other works so clearly and plainly describe the nature of Christ, the gift of salvation, and our response of love to our neighbors. In other words, few works so clearly proclaim the Gospel as does the book of Colossians. That isn't to say that Colossians is a better book than the others in Scripture. It's simply written in a simpler, compact way that is easy to follow and understand. And it is written this way for a reason. You see, Paul didn't start the church in Colossae! It wasn't one of "Paul's churches". Instead, he was writing to a group of people that he hadn't met! So the pastor side of Paul overcame the theologian side, and the letter he wrote to the Colossians is simple, straightforward, and caring.

Now, at this point you might be asking to yourself, "Hold on. If this wasn't one of Paul's churches, then why did he write to them? Why did he feel the need to write an entire letter specifically to people he hadn't met?" These are excellent questions!

It turns out that the Christians in Colossae had a problem. It seems that there were people around telling them that this Christian life they were trying to live was just a bunch of bologna. They were saying things like, "Jesus? He wasn't really God. He was just a good guy, wasn't he?" Or "Baptism? That doesn't *really* do anything. It's just some kind of symbol, isn't it?" Or even "Sanctification? What's the point? Why don't you just sin like the rest of us!" And hearing enough of this, the Christians in Colossae started to believe them. They needed a catechism lesson! They needed to go back to the basics! And there was no better man for the job than Paul.

So, that's exactly what Paul does. Throughout his letter, he walks them through the basics of Christianity. And to do that, he starts at the beginning of the Christian life: faith. Before anything else, Paul thanks God for their faith in Jesus.

Thankfulness for our faith is such a basic, elementary step in living the Christian life, that we often forget to do it. Sometimes we get so caught up in having the right theology or feeling the right things, that we can forget the foundation that those things are built upon. You'd do yourself a lot of good to regularly put your questions aside, push your problems out of the way, and simply thank God for the gift of your faith. So I encourage you today and every day to thank God for your faith in Jesus which He has freely given to you.

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, God of all grace, govern our hearts that we may never forget Your blessings but steadfastly thank and praise You for all Your goodness in this life until, with all Your saints, we praise You eternally in Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen." *LSB*, "Prayer of Thanksgiving to God," pg. 310.

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown*

Friday, March 10, 2023

Read Colossians 1:9-12

### 3-Legged Race

My Friends of Hope! Remember when you'd have Church Picnics or family Reunions in the Summer? Great Memories of laughter, warm reunions with family & friends, great food, and a time for games after the BBQ! One of my favorite games growing up was the; '3-Legged Race!' Two people with one of their legs tied to the other person's leg or in a burlap sack, and then the race begins with other couples or children...lots of laughter, a few spills and eventually all reach the finish line.

In our verses from Colossians 1:9-12, St. Paul prays for 3 Key Legs of our Christian Walk in Life-Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding in order to walk and live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way!

How is that possible, you ask? Verses 11 & 12 show us it's by God's Grace...v. 11;" strengthened by all power according to His glorious might...v.12;" giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you..."

The key to our growing in God's Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding is our faith in Jesus Christ through the Means of Grace. This means daily remembering our Baptism whereby our sins were washed away and we became His precious child. And it continues when we receive the Lord's Supper..."Take eat, this is My Body...take drink, this is My Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins and for the strengthening of our faith."

We run the race, we grow in our faith and in Godly Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding as we fix our eyes on Jesus, (Heb. 12:2); study His Word which is a lamp to our feet and a Light to our path and regularly gather together with our Hope Family, the 'Great Cloud of Witnesses,' that surrounds us like a warm blanket of Christian Love and Fellowship.

My Friends of Hope, as Spring awakens, the daffodils and tulips blossom, and the temperatures warm and Spring leads to Summer, may God strengthen your faith and fill you with all Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding as you grow in your faith and love for God and in living your faith by loving each other as He loves us!

Prayer: Dear Lord, fill me with Your knowledge, wisdom, and understanding through Your means of grace. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek*

*We are happy to welcome the Wilsheks to Hope! Here is a little about them...*

Dave, Gail & Michael have lived all over the world during his 30 years in the USAF where Dave served as a Chaplain. He also recently retired from the Pastoral Ministry after serving 40 years. Gail is a retired LCMS Elementary School teacher, graduating from River Forest in 1984. Michael is the Wilshek's 27 year old son. Michael has Cerebral Palsy and lives with us. He attends Pony Bird Day program.

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Read [Colossians 1:13-14](#)

“The End of the Beginning”

When the Iron Curtain fell and “freedom” entered the vocabulary of former citizens of the Soviet Union, life there became a chaotic, confusing thing. Formerly, they could read the news in just one newspaper and knew it would be the same news as on the radio and TV. There had been rules for everything, and they knew that if they just followed the rules, all would go (fairly) well for them. And they had a national identity; they knew exactly who they were. After the fall, though, nothing was predictable. Many actually looked back at their former lives under totalitarian subjugation – fondly!

Paul only knew this feeling too well. He, too, had been freed from bondage to the Law. His life had previously been clear and simple – “when you follow the Law, you have God’s righteousness and a place in heaven”. His new life, though, was strange and dangerous! People were always trying to kill him! But knowing that Jesus is God’s Son and that He’d personally come to Paul to bring him into His Kingdom, even despite his former life, made Paul actually love all that wonderful chaos.

And so, he saved today’s reading for the end of his introduction to his letter to the Colossians. **“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”** Paul knew that being a new believer was sometimes a rough and difficult transition. Everything you thought was certain was turned over and put upside down on its head.

Paul had experienced this turmoil himself, but knew to the bottom of his heart that that difficulty was caused by having grown accustomed to the meager results of trying to save himself. He could now plainly see that, although he was writing this from a prison, he was now a brother of the King of God’s kingdom and was freer than he’d ever been. Before his conversion, Paul hadn’t realized that he lived in the domain of darkness, but now that he knew Jesus, his eyes were opened to allow him to see God’s true love for him.

