

Our reading today is from Colossians, chapter one, verses one through 14. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother to God's holy people and policy, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we pray for you. Because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people. The faith and love that spring from the hopes stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the Gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the Gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. You learned it from Epiphra, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will. Through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way. Bearing fruit in every good work. Growing in the knowledge of God. Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. So that you may have great endurance and patience. And giving joyful thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, the word of the Lord. Okay, now we had somebody that was going to read the Gospel, and they're not here, so I don't even know what is the Gospel reading there? Luke ten, Luke ten, all of Luke 10:25 to 37. Okay, would you please stand for the reading of the Gospel, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus teacher.

He asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the law? He replied, how do you read it? He answered, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. You have answered correctly. Jesus replied, do this and you will live. But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, and who is my neighbor? In reply, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happen to be going down the same road. And when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite when he came to the place and saw him pass by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was. And when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

The next day, he took out two DA nariyai and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. Now, which of these three do you think was a neighbor? To the man who fell into the hands of robbers, the expert in the law replied, the one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, go and do likewise. This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Except for our kids, who are pardon me, the table the table never got moved or we need some big guys. Yep. Right? Yeah. Come with me. Sorry about that. I love it. I love it. Well, let's pray for the kids. Well, heavenly Father, we thank you for our young people today. We thank you that you are so strong you could move more than a table. You can move mountains, you can move our hearts. We pray that you, Lord, would move the hearts of these children today to know you, love you, and always walk in your ways for the glory of your name. Bless their teachers. Bless them in Jesus name.

Amen. All right. God bless you all as you go. All right. Well, I want to welcome today Wright and Beth Wall, who are here to worship with us. Wright is an Anglican priest. He is serving with a ministry called Navigators that particularly has helped college students, but even goes beyond that, they're incredible in terms of helping people to memorize very important parts of the Bible scriptures. I know that their memorization system was something that I used when I first became a Christian, and those are verses that still stick with me today. So I'm very grateful for the ministry of the navigators, but right. We're grateful to have you here today to bring the word of God to us. Welcome.

The name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. It's a real privilege to be here with you.

Thank you so much, Patrick and Susan, for inviting us. That's a serious table. You could sacrifice aslan on that table with no problem couple aslan, it's pretty big. So I'm grateful to be here for a lot of reasons. I've known Patrick for long. I've known of Patrick a lot longer than I've known him, and I'm just grateful for your faithful ministry over the years and very grateful to share this pulpit. So my life changed pretty dramatically on January 8 1994. That was a day where I made a commitment to love, honor, and cherish. And when you make a commitment like that, you don't really know what the future's going to hold. And looking back after almost 28 years, it's amazing to see the way that God has led us and directed us and worked in our lives in so many ways. There's six of us now. We have four kids. We've gone through at least two career transitions, maybe more, three master's degrees, various things. And I want to ask you just to start off here, just to get you thinking, when have you experienced a major life transition that would have far and unforeseen implications on your life?

Maybe when you moved to a new city, when you went to a new school, when you selected a college, when you took a job, when you got married, when you had a child, when you joined the military. Well, the people in the house, Church and Colossae had made a major decision to follow Christ, and this decision would have major implications for their life, implications that they couldn't foresee. In this opening 14 verses, and Colossians gives us a window into some of these changes. It gives us a picture of life in the kingdom of God for a new and small body of believers in a world that was hostile to their faith. In fact, in a day, these were home churches. I would suspect it would be about the size of tree alight. That would be the church in Colossae at the time when Paul was writing there. Kind of amazing to think. And I want us to take a look at this church's life and think a little bit about what their life together might mean for our life as followers of Christ. And I'm going to do that in three sections. I'm going to try to anyway.

First, we're going to look at three general attributes of the church in Colosse. Second, we're going to go look at two general things that Paul is praying for, for their future. And third, we're going to look at some of the specialized roles we see represented in this opening section of Colossians. The three general attributes of the Church and Colossians that you see are something that Paul talks a lot about. You see faith, you see hope and you see love. These three things, faith, hope and love are, for Paul, the core, the essentials, the sin of quandon of the Christian life. As Paul writes in One Corinthians 13, when everything else passes away, the three things that remain are faith, hope, and love. Let's look at faith first. Paul praises the Colossians for their faith. Verse three. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus. Paul praises the Colossians for their faith in Jesus Christ, their faith in the good news of the Gospel. So just real quickly to digress what is the Gospel? And there are a few verses that do a good job in only one verse of sort of explaining the Gospel.

There's a bunch of them, I'm just going to pick two. Corinthians 5:21 says this for our sake he God made him Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God. It's a great simple one verse statement, it's a good one to memorize. We talked about, we put a plugin for memorizing versus this is not part of the topical memory system. That's sort of the navigator's bread and butter, but probably should be second. Corinthians 5:21 for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin that in him we might become the righteousness of God. See, the Colossians had come to realize the truth about themselves, that they were separated from a holy God by their sin. But then the good news was that God had made a provision for them and that if they would put their faith in Jesus Christ, he would take the sin that was on us and put it on Jesus. And he would take Jesus righteousness and he would put it on us. That is in a nutshell, the Gospel. And we see the results of their faith. In verses twelve to 15, if you've got Colossians one open, you can kind of follow along with me.

