

- **HELLO EVERYONE... PE... Today is Sunday, November 13th, 2022... thanks for joining...**

- **Great scene from original StarWars- Luke trying to convince Han Solo to help him rescue Leia on the death star. Han's is basically "why would I risk my skin for her?"... Luke replies (SHOW CLIP)**
 - o **L: She's rich... H: Rich?**
 - o **L: Umhm.. rich, powerful... listen if you were to rescue her the reward would be.... H: What?**
 - o **L: Well more wealth than you can imagine!**
 - o **H: I don't know... I can imagine quite a bit**
 - o **L: You'll get it! H: I better! L: You will!**

- **Minutes later Han is all in. He joined the rebellion for the promise of reward.**
- **Studying for today's message I thought of this interchange, and how Luke is a good metaphor for a distorted theology so prevalent in evangelical Christianity- the distortion that if we're just ALL IN, we can count on God to bless us with health, wealth- and meet all our circumstantial needs.**
- **I can envision the conversation going something like this, between this version of Christianity and a person wrestling with placing faith in Christ...**
 - o **S: Why should I follow Jesus? I like being in control, why should I surrender to Jesus?**
 - o **P: He's rich...**
 - o **S: Rich?**
 - o **P: Umhm.. yes, rich, powerful... listen, if you were to follow him, the reward would be...**
 - o **S: What?**
 - o **P: Well, how about the cattle on a thousand hills? God's got em, and they can be yours! God will meet ALL YOUR NEEDS according to his riches! Just trust Him and the reward will be more than you can ask or imagine!**
 - o **S: I don't know... I can imagine quite a bit**
 - o **P: You'll get it! Just do everything right, and you'll be blessed!**
 - o **S: I better!**
 - o **P: You will! And if you don't... well, the problem must be with you. You just aren't deserving.**

- **My friends, I've witnessed firsthand just how dangerous it can be to claim promises God hasn't made. Bad theology isn't just disillusioning or pride-fueling- when bad theology fails in the midst of peoples very real lives, it can be utterly devastating.**

- **But here's the thing! In our passage today Paul not only proclaims that the believer has received God's riches, but God's Glorious riches... riches that truly are beyond anything we can ask or imagine!**

- **This is what Paul will reveal- or rather, he will show us what God has revealed about the glorious riches of the fullness of the Word of God. BUT FIRST....**

✠ Circle back to last week.... *The Gospel proclaimed*

Colossians 1:23 ...if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

- **The Gospel has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. That is a HUGE claim, and Paul knew very well that within the expanse of the Roman Empire everyone hadn't heard the gospel, much less the entire world. WHAT DID HE MEAN?**
- **ONE THEORY is the idea of general revelation we see in Romans 1. That God's power and divine nature are clearly seen by all people in creation. We can't say "I didn't know God existed", because creation is continually crying out, "God exists!!"**
- **But this probably isn't what Paul means- he clearly refers to the Gospel, the revelation of who JESUS IS and WHAT JESUS has done. This is not something discernable from just observing creation.**
- **More likely is the image from Paul's own day of a ruler, an emperor, issuing a decree. While this decree is fully stated from the beginning, it will take significant time for the emperor's messengers to deliver and proclaim the decree throughout the empire. Paul is saying "The gospel has been decreed to all of creation"... and he goes on to say, 'And I am one of those messengers-servants, now making it known to you'.**
- **THIS BRINGS US to verses 24-27.**
- **About twenty five years ago someone showed me this passage and it changed the trajectory of my life. Perhaps only second to Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27 has been the passage embodying the scriptural truth at the core of my entire pastoral calling- the stunning New Testament message of God's Grace, of the believer's union with Christ. Lets read it...**

Colossians 1:24-27 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.

- **OKAY- Paul begins this thought by giving us a glimpse into his own situation, moreso, into his heart. He tells the Colossian believers that his role in their lives has been something of...**

✠ **Great cost and great joy**

Colossians 1:24 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.