Paul wanted the Christians in Colossae to understand that, as their brother, he too has experienced the life change that they’re going through. He gets them. And this wonderful, crazy new life is not too good to be true. Jesus, the beloved Son of God the Father, has redeemed us, defeated the domain of darkness, and has brought us into His kingdom. Jesus, and only Jesus, has completely and totally washed away our sins that we may call Him, “Brother”!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I can actually call You by that name only because of Your Son, Jesus! Thank You for revealing Yourself to me through Him. Amen.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson*

Monday, March 13, 2023  
Read Colossians 1:15-20

### Preeminent

Some words just sound like they are reserved for royalty. Preeminent is certainly one of them. Colossians 1:18 could speak of Jesus saying that “in everything he might be first.” The words can be translated that way, but it could give you the wrong idea.

Jesus is not just a trailblazer, although He does blaze the path (actually He is the path!) to life eternal.

Jesus is not first as though He is just a little better than anyone who might be second.

No. He is preeminent. He is above all.

He is the firstborn of all creation. That doesn't mean He is created; it means everything belongs to Him. “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...”

He is preeminent because “he is before all things,” existing before creation.

He is preeminent because “in him all things hold together,” and apart from His preeminence, the whole creation would crumble like a house of cards.

He is preeminent because He is the “head of the body, the church.” This means He guides and directs His church. He is the source of life for the church. Apart from Him, there is no church.

He is preeminent because He is the beginning of the resurrection. His resurrection will bring in tow all those who trust in Him to be raised from death also.

He is preeminent from the creation of life to the re-creation of life.

His preeminent rule over creation, life, the Church, and death are all for one purpose – for you. He is preeminent in order to “reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Consider this today: Christ rules over all, to swallow all sin, corruption, pain, and death visible and invisible, on earth or in heaven. He rules over all to make peace by the blood of his cross. He rules over all, so no one and nothing else could claim preeminence over you, His people.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I rejoice that You are Preeminent over all. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason*

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Read Colossians 1:21-23

### Jesus in Me

It is good for me to admit that I have been sinful. Otherwise, I might take my place with Jesus for granted, otherwise I might run off into sin again, not recognizing it. So, yes, I was sinful. But now I have Jesus.

It is not something I grabbed or sought for or recognized while considering things in sin. Sin clouds the mind, so that one doesn't even recognize sin as sin. It seems the best I can do, and so I find that even now, as I ignore where I have been in the past, there I am again.

Paul tells me to look at faith, not at what I have accomplished, could accomplish, or even just at myself. He came to me, changed my mind so that I recognized sin, so I simply trusted the one who did so much and now lives in and with me.

Yes, there are those around me, glorying in their shame, appealing to me to join them. They continue to defy and anger God, but their appeals also speak my past, my sins. They challenge my trust, they put my faith to the test. It is not God who tests me, but my own self, my own desire to join back in what once appealed me, even as I reject those ways.

Yet it is Jesus who is in me. It is Jesus who enables me to shut my eyes, to turn my attention away from what is dangerous. He continued to save me!

Prayer: Oh, Lord. You have so much trouble with me. Please continue to bring me always closer to You and Your ways. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad*

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Read Colossians 1:24-29

### God's Secret or Mystery Revealed

*"To make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

*Colossians 1:25-27*

Paul rejoices in sufferings for the sake of Christ and His body and reveals God's secret or mystery hidden for ages of Christ revealed to God's people, the Gentiles and the saints in Colossae.

Not everyone in Paul's day received the mystery of Christ **"in you, the hope of glory,"** as many reject and push Christ away today. When the message of Jesus of Nazareth, the only eternal Son of God—incarnate Word of God is *the* crucified and risen Christ given for sinners' redemption and justification by faith alone, many scoff, and many cry, "fool!" We reject errors and all contrary opposition to the teaching of the pure Word of God in Christ, **"the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."**

"We reject and condemn these errors and all others that are contrary and opposed to the teaching set forth here as contrary to the pure Word of God, the writings of the holy prophets and apostles, and our Christian creed and confession. Because the Holy Scripture [Col. 1:27] calls Christ a mystery, over which all heretics stumble and fall headlong, we warn all Christians that they not pry presumptuously into this mystery with their reason but simply believe with the dear apostles, shut the eyes of their reason, take their understanding captive in obedience to Christ, and take comfort and rejoice without ceasing in this, that in Christ our flesh and blood have been raised so high, to the right hand of the majesty and almighty power of God. In this way they will certainly find abiding comfort in every adversity and be preserved from harmful error." (Kolb, *The Book of Concord, FC SD Article VIII:96*).

Christ is **"in you, the hope of glory,"** in God's Word and Sacraments. Through Baptism, you were crucified, buried, and raised with Christ to life, from a dead sinner to resurrected saint in the Gospel. In the Lord's Supper, you receive the true body and true blood of Jesus in bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. You share in Christ's sufferings, and Christ is in you, and with Paul, we rejoice in the mystery made known to us in whom the world scoffs and mocks and spits on. We rejoice in suffering for the sake of Christ and His Church!

Prayer – "In suff'ring be Thy love my peace, In weakness be Thy love my pow'r; And when the [sufferings] of life shall cease, O Jesus, in that final hour, Be Thou my rod and staff and guide, And draw me safely to Thy side!" Amen. (LSB 683:4).

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch*

Thursday, March 16, 2023  
Read Colossians 2:1-3

### Don't Miss Out

These 3 verses summarize Paul's entire ministry to the Christians in Colossae.

First, Paul tells the Colossians that he is concerned for them, specifically for their faith. It seems that there were some prominent teachings spreading among the Christians in Colossae that were not Christ's teachings.

This is a huge problem! If the Christians in Colossae are following teachings that are not Christ's, that means they are not following Christ! And if they are not following Christ, then they are missing out on a lot. They are missing out on a community of love which is knit together by good works, patience, and kindness toward one another. They are missing out on knowing about God's big mystery – Christ who came to earth, died, and rose again. They are missing out on the riches of being one of Christ's followers – forgiveness, hope, and life. By following teachings that aren't Christ's, the Colossians are missing out on Jesus – the only one who can lead to the Father. And Paul doesn't want them, or anyone else, to miss out.

We don't want to miss out, either. In the LCMS, we hold doctrine in very high regard, and we take it very seriously. Some people criticize us for that, but I think it's one of our best characteristics. When new practices appear and new teachings arise, we always look in the Scriptures and Confessions to see if they align with Christ's teachings. If they don't align, then we don't participate in the new teaching. Why? Because we don't want to miss out. We try very hard to follow Jesus and no one else. Because if we follow someone else, then we miss out on all the benefits of following God.

