

***God's Hidden Treasure:  
King Jesus***

Colossians 1:24-2:7

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(This series on Colossians is drawn from pericope divisions, titles and summaries prepared by N.T. Wright, *Paul For Everyone – The Prison Letters*, London, Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2002.)

Have you ever cut a piece of rope? Know what happens to the end when you do? They begin to fray – some going in this direction, some in that. So, you need to take action to keep the ends together or there will, very quickly, be no useable rope left.

All sorts of stuff in life can cut into the rope of our life. And unless there is something that keeps the strands together, very soon we'll be all over the place. Frayed.

That's true as individuals.

That's also true for us as a community.

What keeps us from fraying?

What holds us together?

The answer, in short, is living a life that revolves completely around, and draws only from Jesus Christ.



It comes together in summary in **2:6-7**.

All the stuff in Paul's letter to the Colossians that is before leads up to those verses.

We'll look at them in a minute.

And the stuff that comes after draws from those verses.

We'll look at them next week.

Please join me in reciting these key verses for keeping our lives from fraying apart:

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,  
continue to live your lives in him,  
rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,  
just as you were taught,  
abounding in thankfulness.*

Before a wedding, I encourage the bride and groom to take their vows and print them out.

Paste 'em on the fridge, dash of the car, and by their computer monitor.

Repeat them again and again.

You might want to do this with these verses.

A life centred in Jesus.

Let's say these words again:

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,  
continue to live your lives in him,  
rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,  
just as you were taught,  
abounding in thankfulness.*

If you think that this sounds a little tight, a little narrow, a little exclusive, well....

"... *You ain't seen nothin' yet...*"

It's not just a life centred on Jesus, it is all of history that is centred on him.

Sound rather bizarre to claim that?

Have a look at **verse 25 and 26**.

Paul says that he's been preaching "*the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints...*"

Don't think of **mystery** in the sense of an Angela Lansbery sort of mystery with puzzles, clues and loose ends.

And don't think of it as a secret society with rituals that others won't get to know about, like happens when engineers graduate from university and go behind closed doors for their iron ring ceremony, the details of which they are NOT to divulge to anyone outside.

Rather – think a king and his trusted associates, planning for the governing and care of the empire. And in that plan there are details that involve overthrowing an enemy. Those details, obviously, will not be made public. But the king and his associates will begin to role them out. And, at the right time all will become plain enough.

Daniel 2:19 & 29 use that idea referring to the eternal counsel of God being revealed to his servants.

1 Corinthians 2:7 speaks about the plan that was decreed, but hidden.

God is working to reclaim the world he made.

He is rolling out the plan to make right a universe warped by evil and sin.

But he will only reveal it at the right time and to the right people.

At the end of the day the plan that God declared from the Great Cosmic Throneroom, that has been held back so that enemies of the king wouldn't see it, is made clear,

and that plan

that mystery is this, **verse 27** – do you see it?

***Christ in you,  
the hope of glory.***

If you're hoping for **glory**, for bright light and life that is good

- which is what **glory** means -

if you're hoping for the **glorious** – the really good and bright and beautiful life

some where

some how

some day

you will find it through.....

***Christ in you.***

Here's a prophetic statement that we read together last Sunday morning.  
From Matthew 4:16, quoting Isaiah 9:2. Tell me what you immediately think of:  
*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.*

People in darkness – the opposite of glory.  
Have seen a great light – they get the glory.  
What comes to your mind?

The coming of Jesus, right?  
If that's your first reflex, your first instinct – ***guard that!***  
Because you're absolutely right.

And as much as you are absolutely right, you can equally be absolutely sure that  
there will be people and groups and arguments coming at you telling you that you are  
absolutely numb-nutty ***wrong!***

They may do it nicely, or shake their heads looking at you with sympathy as if you are  
a bit mis-guided or senile, or they may be very irritated or even angry with you.

They will try to tell you that true enlightenment comes with different sorts of spiritual  
experiences or disciplines,  
or that hope for the human race has to come from within ourselves,  
or that as we develop scientifically and morally as a race new hope will rise....  
....that glory can come that way....

Don't buy it.  
Stick to the basics of what you have received.

### ***Christ in you.***

Colossians is one of the shortest, most concise descriptions of the Christian faith.

If you want a longer description of the same teaching, check out Romans 8:1-11:

The human race, and all creation, is heading for death.

No laws or religious experience can change that.

But Christ Jesus can.

And he sends his Spirit to live inside those that surrender to him

As a hope of eternal resurrection -

*he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies  
also through his Spirit that dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)*

### ***Christ in you – the hope of glory.***

**V.28** – It is **HE** whom we proclaim....

The secret plan of God is not first of all a map of events, or a timetable, or a series of  
spiritual practices and rituals.

It is a person.

It is Jesus.

[N.T. Wright TNTC *Colossians*]

....warning **everyone** and teaching **everyone** in all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone** mature in Christ...

Notice the word "everyone" repeated three times?

It is not just a select group of insiders that can get hold of this;

Only those smart enough, or old enough, or rich enough,  
or studied enough, or experienced enough, or with the right personality type,  
or of the right gender.

No! Everyone can find wisdom that sorts life out in the proper way.

Everyone can grow up spiritually.

But it all happens....

***In Christ.***

That's what Paul toils and struggles for, says **verse 29**.

He wants believers in Colosse and Laodicea and area – **chapter 2, now, v.2-3** -

*to be encouraged in their hearts and united in love,  
so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding  
and have the knowledge of God's mystery,  
that is,  
Christ himself,  
in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

A couple of things from these verses.