But in verse twelve it says the Father qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light that's what happens when we receive the Gospel, we get qualified. We were unqualified and now we're qualified. Verse 13 he has delivered us from the domain of darkness, he rescued us, he ransomed us. We were held in captivity and darkness and he came to get us and he transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. And then lastly, verse 14, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Now, let's look at hope. Back to verses three through five. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you

in heaven, Paul gives thanks for their hope in their eternal inheritance. And just like faith, it needs an object. You don't just have faith, you have faith in something. They had faith in Jesus Christ, they had faith in the Gospel. Likewise, they had hope in something in their eternal home that they would spend with Jesus in the new heavens and the new earth. Now, when Paul uses the word hope, he doesn't use the word hope like I do, right?

I hope it will not rain today, but I have zero control over that. I hope tonight that we will have tacos, but I have no idea what breath is prepared. I hope that the Tar Heels beat Duke, but I don't know how any of those things are going to go. When Paul talks about things, about hope, he talks about things that we're sure of. He's sure about these promises of God for the future, because they are based on God's faithfulness in the past. That's why we can have hope for what he did in the past. What he did in the past in saving the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt and bringing them into the Holy Land based on Jesus' resurrection. The sure hope that because he was raised from the dead, we will be raised from the dead. Theologian Scottie Smith defines hope this way hope is having our hearts increasingly filled with every good thing that Jesus has won for us, being certain and enthralled about the life we'll enjoy forever and the new heaven and the new earth. So much so that we'll spend the rest of our days loving mercy, working for justice, and walking humbly with our God.

So we had Paul commending the Colossians for their faith in Jesus and for their hope and where they were going. Now let's look at love. Back to verses three through five. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints. The Colossians demonstrated love for the saints. Just like hope and faith, love has to have an object that needs to be expressed. It's got to be expressed somewhere. And there's no better expression than what we read in the Gospel about the Good Samaritan, right? It's not just love. It's not just a feeling. Van Halen was wrong. It's not just something you feel for one another. It is something that gets expressed in your actions in many ways. As a guy that disciples Me said, love is an action bird. It's something you do, something that you demonstrate. It's the ultimate test of a person's faith, the love that they have for their brothers and sisters, again, not only expressing their thoughts, but in their actions. An important thing to recognize here in verse eight. Verse eight says, Epaphras has made known to us your love, your love in the Spirit.

The ability to love comes from God. It comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. We love because he first loved us. Without his love, we can't do it, no matter how hard you try. Let me just pause here and ask a few questions. Have you put your faith in Jesus? Have you put your faith in the Gospel? Are you living in light of hope? Are you loving the saints? If you answered no to any of these questions, you might think that the answer is, I got to try harder. But you'd be wrong, because that's not true. The answer is to ask God to give you the gift of faith, to ask God to fill you with hope and to ask God to fill you with love. Empowered by the spirit. So Paul is thrilled about what he's heard about them. They've got the most important things. They've got faith, they've got hope and they've got love. But notice that even though they've had a wonderful start in the kingdom life, he remains committed to their growth. It's not like they're done it's because the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint.

He tells them he's going to continue to pray for them, and he tells them he's going to pray for two things, verses nine and eleven. Read along with me. And so from the day we heard. We have not ceased to pray for you. Asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Fully pleasing to Him. Bearing fruit in every good work. And increasing in the knowledge of God. Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. For all endurance and patience with joy. Paul prays for two things, specifically, that they would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and that they would be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. He prays for knowledge and he prays for power. Let's look at these two prayers. First prayer, verse nine. That they would be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Why does he pray for these things? So that they will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in knowledge of God.

See how you think what you are filled with in your head. The knowledge that you are filled with that has an impact on what you do and how your life plays out. And where again does that understanding come from? It comes from the Lord. It's because it's a spiritual battle that we cannot win. In your own

strength, let me ask you, how do you pray for others? How do you pray for your children? How do you pray for your parents? I have to admit, I don't often pray that my children would be filled with the knowledge of God. I pray that they'll get that internship, that they'll be safe on that trip. I pray for all kinds of things other than this. But Paul informs what our prayers ought to be about. We should pray for those that he's put in our care, for their understanding, because if we get that right, other things will be right. How do you pray for your children, your friends? How do you pray for your aging parents? Paul prays for transformation of their mind that will result in transformation of their lives. The second prayer is that they would be strengthened with all power according to his glorious name.

Again, the battle belongs to the Lord. It's not our power. We can't do it in our strength, although I so often try to, can only be done in the strength of the Lord. And if we're strengthened with his power according to his glorious name, it tells us that we will have endurance, that we will have patience with joy. It tells us that we will be thankful, giving thanks to the Father. See, walking with God for a lifetime requires strength, God's strength. I want to make one more observation about this opening part of Colossians, and it's about the plurality of specialized roles and gifts that we see here in Colossians. There's a pastor. The pastor taught the Colossians, he shepherded them. Verse seven says, just as you learned it, talking about the Gospel from a pastor, our beloved fellow servant, he is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. We could put in here Patrick and Susan. They're like a pastor. They are sharing God's word as faithful ministers of Christ on all of our behalf. He brought word to Paul of what God was doing upon the church in hostile, a huge and important thing, bearing witness to what you've seen and telling people what God has done.