So, thank God for Holy Scripture. And thank God for our Confessions which are the faithful explanation and application of Scripture. Take them seriously. Because we don't want to miss out on Christ. And by taking them seriously, we won't.

Prayer: "Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us perfectly to know Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth, and the life, that following His steps we may steadfastly walk in the way that leads to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer for a right knowledge of Christ," pg. 311.

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown*



Friday, March 17, 2023

Read Colossians 2:4-5

### Smooth Talk/Fact Check

My Family of Hope! Do you remember the old TV show; 'Dragnet?' Sgt. Joe Friday would always tell someone; 'Just the facts, just the facts!' Regardless of the situation, (the crime, the criminal, witness or victim) his focus was always on the facts! He didn't allow a 'Smooth Talker' or 'Smooth Talk' pull him away from the facts, the truth of the case.

In our 2 verses today in Colossians 2:4-5, St. Paul addresses the 'False Teachers' who with their 'smooth talk' and 'smooth talking' were trying to pull the Colossian Christians away from the Truth of the Gospel. In verse 4, Paul states, "I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments."

You can turn on your T.V. and depending on what Network you watch, you can hear the 'Talking Heads' describe the same topic or event in 2 different ways and both believe they are speaking the truth! This is true whether its Politics, Political Parties, World Events and even our Christian Faith depending on who you're watching on T.V.

When we hear 'Smooth Talk' from 'Smooth Talkers' how do we determine what is True and what is False? We, 'Fact Check!' Where do we get the 'Facts' about our Christian faith? Is it in what Society or Pop Culture, the Party in the White House (or their opponents), or what any other the 'Smooth Talker' tells us is true? No. We go to God's Word, the Bible as St. Paul states in verse 5, "and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is."

THE Answer is found in God's Word! The Faith we were Baptized in and later Confirmed in at our Confirmation in which we are rooted, grounded, and grow in all our days. For it's in Jesus Christ, our Savior, Shepherd, Lord, our Alpha & Omega that we have Forgiveness, Life and Salvation! The Psalmist states-(PS. 119:105) "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." We follow the good example of the Bereans who searched the Scriptures to see the Truth of the Gospel. "For they received the Message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

When we hear something or read something about our Christian Faith, we do what we learned as a child as we sang...

"The B I B L E that's the Book for me! I stand alone on the Word of God ...the B I B L E!"

"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!" That's The Fact! AMEN

Prayer: Dear Lord, keep me from falling from smooth talk that lead me away from you. Let me cling to the Truth of Your Word. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek*

Saturday, March 18, 2023

Read [Colossians 2:6-8](#)

### “Rooted”

“As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.” Paul is writing to believers – they have “received Christ” as their Lord, but they’re having problems with the second part, “So walk in Him.” Paul’s letter doesn’t describe precisely what the Colossian’s challenge was, but enough is said of it that we can take Paul’s prescribed “cure” for our own faith challenges.

We’ve had some cut flowers in a vase for the past 10 days that are about at the end of their lives. Most are wilting, a few are all shriveled up, while a few others are still fighting to remain beautiful forever. Their problem, though, is that they’re no longer in the ground – their roots may still be in the ground somewhere (probably warmer than Missouri!), but now their stems stick down into only water. Well, mostly into water. We don’t always keep it filled perfectly, and their stems may have to “suck air” some of the time.

Paul tells the Christians of Colossae to “remain rooted... in the faith, just as you were taught”. They’d been taught about Christ. They’d heard the Good News, and the Holy Spirit had caused them to receive Jesus as their Lord. But now they were looking to traditions and practices outside this faith. Philosophy, former rituals and ways, and the spirit of their fallen world was capturing their attentions and pointing them away from the Cross. And their faith was wilting, shriveling up, and in danger of dying.

Epaphras had taught them the Word about Jesus. He’d planted them in the good soil of the Good News and they’d begun to bear the good fruits of faith. But they needed to stay rooted in that Word to be built up and remain established.

You and I need this same Word. We need to remain grounded in Jesus, just as we’ve been taught. Life (meaning the devil, the world, and our flesh) constantly tries to distract us from this solid foundation with crises, hobbies, and other distractions. But, just like the daffodils and flowers afflicted by the freezing air and high winds, walking in the way of Jesus by remaining planted in His Word will keep us alive. We may be hurt, “wilted”, and damaged by sin, but we, too, will “blossom” again, “abounding in thanksgiving.”

Prayer: Risen Savior, Mary thought that she had wrongly mistaken You as a gardener on Easter morning. But You have planted Your Word in me and created life where there was only death. Continue to nurture me by Your Word. Amen.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson*

Monday, March 20, 2023  
Read Colossians 2:9-10

### Full and Filled

Julie's preschool class just finished their transportation unit. Her group of 2 year olds is always fascinated by trucks and planes and trains, but one of their favorite things in the classroom all year is an inflatable raft that they hop in and pretend to take out on the waters in grand adventures.

Now, they never take the boat out on the water, but if you wanted to do so, the most important thing is for the boat to be full. I don't mean full of cargo, but full of air. The boat comes in a relatively small box, but once it is full, it takes shape and goes from being a ball of plastic and rubber to a vessel to carry a load of 2 year olds.

I was thinking about the boat as I read the text for today, as Paul writes about fullness and filled. "For in him (Christ) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." As the Nicene Creed puts it, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God" dwelling bodily among us. Jesus is not diminished at all by His humanity, He is truly God, and able to bring to His people the presence of God, the forgiveness of God, the help of the eternal God. He is not a shadow of God, but "the image of the invisible God." He has made the Father known among us by who He is and what He has done for us and our salvation. The fullness of God is in Christ.

And He fills us. Apart from him, as Paul says in Ephesians, "we were dead in our trespasses and sins," but now "you have been filled in him." Christ, who is the fullness of God, fills us. So what's that mean? It means we have everything we need in Christ. He fills us with His forgiving life and energizing Spirit. He gives us shape to live as God's people, being filled with the life of Christ. We go from being dead in trespasses and sins to being filled with the life, forgiveness, joy, and love of Christ to carry with us. From His fullness, we are filled.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, as You have filled me with Your life, give me peace today knowing I have everything I need for faith and life in You. Help me this day to live according to the fullness of Your Word. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason*

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Read Colossians 2:11-12

### Jesus Made Me His

Jesus made me His. It was not something I could do, it was not even something I could want, He came to me and changed me, caused me to want Him and to be part of His people, a very part of Him. What a great joy that is. I cannot fail, since He sought me, I cannot offend Him, since we are together.