Number one – as much as we just said that the Christian life is a life lived in surrender to Jesus, so it is **ALSO** a life lived in partnership with **other believers**.

We cannot find encouragement, we cannot gain understanding, we will not grow in knowledge unless we do it together.

Remember my opening picture – of the rope?

Any rock climber or sailor can tell you that a frayed rope has no strength and is of zero use. And any single strand out of that braided line is also of zero use.

You need the rope intact, all strands braided tightly together, ends secure.

Only then is it safe and strong to use.

Paul wants them to *have the **knowledge** of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself....*

The word here is not just knowing **about** something.

But **really, deeply** knowing it – through and through.

The word for *knowing* is *gnosis*.

But when you **REALLY** know something you add the prefix *epi-..... epi- gnosis*.

Paul wants the Colossians, and Laodiceans, and us

to have the **epi-knowledge** of God's mystery

to **epi-know** Christ himself;

to really, deeply, richly, fully know Him.

It's one thing to say, "Yeah, yeah. I know that Jesus stuff and what it's about."

No!!!

Do you **epi-know** Jesus?

Like really deeply richly know what he is about, and what he thinks, and what he loves, and how he cares?

Do you not only know **about** it, but know it **personally**?

Is Christ – **IN** – you?

**Verse 3** – *in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

all the treasures are **hidden** – think gold mine, you go down the shaft, into the mine, get out your pick axe and start swinging.

you go down into a relationship with Christ, surrender and open yourself up to him, and as you go deeper into that you start to excavate all sorts of wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom, beginning way back in the book of Proverbs, is the big picture, wide sweeping understanding of how life is meant to work; how God designed this creation thing to function – big picture. Doesn't have to do with smart or book learning. Some of the wisest people I have ever met had very little formal education. But they knew how life worked.

And you need that before knowledge, before figuring out the details; before getting the specific insights.

Knowledge without wisdom is a waste of time.

Details without the big picture make no sense.

In the bible when you see the words "wisdom" and "knowledge" together, like in Romans 11:33 or 1 Corinthians 12:8, "wisdom" always comes first. Always.

Verse three tells us that you can only figure out the details of life when you put them in the context of the Wisdom named Jesus.

**Verse four** – there will be lots of people that will try to tell you that you're wrong.

And they will make it sound very convincing.

They will come to you with all sorts of bright ideas and spiritual possibilities that sound very convincing.

Colosse was like Ottawa – all sorts of different religions and spiritualities around. Many cultures. And it was considered offensive to say that one was more right than the other. You were considered as living **against** values of the Roman Empire. Being inclusive was seen as part of civic duty.

How dare you suggest that following Jesus is better than some forms of native spirituality!

Are you suggesting that only you are right, and that all Muslims are wrong?

Are you implying that Buddhists are misguided?

Don't be so obsessed with Jesus.

As someone said, always remember that after grace comes attack.

After you surrender your life to Jesus, and prayerfully begin to live for Jesus, you can

expect to face resistance and opposition.

After grace comes attack. [Wright, TNTC *Colossians*]

Five people made profession of faith last Sunday.

I'd be very surprised if they haven't already encountered some significant challenge or temptation in their faith walk this past week.

In **verse 5** Paul praises the Colossians.

*I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

The word for "*firmness*" is the same word that Dr. Luke uses in Acts 3:7 to describe the healing given to the ankles of the paralytic at the temple gate when he met Peter and John.

strong and stable

no stumbling or falling

able to walk and run and leap and dance.

The Colossian church, like Calvin church, was a very small community in a relatively large and diverse and suspicious, even hostile city.

They faced all sorts of challenges.

Maligned as being against Empire values – "*It's not the Canadian value to be so narrow in your thinking*".

Misunderstood and characterized – did you know that people suggested that Christians were cannibals (*after all they gathered, like we're doing here tonight, to eat some guy's flesh and drink his blood*) and they engaged in incest (*they **loved** each other as **brothers and sisters** – and in the sex-charged environment of the Roman Empire..... no different than Canada today.... what **else** could that mean but incest?*).

And yet – facing all that the little church stood firm.

So Paul coaches them, **verse 6-7** -

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,  
continue to live your lives in him,  
rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,  
just as you were taught,  
abounding in thankfulness.*

Our life is based on the inconceivable idea of God coming to earth as a human being, killed at the hands of religious and civic authorities, dying and rising again, claiming that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him, ascending to heaven, sending his Spirit's Presence, and promising to return one day.

That's what we anchor our life on – *rooted in him*

That's what we seek to develop and nurture and grow – *built up in him*

No Jesus-**AND**  
No Jesus-**OR**

No compromise.  
In this together.  
Sticking to the basics that we've been taught all along.

And doing so **thankfully**.  
Living our faith in a winsome way before a city who watches.

I feel badly that somehow as evangelicals we have allowed ourselves to be given the popular image of being negative, angry, reactionary and phobic. I know that partly this is simply bad press and maybe even deliberate misrepresentation. But we have to admit that partly, at least, there's a measure of truth to it.

Well, we can't control how others behave.  
But lets at least agree among ourselves, here at Calvin that for us:

*As we therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,  
we will continue to live our lives in him,  
rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,  
just as we were taught,  
abounding in thankfulness.*

Can we say that?  
Will you pledge that?

Join me -

*As we therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,  
we will continue to live our lives in him,  
rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,  
just as we were taught,  
abounding in thankfulness.*

Amen!