- **This text is difficult to adequately translate into English, and at first read is a bit confusing. What does Paul mean when he says HE is 'filling up'- or experiencing- what is still lacking in regards to Christ's affliction, or suffering?**
- **FIRST, the context- and virtually all of Paul's writing- makes it clear that nothing was lacking in Christ's sacrifice at the cross. As we've seen, Vs 15-19 is one of the NT's greatest proclamations of Christ's total victory and absolute sufficiency for the reconciliation of all things to God.**
- **The idea Paul expresses here is very personal and unique to him. Basically, he says it gives him great joy to suffer on behalf of the church, because his suffering may deflect, or possibly reduce the suffering of the church itself.**

- **He's saying something like "suffering will come to us as we live out our faith in Christ, but I hope to reduce your suffering – you, the body of Christ- by taking this suffering onto myself. And even though this comes at great cost to myself, it gives me even greater joy.**
- **You see for Paul, suffering wasn't some badge of honor or evidence of his righteousness. His suffering was the result of his love for the church- AND his love of the church was itself an expression of his love of God.**
- **The NT writers speak a lot about suffering and persecution, and how for some believers it will be inevitable. But this teaching about Christian suffering has been distorted as well. The idea that when things don't go the way we want, "well, it's because I'm a Christian and therefore people are against me"... well, that does happen, but it might also be because you are being obnoxious.**
- **It can also be tempting to view suffering as a source of identity, where people will frame their whole lives in terms of adversity against the 'enemies of God', and therefore if you disagree with them or are against them in any way, then you are persecuting them, and you are against God.**
- **A good corrective here is found in 1 Peter 2... I'm reading a few excerpts, starting around vs 12...**

¹²Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; **(God will never lead us to violate...)** live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

(Who was the emperor? NERO!)

- **Peter goes on to say that even when we live this way, suffering may come... then in vs 19...**

¹⁹For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. **(HERE's our example...)**

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

- **HEAR! When our lives- words, actions- express the love, goodness, patience, integrity, and kindness of God- even when we are different from the surround culture- this is ATTRACTIVE to people.**
- **Scripture says, YES, at times opposition and even suffering may come- and when it does, don't respond with anger, defensiveness, and all out efforts to defeat our enemies. Rather, respond by loving your enemies. Listening, seeking to understand, seeking to extend the God given human dignity in every person, even when it is hard! By doing good. Respond by bearing up with humility and joy, not with anger or fear. Most importantly, respond by placing our hope and trust in God, not in human power.**

- **And so Paul says “it gives me joy to suffer on behalf of Christ’s body, which is the church”. AND NOW, with God’s message to the church in mind, Paul says:**

Colossians 1:25 *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.*

- **This is NIV. “The word of God in its fullness” is also translated “fully carry out (or completely preach) the word of God.” KJV says “fulfill the word of God.” In ‘The Message’ Eugene Peterson translates Paul saying “I am...”**

✠ Laying out the whole Truth

- **However it’s translated, you can sense the energy in Paul’s voice... “THERE’S something I’m about to say, and if I didn’t say it, the Gospel would be incomplete. In fact, what I’m about to say is THE COMPLETENESS of the Gospel. Everything God has been doing and saying for all generations has been working toward THIS GLORIOUS TRUTH.**
- **THIS TRUTH is something that up to now has been a mystery.. in God’s timing it has been kept hidden. BUT IT’S NOT HIDDEN ANYMORE. YES, It’s a mystery, but it’s a mystery that has now...**

✠ The Mystery revealed

Colossians 1:26 *the word of God in its fullness... the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.*