In human nature, a person seeks ceremony at times of great change, at times when things are changing. God knew my needs, God came to me with joy, with personal care, and with attention to my human needs for ceremony. Could He have skipped that, of course. But He didn't. As a child goes through birth to enter the world, so God brought me into His family of those loving Him by giving me baptism. This He did so that I would know that He is changing me, that I would know that this is a time of great change, that I would remember and appreciate what He has done.

I am thrilled to know that God lives in me, empowering me, guiding me, and, even, disciplining me - not that I enjoy undergoing correction, but rather that I appreciate the fact and results of correction. In baptism God does come to me, in Baptism I know that God, who always keeps His Word, that that God has me in His family of rescued people, in who He, Jesus, is my daily companion. Thank You God.

Prayer: In Your gift of life which You give me, God, I so appreciate Your also listening to my needs and desires. Thank you. Amen

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad*

Wednesday, March 22, 2023  
Read Colossians 2:13-15

### God Made us Alive in Christ

*“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” Colossians 2:13*

How can a dead man be made alive? Not by the demand and perfection of our keeping the Law, our will, reason, strength, or flesh. Paul continues to lay out how all mankind is dead in their trespasses. Paul also mentions this in his letter to the church at Ephesus, **“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins”** (Eph 2:1), and **“the uncircumcision of your flesh”** (Col 2:13) is a spiritual condition recognized in the Old Covenant by Moses; **“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn”** (Deut 10:16; see Jer 4:4). I.e., repent! All Israel and all nations are under the curse of the Law because of sin inherited from disobedience and rebellion from the beginning in the garden. We need to be made alive.

The Law that accuses and demands perfection, which stands against us, must be fulfilled. By whom? The debt of sin must be settled and paid for, an eternal debt we cannot pay, and by what payment then? A perfect blood atonement payment is settled forever in Christ’s payment and blood sacrifice atoned for your sin on the cross. With the shed blood of Christ and atonement for our sins, the record of debt no longer stands against us. And, thankfully, life and grace are in Jesus Christ given for **“you, who were dead in your trespasses and [in] the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him [Christ], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross”** (Col 2:13-14).

“Ambrose wrote in a letter to a certain Irenaeus: “Moreover, the world was subjected to him through the law, because by the prescriptions of the law everyone was indicted and by the works of the law no one is justified. In other words, through the law sin is recognized, but its guilt is not relieved. The law was shown to be harmful since all are made sinners, but when the Lord Jesus came, he forgave the sin for everyone, which no one could avoid, and he blotted out the bill of indictment that stood against us by the pouring out of his blood [Col. 2:14].” (*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Apology IV:103*).

Our Lord, King and Savior, Jesus Christ, **“disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him”** (Col 2:15).

Prayer – “In Thee all fullness dwelleth, All grace and pow’r divine; The glory that excelleth, O Son of God, is Thine. We worship Thee, we bless Thee, To Thee, O Christ, we sing; We praise Thee and confess Thee, Our glorious Lord and King.” Amen. (*LSB 527:3*).

*Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch*

Thursday, March 16, 2023  
Read Colossians 2:1-3

### Don't Miss Out

These 3 verses summarize Paul's entire ministry to the Christians in Colossae.

First, Paul tells the Colossians that he is concerned for them, specifically for their faith. It seems that there were some prominent teachings spreading among the Christians in Colossae that were not Christ's teachings.

This is a huge problem! If the Christians in Colossae are following teachings that are not Christ's, that means they are not following Christ! And if they are not following Christ, then they are missing out on a lot. They are missing out on a community of love which is knit together by good works, patience, and kindness toward one another. They are missing out on knowing about God's big mystery – Christ who came to earth, died, and rose again. They are missing out on the riches of being one of Christ's followers – forgiveness, hope, and life. By following teachings that aren't Christ's, the Colossians are missing out on Jesus – the only one who can lead to the Father. And Paul doesn't want them, or anyone else, to miss out.

We don't want to miss out, either. In the LCMS, we hold doctrine in very high regard, and we take it very seriously. Some people criticize us for that, but I think it's one of our best characteristics. When new practices appear and new teachings arise, we always look in the Scriptures and Confessions to see if they align with Christ's teachings. If they don't align, then we don't participate in the new teaching. Why? Because we don't want to miss out. We try very hard to follow Jesus and no one else. Because if we follow someone else, then we miss out on all the benefits of following God.

So, thank God for Holy Scripture. And thank God for our Confessions which are the faithful explanation and application of Scripture. Take them seriously. Because we don't want to miss out on Christ. And by taking them seriously, we won't.

Prayer: "Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us perfectly to know Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth, and the life, that following His steps we may steadfastly walk in the way that leads to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer for a right knowledge of Christ," pg. 311.

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown*

Friday, March 24, 2023  
Read Colossians 2:20-23

### To Do Lists: Man's or God's

My Family of Hope, in today's text from Colossians 2:20-23, St. Paul addresses the problem/the heresy of man's "To Do List" of trying to earn favor with God and earn their way to heaven. These verses show us the impossibility of man's to do list of trying to earn our way to heaven.

We all have; 'To Do Lists,' don't we? There's 'To Do Lists for everything under the sun: Spring Cleaning, Getting the Garden ready for planting, doing your taxes...and since I recently retired, I have the 'To Do List' from my wife each week...LOL.

These lists are helpful in organizing our lives and helping us to get things done. When we check off our to do list, we have a feeling and sense of accomplishment. I know for myself, once I finish my list, it's time for a nice nap!

However, for the Church at Colossae and for the Christian Church today, there is the temptation to listen to those who would try and water down the Gospel and the Gift of Grace in Christ by adding an, 'Unholy List' of things that make us feel that we are cooperating or earning our way to forgiveness, life and salvation. St. Paul speaks to this error by the false Christians and their errors in verse 20, "If you died with Christ to the basic principles of the world, why as though you still belong to it, do you submit to its rules?"