A pastor shows up to Paul, who's in prison, by the way, and says, you'll never believe what's happened in Colosse. Paul never went there, but he heard about what was going on there and he was encouraged, so encouraged that he wrote a letter that we all have today. Noah pastor. No letter to the Colossians, who's a faithful shepherd before witness. As I said, Paul never went to Colossi, but he wrote the book of Colossians to exhort. And exhort is more than encouraged, right? He encouraged them. But in exhort, you are calling forth out of them who they are, something inside. And he does that by encouraging them for what he always already sees in their life and telling them, this is what I'm praying for. This is what I'm expecting patiently from the Lord to develop in your life. Think about this. The Church and Colossians were his spiritual grandchildren. Maybe his great grandchildren. Maybe his great great grandchildren. See, when you read the Great Commission, it tells us to go and make disciples and to teach them to obey everything that I've commanded. That's what Jesus says, including the command to make disciples. And that's what I would say is the centerpiece of the navigators.

And a church like this, we're about spiritual generations. We're about making disciples that are going to make disciples. We want to see generations, right? So who took the gospel to Asia Minor, Turkey, where this was Paul, right? And how did it get over to Colossians? Well, a guy named Pappas brought it. Right? It is so amazing. So Paul, like a spiritual grandfather, is hearing about these good things in their life and he is sending word. So please. I've got a few letters from my grandfather and they're just like, golden, because it's like, I'm so grateful that this is going on in your life. And as you think of the future, I want you to think of these things. That's what Paul is doing here. He's saying, I'm so grateful what God has done in you. And this is where I pray to God. Timothy, it says Paul and Timothy are writing this letter. Timothy was Paul's faithful companion. He was his son in the faith. He was also from Asia Minor. He was from a place called Lystra Derby, that region. He had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. He embodied the truth of the ministry of reconciliation.

He came from both, and he was in Christ, sharing with the churches throughout Asia Minor. And it just shows that ministry is a team sport. And there's another guy that's not mentioned here in this section, but he's mentioned later in chapter four. Tychicus. Tychicus is the guy that carried the letter back. You see all these different roles that God's got going on here. You got a pastor who planted the church and came to tell Paul. You got Paul, who heard about it and sent them encouragement and exhortation. You've got Timothy that was right there with Paul, supporting and encouraging him. And you got Titus no, Tychicus, we don't have this letter. He brought it to him. And this plurality of gifts speaks to what life in the kingdom is all about. There are general characteristics of the church, like faith and hope and love. And there are also specialized roles and gifts. The April, the church planner

and shepherd and messenger. Paul, the apostle and exhorter. Timothy, the encourager, tichkis, the message bearer. Question do you have a sense of your particular role in the kingdom? It could be a role for a time. It could be an ongoing role.

It takes a while to figure out, and it's okay if you don't know. But I encourage you to ask God to give you a vision for how he wants to use your life. And if you don't know what it is, just take something that sounds kind of interesting and try it, and God will direct you from there. As I said, it's exciting to be here. Tree of Life, Anglican Church and Garner is evidence of what we read in verses five and six. He's talking about the spread of the Gospel. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the Gospel which has come to you as indeed in the whole world. It is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. Isn't that exciting? You know, we're dropping the bucket of what God is doing in this world, my son. I'll talk about Him because he's not here. When I became a pastor, I said I would never speak about Him without the permission. So sorry, Davis, if you hear the tape, but he just got back from Poland and the Ukraine and he was taking supply into the Ukraine and then he was picking up refugees and bringing them back to Poland.

Just an amazing experience for a 19 year old young man. And on Sundays he worshiped with a church in the Ukraine or a church in Poland. This is going on all over the place. God's kingdom is advancing. So encouraging tree of Life is a new community of believers that is growing in faith, hope and love. And like a paprikas, Patrick and others are faithfully teaching and establishing this church, this outpost of the Gospel and Garner. And as Paul prayed for the believers in Colossal, others afraid for you that you would be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding. So that you would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, so that you would bear fruit and so that you would increase in the knowledge of God. And they're also praying that you would be strengthened with all power according to his glorious mike. That you might endure, that you might not just endure, but you would endure with patience and joy and that you would give thanks to the Father. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for this community of faith. Thank you for the fathers and the grandfathers that faithfully shared the gospel that you caused to grow that we're here because of.

Thanks for calling Patrick and Susan to this work. Thank you that this is a community of faith, hope and love and that we pray that you would continue to bless this church. I pray, Lord, that you would fill the community with the knowledge of your will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding and that you would strengthen them with all power according to your glorious might and that you would use this church to establish disciples that would make disciples so that your gospel would continue to spread in this whole wide earth to your glory. Covers the earth as the waters covered the sea. In Jesus name, amen. Yeah.