- **FEW important things here! Stay with me....**
- **The Colossian church was predominantly gentile, but also included Jews. AND, the false teaching threatening the church- to some degree- asserted that it wasn’t enough to trust in Christ, these new believers also had to go back and take on the law and traditions of the Old Covenant- OT.**
- **SO, When Paul speaks of the mystery God kept hidden for ages and generations, he is referring to the history of God’s work through Israel.**
- **“There was something God was doing, working toward all along through his people, the Israelites. Through the law, through the prophets. But even the prophets weren’t able to understand it.**
- **In 1 Peter 1, Peter says this...**

1 Peter 1:10-11 *Concerning this salvation (What God did In Christ), the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.*

- **They had glimpses, they sensed that God was working toward something, but they couldn’t yet see it. It was hidden, it was a mystery.**
- **It’s HARD for us to grasp the significance of this, but a HUGE part of this mystery was that IN CHRIST God would FULLY incorporate the gentiles- the unclean “OTHERS”... all those who are different... FULLY into God’s work of salvation.**
- **Again, we can see the prophets had a glimpse of this in what Isaiah writes in the Messianic prophecy...**

Isaiah 49:6 *“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant- to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those*

of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

- **Speaking of the coming messiah, Isaiah says “It’s not enough for you just to restore Israel... you will be a light to the gentiles, that this salvation will reach the ends of the earth”.... And some seven hundred years later, Paul would write to the Colossians “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Christ, the messiah), and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.**
- **But what Isaiah didn’t expect, what no-one saw coming, was that IN CHRIST both the Jews and the gentiles (The insiders and the outsiders) would be EQUAL, SHARERS TOGETHER in the Grace of God, with no barriers separating them. In EPHESIANS 2 Paul says...**

Ephesians 2:14-16 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

Ephesians 3:2-3, 6 *Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

- **Paul cries out... You don’t have to go back into the law, you don’t have to take on the crushing burden of religious performance... Because EVERYTHING GOD was working to say, HE HAS NOW FULLY SAID. And the FULLNESS of what God has to say is JESUS.**
- **NOTE: the word “DISCLOSED”... some translate “mystery that has been REVEALED”- the Greek word has the sense of MANIFESTED. God’s revelation isn’t just another sacred text. What God has to say has come to us, taken on humanity, the word has been made flesh, we have seen him, and WORD, the FULLNESS OF WHAT GOD HAS SAID IN CHRIST... it can only be described as being...**

† Glorious riches

Colossians 1:27a *To them (the Lord’s people) God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery (pause)*

- **THIS IS DRAMATIC. Paul is building toward a climax here. He’s about to lay out the BIG reveal... he says “CHURCH! Believers! God has chosen to reveal to YOU this mystery, so that THROUGH YOU this mystery may be revealed to the gentiles- to ALL PEOPLE- and this mystery is nothing less than the GLORIOUS RICHES OF GOD.**
- **When we read Paul’s letters, we will see he is prone to superlatives. To emotional language. Paul describes God’s goodness, what God has done and continues to do, in overwhelming terms. It’s like Paul is straining to come up with words that just begin to describe the magnitude of what God has done, the MAGNITUDE of what is NOW true of us IN CHRIST.**
- **When Paul told the Philippian church that “MY GOD WILL MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS”... he wasn’t talking about the temporary external needs common to all humanity. We all have circumstantial needs**

and God knows this! But the GREAT PROMISE, the glorious riches that EVERY BELIEVER HAS FULLY RECEIVED, is far greater, and is ALWAYS PRESENT, no matter what a given day may bring. CONSIDER WHAT WE SEE IN EPH 3....

Ephesians 3:14-21 For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

– **And so to the Colossians, and to us, Paul now proclaims the GREAT HOPE of the Gospel...**

✠ The Great Hope

Colossians 1:27 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.