What was the Father's 'To Do List' for His Son and our Savior, Jesus? Jesus' 'To Do List' was to do His Father's Will. Jesus came to bear our sin and to be our Savior. As John the Baptist said; "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus came to do the will of His Father: to defeat and destroy the power of sin, death, and the devil for us for today and for eternity.

In our Baptism we were buried with Jesus and raised with Him through our faith in the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. (Col. 2:12) God's Word points us to Jesus. God's Word both the Old Testament and the New Testament shows us what Jesus has done for us. Isaiah 61:1-3; "The spirit of God is on Me to preach the good news to the poor, to open the eyes of the blind and to set the captives free!" "Where O death, is your victory? Where O death is your sting? But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:55-57 ff)

Jesus has fulfilled everything His Father gave Him to do to give us. Look to Jesus' words, "I thirst!" ... "It is Finished!" ... "Father, into your hands, I commit My Spirit." Jesus' Words, His Life, His Death, and His Resurrection for each of us give the assurance that we have Forgiveness, Life, and Salvation for today and for eternity by God's Grace and Favor! (Ephesians 2:8,9)

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, by Your cross and empty tomb, You prove that Your work is complete. You have done all the Father gave You to do for us. Thank you, Jesus! Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek*

Saturday, March 25, 2023

Read [Colossians 3:1-4](#)

### “Spring Cleaning”

Try these out on your spouse: “I cleaned last Spring; I don’t need to this year”, “One and Done – I already cleaned up once – don’t need to again”, “I weeded last year; I don’t need to again this year”. No, Spring Cleaning has to be done again and again, every year (and I’ve heard that cleaning some things more than once yearly is actually a good idea). Clearing the weeds out of the yard last year might help this year, but you need to do it again or they’ll just come back. Worse.

This illustrates why Baptism is referred to as “Cleaning”, not “Spring Cleaning”. Baptism cleans you of all your sins – past, present and future – and is done forever. You don’t need to be re-baptized every year. When the Name of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is pronounced over you and the water washes you, you are a new person. You are a child of God. Christ’s righteousness takes the place of your former unrighteousness so that you can stand holy before God on the Last Day and be welcomed into His eternal kingdom.

Some of the believers in Colossae couldn’t accept this. “Surely there must be more that I have to do”, they seemed to think. They’d heard God’s Word preached to them. They’d been baptized. They believed. But that seemed not enough – just some water and some words – “surely there must be more that I have to do?”

And in a way, they’re right. The Good News is so good that it sounds too good to be true. And that’s why Paul’s been explaining it to them this way: **“having been buried with him (Christ) in baptism, ... you, who were dead in your trespasses..., God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us”**. Cancelled – period.

Paul wants them to move on now. He writes, **“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.”** All of us who have been baptized and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior are saved. We don’t need to (and actually can’t) do anything else to save us. Jesus has done it all.

So this reading begins a new section. In our new lives, we don’t need to worry about salvation, but rather should fill ourselves with Christ, Who emptied Himself for us. Never fear, **“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”**

Prayer: Lord God, You have given me a new life in Your Son, Jesus. Help me to have faith in this fact, that I may live that life for You. Amen.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson*



Monday, March 27, 2023  
Read Colossians 3:5-10

### Take that Off!

Nearly every little boy goes through a bunch of stages that seem ridiculous from the perspective of adulthood. There is the period of time when you will do anything to avoid taking a bath or shower. Why? Because. Oh, there might be specific reasons to avoid the bathtub or shower, like you're doing something much more fun. But there doesn't have to be any reason at all.

Similar to this, I distinctly remember going through a phase when I was about nine years old. Every day I wanted to wear the same sweatshirt and the same jeans. It was my favorite. I would even wait to get dressed until it was just about time to leave the house, so I could try to get out the door with the same sweatshirt on for consecutive days. Before I could turn the doorknob, I'd hear, "Jason Michael, take that off!"

Paul is using clothing language to speak about the acts of our sinful nature that we just keep putting on. He tells us "now you must put them all away," or literally, "put them all off," as in take them off. I find Paul's list helpful because it is wide and probably includes your favorite "sweatshirt" that you just keep putting back on and trying to sneak out of the house. But whether your pet sin is anger, obscene talk, sexual immorality, or coveting, it needs to be taken off. And such sins don't just need to be cleaned up a little. You need to burn that sweatshirt. "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you."

Why? You have something so much better! "You have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." That's a reference back to Jesus. You wear the new life of Christ. He has washed you clean in the waters of baptism, and clothed you with His righteousness. Don't foolishly put back on dirty clothes. (Imagine getting a shower and then putting right back on filthy clothes that you had covered in mud!) Paul will go on to speak of what our clothing is to look like now, but start here. Remember you are new in Jesus, and He is constantly renewing you. If you start to put back on those old, comfortable, filthy rags, confess your sins and be renewed again in the cleansing forgiveness of Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, forgive me for dressing myself again the rags of sin. Cleanse me anew and dress me in Your righteousness. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason*

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

Read Colossians 3:11

### Differences

The world is filled with people, people who are like me in customs, habits, and backgrounds, and also people with strange habits, with backgrounds and customs I am just not familiar with. Not very surprisingly, there are often clashes between those differences, especially when we have customs that create trouble for each other. Temptation rises its foul head - surely those differences are not right.

I find hot-headed responses, anger, and desires to do harm. I don't always do anything with those responses, but my heart jumps to conclusions anyway. But I know that's not God's way. I know that Jesus died for them just as much as for me. Yes, I know that, but convincing myself of that - well that takes God's intervention.

I find myself praying that God will help me - that God will give me directions, and then step in and cool my emotions, change me again, so that I can live like Him.

I am so thankful that God does intervene, not only in recorded history, but also in my life. Since He has saved me, I find that I want to be like Him. Not of course to give salvation to others on my own, but rather, in gratitude, appreciation, and love, to live like Him. He makes no differences between customs, habits, backgrounds, so I want myself to also make no differences. I want Him to bring opportunities to myself and in so doing, to empower me to live like He does in those opportunities.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for changing me. Now, Lord, show those changes in my life. Bring the opportunity and my renewed life together in glory. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad*

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Read Colossians 3:12

### God's Chosen Ones

*“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” Colossians 3:12*

Paul is encouraging the Colossians to be Christians. “Therefore, clothe/put on for yourselves, as God’s elect/chosen ones, holy and loved/beloved [divine love/affection from God], merciful/compassionate hearts [inward parts], kindness/generosity [being helpful or beneficial of each other], humility/modesty, gentleness/meekness [as of less importance than others] longsuffering/patience [under the provocation of one another].”

