

Christ in you...

The message of Colossians



Part 4: The Way of Jesus

INTRODUCTION – Way, Truth, Life

John 14:6

As Western Evangelicals, we will be tempted to separate the TRUTH of Jesus from the WAY of Jesus. But people will see the TRUTH of Jesus when we follow in his WAY. And that leads to LIFE.

DINE IN – Learning The Text In Its Context

- REJOICING IN SUFFERING: Paul is apparently writing this letter from prison (4:3, 18). His beatings and imprisonments are not meaningless but purposeful and powerful and therefore worth rejoicing in. His rejoicing is not masochistic, but similar to a mother who rejoices with each passing labour pain, knowing she is one step closer to seeing her newborn baby.
- WAS CHRIST'S SUFFERING REALLY INCOMPLETE?: Yes and no. Christ's suffering was enough to show us God's love and to make possible our salvation apart from any religious system. But Christ's personal suffering does not complete the task of communicating that message to the world. Paul's suffering was a suffering of communication, the cost of fulfilling the Great Commission and thereby completing Christ's mission (John 10:16; Matthew 28:18-20).
- SERVANTHOOD: In 1:23 Paul said he was a servant of the gospel. In 1:25 he claims to be a servant of the church. His identity is not that of "big man in charge", but servant of all. Church leaders are servants of their fellow soldiers, more like the cooks than the Generals.
- THE CHURCH: Paul uses the word "church" (Greek, *ekklesia*) to mean the entirety of the Body of Christ AND to refer to local gatherings of the family of faith (e.g., 1:24; 4:15). The Greek word simply means a gathering of people for a purpose, which is true of us whenever and wherever we come together in Jesus' name.
- THE WORD OF GOD: When referring to "God's Word" the biblical writers are usually referring to the message itself rather than a document containing the message. Ultimately, God's word is Jesus (John 1:1-18; Hebrews 1:1-2; Revelation 19:113) and his message (Luke 5:1; Acts 6:7; 8:14). The Bible is "God's Word" in a secondary sense. To make it primary is idolatry.
- THE SECRET: The "mystery" (Greek, *mysterion*) of the Gospel is that Gentiles and Jews are together experiencing the same privilege of Christ-in-us. The "you" of 1:27 is plural (e.g., y'all), putting the emphasis on the beautiful miracle of Christ in the middle of the diverse-yet-unified Christian community, rather than our typical Western emphasis of Christ in the individual Christian.
- WE PROCLAIM HIM: Jesus is the centrepiece of our message.
- EVERYONE: Radically inclusive language (used 3 times in the Greek of verse 28), only hinted at in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 66:18-21).
- ADMONISHING & TEACHING: Correcting as well as instructing. Do we have the sense of family security to make room for both?
- WISDOM: Beyond knowledge, wisdom helps us live "off the page", putting principles into practice in relational contexts, rather than legalistically trying to apply Scripture like a rule-book.

- PARTNERING LABOUR: Notice the division of labour of 1:29, where Paul is actively involved, but he functions on the power that God supplies – Lit., "with his energy (Greek, *energeia*) that he energizes in me in power (Greek, *dunamis*)".
- THE SECRET (PART 2): Jesus – the source of all wisdom and knowledge.
- DECEIVING ARGUMENTS: Whatever they are, keeping Jesus in the centre seems to be the God-given way of combating them.
- ABSENT-YET-PRESENT: Paul is so tuned in to the Colossian's reality, so other-centred, that he feels almost present with them, going through their experiences with them in spirit.
- JESUS IS LORD: We become Christians (meaning "Christ-follower") when we choose to embrace Jesus as our Lord, our Master, our Mentor, our Guide, our God. But this is not a one-time act of momentary faith. IF we embrace Jesus as our Lord, we will continue to follow him as our Lord.
- THANKFULNESS: Gratitude (Greek, *eucharistia*). The fundamental attitudinal disposition of someone who embraces the Gospel of grace instead of the way of religion.

TAKE OUT – Applying The Text To Our Context

- TAKE OUT #1: Jesus is our Word, our Wisdom, and our Source of all truth. We proclaim him. We learn from him. We make him central to our lives. So, while we should study the Bible up close, as under a magnifying glass, we must then step back, take a deep breath, appreciate the big picture, and refocus on Jesus. If our message does not revolve around a PERSON (Jesus), then we are not communicating the Word of God.
- TAKE OUT #2: Paul uses athletic, military, agricultural, and architectural imagery within these few short verses. The biblical writers tend to prefer earthy language and cultural imagery over pseudo-sophisticated theological jargon. Our mandate today is to translate the Word of God, the message of Jesus, into culturally relevant imagery.
- TAKE OUT #3: God desires to reveal what has been hidden, to tell his secrets, and to solve spiritual mysteries through Jesus. The secret is out; the mystery is solved; all by God's choice. God wants you to know him. He is not playing hard to get.
- TAKE OUT #4: We should reject all private and privileged revelations that are not plainly available to all of God's people.

CONCLUSION – Unity As Evangelism

John 17:20-23

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one thing that most challenged, puzzled, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

2. Read our key text, in a variety of translations if possible. a) What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why? b) In what ways are you (or have you, or could you) suffering along with Jesus and Paul in order to complete the mission of Jesus and invite new sheep into the fold? c) In what ways do you experience "Christ in you" as well as living "in Christ"? d) To what extent is your life characterized by overflowing gratitude? Why or why not? e) What contemporary metaphors could be useful for us to communicate aspects of the Gospel today? Go ahead – take some time trying to communicate the message of Jesus using a variety of contemporary metaphors.

SO WHAT...

3. Read Christ's prayer for us in John 17:20-23 and talk about the implications. Then close by uniting your prayers with Christ's.

Bruy Cavay @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, March 2, 2008