- **Imagine being one of Colossian believers. Your faith is profound, but it is simple. From our perspective today, almost primitive. THERE ARE teachers in your midst saying “Listen, if you really want to be right with God, if you really want the best God has for you, HERE’S THE LIST OF EVERYTHING you have to do TO GET TO GOD. And if you do this all really well, if you are one of the elite performers, THEN GOD will really love you, then he will bless you.**
- **Paul says NO! You don’t have to perform to get to God, GOD HAS COME TO YOU. IN CHRIST, God has not only come to you, His presence now dwells IN YOU. From your perspective you may think you’ve given your life to God, but the truth is that CHRIST HAS GIVEN HIS LIFE TO YOU.**
- **This is why Paul could proclaim throughout his letters that IN CHRIST we are HOLY, BLAMELESS, FREE FROM ACCUSATION, RIGHTEOUS, GOD’S WORKMANSHIP, and DEARLY LOVED.**
- **TAKE THIS ONE STEP DEEPER. In NT/NC we see that the believer is both IN CHRIST, and CHRIST IS IN US. These two concepts reinforce each other, but they aren’t exactly the same.**
- **FIRST... we have...**
 - **The Hope that we are IN CHRIST**
- **This is what is NOW true of us as disciples of Jesus. You see the scriptures there- I encourage you to go read them... if you do, you’ll see them proclaim that IN CHRIST...**
 - **You have received the gift of eternal life.**
 - **There is now NO CONDEMNATION**
 - **We are all members of Christ’s body, and we belong to each other**
 - **There is no longer Jew nor gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.**
 - **We are all children of God through faith**

- *We have God's wisdom, we are righteous, holy, and redeemed*
- *We are new creations!*
- *In Christ we possess the peace of God, even that transcends our understanding, and this is a peace that will guard our hearts and our minds.*
- *This is incredible. This is overwhelming. But it's still not the full story.*
- *NOT ONLY are we IN CHRIST, with all that means: we possess...*
- **The Hope that Christ is IN US**
- *Trying to imagine a metaphor, a story, that starts to capture this... best I can do so far...*
- *Imagine you were an orphan, and you've been adopted into a new family. You're not a second class child, you are a full member of the family, as if you always had been. As a member of the family, there are now things that are TRUE OF YOU.*
 - *You have a new name. A new identity.*
 - *You have new brothers and sisters, a new family.*
 - *You have a new inheritance- both for the future and for the present.*
 - *AND, you have a new mom and a new dad- and everything about the family, the life of the family, flows from them.*
 - *BUT, IN THIS SCENARIO, your new mom and dad are distant. You know them, your life has radically changed because of them, but it's more like you know ABOUT THEM.*
- *This is where the metaphor breaks down. Because what Paul- what God- is saying is that in our story the mom and dad are the Father and the Son- and they are NOT DISTANT. Not only are we IN THEM, but in a mystery no metaphor can fully capture, they are IN US. By the Spirit, God, In-Christ, has placed his very life INSIDE US, and he dwells with us, in union with us, always.*
- *And so at the most basic level, this means we haven't just been called into a new WAY OF LIFE, we have been given a new SOURCE OF LIFE.*
- *And Paul completes his thought by saying this NEW SOURCE OF LIFE- CHRIST IN YOU... this is our...*

- **The Hope of Glory**

- *Christ is in you, and this is the Hope of Glory. Just a final thought here. IN ONE SENSE, because we are IN CHRIST, and Christ is IN US, we have absolute assurance of our hope of eternity. That we will fully come to know the GLORY OF GOD in the future of eternity. This is the HOPE of the NOT YET, the hope of what IS TO COME. THIS IS GOOD NEWS!*
- *But it's not all Paul has in mind. Given the broader context of his full letter, we know Paul is also pointing to our experience the Hope of God's glory NOW. TODAY. IN THE MIDST OF LIFE AS IT REALLY IS.*
- *This isn't just the hope that we see WILL SEE the Glory of God in the life we WILL HAVE, but that the Glory of God WILL BE SEEN IN US, RIGHT NOW, in the life we ALREADY HAVE.*

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 *With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. ¹² We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

- *So, what does it look like for us to be bearers of the Glory of God? This is what Paul will spend the rest of his letter unpacking, and we will continue with that, next week*