To be clothed/having put on all these things is to be clothed in Christ and to have God’s love for one another. That is, to have God’s gift of faith in the love and righteousness of Christ given for you in suffering and dying for your sins on the cross, reconciling you to God, and rising from the dead ruling and reigning over all things here and now as we await His appearing on the Last Day.

Paul Kretzmann beautifully wrote,

“The Christians being united in fellowship in Christ, it behooves them to lead a life in conformity with the intimacy and sacredness of that bond, to express in their whole lives and all their actions the love which unites them in Christ: Put on, then, as the elect of God, saints and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humbleness, meekness, longsuffering. These are wonderful titles which the apostle applies to the Christians, and his use of them shows that he is an expert in the art of evangelical admonition. He calls the believers "elect of God," thereby indicating the source and fountain of all the spiritual blessings of God. God has chosen the Christians in Christ before the foundation of the world. According to His counsel of love He has elected certain people out of the mass of the redeemed to be holy and blameless before Him in love. Not by reason of our merits and works, but out of free grace, according to the good pleasure of His will, He has chosen us in Christ. A result of this election is that we are holy, cleansed, sanctified by the blood of the Lamb. Christ has borne the sins of all men earned forgiveness of sins for them all. The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to all that believe on Jesus Christ as their Savior. For the sake of Christ and His perfect righteousness they are holy before the face of God, without a spot or blemish. And therefore they are finally the beloved of the Lord. For the sake of Christ, His beloved Son, the Father loves us, the fullness of His good pleasure rests upon us, the complete measure of His love and mercy.”

**“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”**

Prayer – Gracious Father, grant me Your love toward my fellow brothers and sisters, neighbors, and all Your creatures/mankind, as You are Holy, merciful and compassionate, kind and gentle, longsuffering and patient toward me for the sake of Christ. Amen

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch*

Thursday, March 30, 2023  
Read Colossians 3:13-17

### Give Thanks

We are made into new Creatures through Christ. In baptism, the Old Adam is killed and the New Creation is given life. Now, as these new Creatures, Paul reminds us that we are called to live in a particular way. We are called to be patient and understanding with one another if issues arise. We are called to forgive as we have been forgiven. We are called to live in harmony with all others who have been born anew. In summary, we are called to live in love. We are to love one another as Christ has loved us. His is the response to being given new life. This is what it looks like to be a Christian. And this is incredibly easy to forget to do.

Though we are new Creatures, redeemed and saved by the Word of God, it often doesn't feel like it. Our own sinful nature still persists and the hardships of this world often leave us feeling alone. Perhaps you've found yourself thinking, "I know that I'm supposed to love others, but how can I when, at times, I don't feel loved myself?" It's easy for the reality of our new life with Jesus to become drowned out by all the noise of the world around us.

To combat this, Paul suggests a simple solution: give thanks. Regardless of all the noise of this sinful life, remember to give thanks. How can one possibly forget that they are loved when they take time to be thankful for all that has been given them? Likewise, how can one possibly forget to show love to their neighbors when they take time to thank God for the love He has shown to them? Give thanks to God constantly and you will not forget that you are loved. Give thanks to God constantly and you will not forget how to show love to others. This is such an important and helpful tip that Paul mentions it three times in these verses alone!

So, I encourage you to always give thanks. Jesus has given you everything. By thanking Him constantly, you won't forget that you are loved, and you won't forget to love others.

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, God of all grace, govern our hearts that we may never forget Your blessings but steadfastly thank and praise You for all Your goodness in this life until, with all Your saints, we praise You eternally in Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

- LSB, "Prayer of Thanksgiving to God," pg. 310.

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown*

Friday, March 31, 2023  
Read Colossians 3:18-21

### Jesus' Heart...Your Home

My Family of Hope! We've all heard the phrase: "Home is where the heart is!" That's true for each of us. It's especially true for each of us because Jesus has made His home in our hearts!

"Home is where the heart is," speaks volumes to each of us on the importance of Jesus' place as the center of our hearts, lives, our marriages, families, and all our relationships. Regardless of our age, marital status, or how many children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren we have, the love of Jesus in our hearts is a warm lighthouse beacon of love that shines in our families and through us as a Gospel Light to everyone we meet.

In my home growing up, my Mom and Dad taught my brother and I what it meant to be a Christian in their lives and actions in how they treated and spoke to each other as well as to us long before we could read the Bible or comprehend what it meant to be a Christian. I can close my eyes and see my Dad folding his big hands over mine at bed time prayers and how Mom and Dad loved each other and John and I when we were children like it was yesterday. As I got older, left the nest, married, and began my own family, I applied and still apply these lessons experienced and learned. I learned from them of Jesus' love between husband and wife, parents and children and seeing, hearing, and experiencing Jesus as the heart of our home and family. Mom and Dad always said, "We're not perfect but forgiven," and I learned grace and forgiveness from them. Jesus' love in our marriages and families is genuine, open, honest, living, and forgiving because Jesus loved us and showed us how to love. "Love one another as I have loved you." John 3:16 Love for the world pours into our hearts and through us to each other.

The verses today from Colossians 3:18-21 are all roots and grounds our love in Jesus first and foremost. St. Paul writes in Col. 3:17, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

My Family of Hope, may God richly bless each of you in your hearts, homes, marriages and lives as you grow in your love for Jesus and live that love with each other as Jesus loves you! In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek*

Saturday, April 1, 2023

Read [Colossians 3:22-4:1](#)

### “April Fools”

How would you like a job where you worked for Jesus Himself? Do you think He might be too much of a perfectionist? Would He tolerate mistakes? Would He allow breaks? Would He mind if you just “coasted” for a while after lunch? Might He call you into His office to talk to you about those personal phone calls? On the other hand, do you think Jesus might be too easy on you? That He’d just forgive any and all mistakes you make? That He’d happily tolerate it if you knocked off before the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the day (3 PM)?

But, no, that’s not how it really is, is it? If you’re not retired (and probably even if you are), you work for other people. Even if you’re “self-employed”, you work for your customers. Sometimes this brings great joy; but oftentimes it doesn’t. Employers can be oppressive, micro-managers. They seem to enjoy throwing all the hardest jobs at you, just to see you squirm. And customers can be so demanding!

However, our reading for today says otherwise: “You are serving the Lord Christ.” When you go in to your job – flipping burgers, babysitting, clicking away on a computer, or whatever – we are to “work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men”. Moreover, we are to “obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.” Oh, that’s just great! I thought my boss was strict – now I have to obey him in everything while “fearing the Lord”!

That’s what an April Fool might think, but we’re no April Fools! Jesus has revealed to us the Wisdom of Heaven. We know what’s going on in the universe, and know that He’s got everything under control. He Himself is called Wisdom, and He’s our Brother. We know that He has saved us and is even now preparing a place for us in heaven, with Him! And this gives us Peace, that passes all understanding. The world doesn’t know that kind of Peace, but we do.

So, when you go into work, and everything’s falling down around you – the company lost a client, the dishwasher’s broken, the weather has blown a tree down on your car so you can’t even get to work – you nevertheless have Peace. And your co-workers around you see that. And, when everything’s going great, your hard work and creativity serves to make your neighbors’ lives better. You know the eternal reward before you, and you enjoy serving those around you, knowing that your Boss died for them, too.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You gave us Wisdom when we first knew You through Your Son, Jesus. Help us share that with our neighbors through service to them. Amen.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson*

Monday, April 3, 2023

Read Colossians 4:2-4

### Thy Kingdom Come

On this Monday of Holy Week, this specific part of the Lord's Prayer seems like the natural prayer to connect our reading to our remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection.

Paul encouraged the Colossians (and now us!), "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving." Thy kingdom come, Lord. I am watching for Your kingdom and anticipating the day of your return. Keep me in Your kingdom through the strength of Your body and blood that You gave Your disciples long ago and that I share in through Your supper. Keep me in Your kingdom by speaking the forgiveness of the cross and the hope of the resurrection. Keep me in your steadfast love and lead me to look to the coming of Your kingdom in full when I will share in Your resurrection.

Paul went on, "At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ." Thy kingdom come, Lord. May Your kingdom come not only to me and to Your Church, but to many more that Your kingdom of mercy and grace would expand. Provide open doors for Your people in all places to share the mystery of Christ – that You took on human flesh, suffered in our place, died for our sins, and rose for our justification. May this word of hope in You be proclaimed by pastors, missionaries, teachers, parents, and each of Your people, as You give us the opportunity to do so.

Prayer: O God, in my life, in our congregation, throughout Your Church, and throughout the world – Thy Kingdom come. Amen.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason*

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Read Colossians 4:5-6

### Help with the Words

There is one thought that keeps coming into my mind. I need God's Word in my life all the time. I need to read, to think, to review what is in it. I need to put ideas together covering all parts of the Bible to ensure that what I think is according to God's ideas. There God talks to me - oh, I don't get revelations, rather as I consider what I read, He reminds me of other parts of the Bible, He brings ideas to my mind and reminds me of His guidance when I get excited about how wonderful my ideas are.

I need God's Word and so do my friends (even friends I have just met) but sometimes those friends haven't ever lost themselves in God's Word. They don't know how all the parts fit together. God wants me to share with them. And I am willing, but my wild, off-the-cuff, explanations can use some improvement.

So, as I am considering what God says, so I also wonder "how can I explain this to someone". How do I say God's Words without trying to make them my words? I truly need God's help. The more I try the more I fail. This is the story of my life, well, my life without Jesus. I try to put things together well, to plan out a discussion when possible. And then I remember, He tells me "The Holy Spirit will guide what you say." Then, I rest in Him. He will tell me either now as I prepare or then when someone needs God's Words.

Prayer: Thank you my Lord, thank you for giving Your Word to me to share. Please guide my thoughts, so others can learn from me, in Your way. Amen

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad*



Wednesday, April 5, 2023

Read Colossians 4:7-9

### Encourage Your Hearts

Hearing from a dear friend or beloved family member you have desired to hear from is an encouragement to the heart. I remember receiving letters from my grandma throughout my childhood into adulthood, and these were treasured moments and encouragement to my heart to know how and what things my grandma and grandpa were doing. Today, this takes the form of text messaging, email, or video chat; perhaps a few of us may still write letters and make phone calls; either way, the purpose is to let others know how you are, your activities, and overall, to encourage their heart.

In the same way, Paul sends Tychicus and Onesimus, along with others, to Colossae with a letter to tell them of all of Paul's activities and **"for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may [παρακαλέσῃ] encourage your hearts"** (v. 8). Encourage here, παρακαλέσῃ, *parakalesē*, is an invitation or a call to instill courage, comfort, encouragement, and cheer to someone or something. So far, Paul has used this word in one other place in his letter to Colossae to encourage their hearts,

**"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ."** (Col 2:1-5).

Tychicus, **"a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord"** (v. 7), brought Paul's message of encouragement to the hearts of Christ's Church in Colossae and Laodicea. Paul also sent Onesimus, who was the slave of Philemon, converted, now as a Christian (see Philemon), back Onesimus to Philemon in Colossae as **"our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you"** (v. 9), and who was likely acquainted with Laodiceans in Phrygia along with Epaphras.

Yahweh sent you and me a message of His love for sinful mankind, in the mystery revealed in the Christ foretold to come fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God become flesh, rejected by men, suffered and died the death we deserved paying for our sins, THE sacrificial Lamb who rose from the dead for our salvation and redemption from the power of sin, death, and Satan. As Jesus Christ lives and reigns here and now, today, in your Baptism, your sinful heart is washed anew and forgiven in His Name.

Prayer – Father, encourage our hearts today in Your Word, promise, and participation in the blood of Jesus. Amen

*Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch*

Thursday, April 6, 2023  
Read Colossians 4:10-11

### The Comforts of Home

“These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.”

What is Paul trying to say here? Why does Paul specifically say that he is comforted by the Jewish Christians (Aristarchus, John Mark, and Justus) as opposed to the Gentile Christians (Epaphras, Luke, and Demas)? Is he implying that the circumcised, Jewish Christians were better believers than his uncircumcised, Gentile companions? Of course not! Paul is by no means suggesting that Jewish Christians are better believers than Gentile Christians!

Well, if he’s not comparing the two, then what is he doing?

Paul is speaking of one of the most basic human principles that is often overlooked: we are more comfortable around people with whom we have shared experiences. We are most comfortable around people with whom we are similar! We get along easily with people who are like us! And there’s a certain degree of comfort in knowing that someone else is experiencing and processing things exactly like you are. We are most comfortable with people who are closest to home. For example, while in prison, Paul receives a certain degree of comfort from his Jewish companions that his Gentile companions simply cannot emulate. Why? Because they are Jewish like Paul! They share the same training, practices, styles, and experiences. This isn’t to say that the Gentiles were bad Christians. No, the Jewish Christians were simply close to home for Paul, and he felt a special kind of comfort with them.

By pointing this out, Paul encourages the Christians in Colossae to find comfort in each other. The Colossians grew up together, experienced life together, and knew each other in a special kind of way. Because of this, when trials arose, they could look toward each other for a special kind of comfort – the comfort of knowing that someone with shared experience was experiencing and processing things exactly like them.

And this encouragement is for us, too. Love all people and share Christ with everyone, but remember to hold fast to those long-lasting relationships that are close to home. Because someone who has known you forever and understands you through shared experience – siblings, life-long friends, parents, or children – can comfort you in special ways that others simply cannot emulate.

Prayer: “Visit, O Lord, the homes in which Your people dwell, and keep all harm and danger far from them. Grant that we may dwell together in peace under the protection of Your holy angels, sharing eternally in Your blessings; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

- LSB, “Prayer for home and family,” pg. 315.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown*

Friday, April 7, 2023  
Read Colossians 4:12-15

### Making a Difference for Jesus

My Family of Hope, in today's reading from Colossians 4:12-15, we want to look at how we can make a difference for Jesus in the lives of others as Epaphras did for the Church at Colossae and the towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis that he served. St. Paul speaks of how his friends made a difference in his life and ministry and how, in turn, they made a difference in the lives of those they met and ministered to.

Our Hope Family, just like our bodies, is made up of different and unique parts and functions. For our Church to work as it can, just like our bodies, all of us have a special role to perform. Each of us has gifts and abilities to use to serve Jesus and each other, just as Epaphras, Demas and Luke did with St. Paul.

Epaphras shows us and encourages us to, 'make a difference' for Jesus in the lives of our Hope Family. Colossians 4:12, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling for you in his prayers, in order that you may stand complete and fully convinced in all the will of God."

Epaphras made a difference for Jesus by praying for the members of the Colossian Church and those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul states that he was, "working hard/wrestling in prayer." He prayed for each of these people for greater love and compassion. We also pray for each of our Hope Family throughout the week for those in need on our Prayer Chain and the Weekly emails we receive from Pastor and on Sunday morning in Worship. We pray for each other just as Epaphras prayed and how Jesus prayed for His Disciples and for all Christians. Look at John 17:20-26 to see how earnestly Jesus prayed for all Christians, for each of you!

I would encourage you to take your Weekly Prayer Requests whether it be via email or jotting them down on Sunday morning and pray for our Hope Family and Friends throughout the week. Know that each of you makes a powerful and positive difference in the lives of those you pray for.

When someone tells you, 'I am praying for you and your family,' it brings the Love of Jesus to their hearts. I can tell you in my life, my wife's 2 long battles with cancer and our son's many health issues, it has brought great comfort, encouragement, and strength to Gail, Michael, and to me.

My Family of Hope, may God richly bless you as you grow in your faith and love for Jesus and in living that love and faith with all of our Hope Lutheran Family. I invite you with Paul, "Brothers and Sisters, pray for us." (1 Thess 5:25). May Jesus' prayer for you bring you closer to Him as you pray for others. Jesus said, "I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one Father, just as you are in Me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent Me." (John 17:20) AMEN.

*Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Dave Wilshek*

Saturday, April 8, 2023

Read [Colossians 4:16-18](#)

“Grace be with you”

What are you going to do today? It’s about time to mow the grass. Even if your grass isn’t long enough, the weeds probably are. Saturday, the day after Good Friday – the day before Easter – is kind of a quiet day. The week ended on a solemn note, as we turned out the lights in church, the altar stripped of the bright paraments, the flowers, the banners, and everything else – gone. It looks really plain when all that is gone, empty.

Imagine being a disciple though, the day after the first Good Friday. You’re now waking up after the worst day of your life! The man you thought to be God’s Messiah, sent to save His people, was killed like a common criminal. He’d literally walked on water! But He didn’t do anything to stop the lies. The arrest, the accusations, the “trial” – He just took it. He was bloodied, beaten, humiliated, and then stripped naked and nailed to a cross and raised up for all the world to see. And then He died – He died! And now, you’re waking up the next day, and have realized that yesterday wasn’t just a horrible dream. Now what?

As Paul finished his letter to the Colossians, he might have felt that same despair. He kept a stiff upper lip all the way through his letter, but now, he knows, he might be wishing farewell to these people for the last time. He’s in prison and chained to a guard. He’s made the best of it, continuing to spread the Word, but there’s always that nagging question, “What if Emperor Nero isn’t such a nice guy?”

We can read these few short verses and easily miss some of the seeming futility. Paul urges his readers to read the letters to the Laodiceans, where the Church has been planted and is growing. But in John’s Revelation, Jesus spoke differently of this church: **“So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”** Today, it’s a Russian military base. Paul could easily have become downhearted. While many heard and believed, countless others ignored his message, twisted its meaning, or turned violently against him.

And so, he finished this latest message strongly – **“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.”** We need Paul’s strength today. Our “Christian society” is becoming a lot more hostile to Christ’s teachings. And Paul couldn’t give us his strength. Most of us don’t have a tenth his energy and willpower. But he left us something even better. **“Grace be with you.”**

Jesus’ birth was Grace. His life was Grace. His death for us was Grace. And His resurrection – GRACE! And Paul’s not just “wishing” that we might get a glimpse of Grace, that Grace is with you. He is risen!

Prayer: God of Grace, help us to see Your Grace, feel Your Grace, and know Your Grace. Through Your Living Son, Amen.

*Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson*