

Living A Life Worthy of the Lord

May 14, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled "Living a Life Worthy of the Lord." The scripture reading is Colossians 2, 1-5. Thank you to Robin, Geoff, Jim, Don, Ed, and Paul for being part of the video. Happy anniversary this week to Stephen and Jenny. A happy birthday to Paul and to Dianne. We'll be getting together for a potluck to celebrate Dianne's 85th birthday on May 21st. Everyone is welcome.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

We're going to open with a few announcements and some prayer requests and also a reading from scripture that Robin's going to help me with. We are still working out the details of the Wednesday evening meetings that we're planning to start. We will communicate with you soon on that. If you haven't handed in your survey to the elders, please do that and you can hand it to one of them or put it in their mailboxes out in the lobby. Also on a similar sort of admin note, financial statements are available. I got those done this week, so please speak to me for a paper copy or there's also that's been mailed out in the bulletin. We have a couple of prayer requests. We have a reason to praise God. Maddie is being baptized this morning up at Tintern, so we're happy to welcome a new sister in Christ. We are also still aware of Diane's neighbor, Reen, who is on the mend, but still has a lot of congestion with her pneumonia. Let's go to God in prayer and lift those people up.

Lord, we are so excited for Maddie to make this public declaration of her commitment to you. We thank you for bringing her to a place where she is ready to be part of your kingdom, to be part of your family, and to be a sister of all of ours. Thank you for the decisions and the circumstances that have led her to this point, help her community and all of us to support her and to encourage her as she embarks on this new kind of life with you. God, we're also thinking of Reen this morning. We ask for your continued healing hand on her. We thank you for her family who have come together to support her, and we ask that you strengthen Diane as she is a support to her as well. We are aware of others who are, maybe we haven't mentioned, who we each know, who are suffering, who are ill, who are sick at heart, God, and we ask for your healing hand to be on them to give us what we need to strengthen them and to raise them up in your sight. God, as we lift our voices and our hands this morning, we would ask for your presence to be with us, to fill each one of us with your love. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

So I'm going to ask you to stand. We're going to have a responsive reading this morning, and so I'm going to read a verse, and then Robin is going to lead you in the response. So here it is. It's from Psalm 136. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good." "His love endures forever." "Give thanks to the God of gods." "His love endures forever." "Give thanks to the Lord of lords." "His love endures forever." "To Him alone who does great wonders." "His love endures forever." "And who by His understanding made the heavens." "His love endures forever."

Communion

As I read over the scripture that Donny is going to speak from today, this week, there were a number of things that stood out. But the thing that I chose to use as we gather together to remember our Lord has

to do with community. One of the lines that Paul uses in Colossians 2 is, "I am present with you in spirit." And I backed up a little bit and looked at the situation. Paul didn't know these people personally. He had heard about them from Epaphras amongst others and the good things that they did. But when I read through that, I kept coming back to this idea that we are a community. And that's what we're here for.

The sign today says, "Communion." They come from the same root word, "being together with God." So just listen to a few of the things that Paul says in this first couple of chapters of Colossians. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. Well, that's a problem. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation. That's what we're here to celebrate this morning. He is going to present us wholly in God's sight without blemish and without accusation. Problem resolved. Well if that was all there was to it, then I don't think Paul would have had to write what he did. Because he goes on to say, "He will present you if you continue in your faith established and firm and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel." The human life is sometimes a struggle. It's ongoing all the time. And sometimes it can be down because it's so difficult. See the problem is solved but it's contingent. It's contingent on the fact that we don't move away from that gospel message. And that is the importance of community and why Paul keeps coming back to it so many times. For these people he didn't even know personally.

He says things like this, "I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ Jesus is. For to God's holy people, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. We always thank God when we pray for you because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all God's people. Faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven." Notice that hope is stored in heaven, not just in our hearts. 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. It continued to grow in them and he was delighted in that. He says, "We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the spirit gives. That you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way." I think God's going to have something more to say about that later. Being strengthened with all power so that you may have great endurance and patience. Our lives are not a sprint. They're a marathon and sometimes it can be a trot. But he's delighted to know that they are remaining true. He says, "Of these people he doesn't even know, we pray for you so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ." And these people that Paul hasn't met personally, he speaks about them and says that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love.

Paul's prayers, all the work that he does, he says he contends for them all the time is for the purpose that they might be encouraged in heart and united in love. That's what this time is all about. We have a gift from God in his Son and we are here to celebrate that he will present us unblemished and spotless before his Father if we just stay the course. Let's go to him in prayer as we break this bread.

Father sometimes it seems like on a dull dreary gray day our hearts can be like that too because the world grinds us down. There are so many things that would turn us away from you. Sometimes we just feel like it's just easier to give up and go with the flow. But Father we know that we have a hope and it's there in heaven for us. And it was brought about because your Son gave his body to be sacrificed on a cross and once for all so that sin would not be an anchor around us. So that drudgery would not be

something we have to live with every day but rather Father that we can live to know your glory. We look forward to that day. Father we thank you now as we break this bread for the brothers and sisters we have here the ones that we don't know across the world who all pray for our redemption. Father we thank you and we bless you in the name of your Son. Amen.

[Music]

One of the deeper theological thoughts that Paul touches upon here is something he calls the mystery. And that word is appropriate, it's a reasonable translation. But it's not like the mystery novel where there's something to figure out.

I think we might better think about it as something remarkable, incredible. The, "Well that's not how I would have done it," revealing of God's work. Because Paul says this, "God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." An amazing thing is not that God could save Gentiles, but that God could save anyone. That Christ makes his home in the temple of human beings. The world sees us with him living in our lives. That he has given us the church to support and encourage us. And that his Spirit is the proof of the hope of a place with God in eternity. Let's go to him one more time in prayer.

Father, we cannot fathom the gift you have given us in Christ. Christ who chose to live in these vessels of clay. Father, the seal of your Spirit that guarantees our place with you in heaven. Help us to live victorious lives as a result of that. This cup that we share celebrates the fact that his blood washed us clean once and for all. And Father, we can look forward and not backward. We thank you for his gift, we thank you for the wedding feast of the Lamb that we look forward to with such desire. In Christ we pray, amen.

Reading

Colossians 2:1-5

Morning.

Our reading this morning is from Colossians 2, 1-5. I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, for who have not met me in person. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full richness of complete understanding in order that they may know the mysteries of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments, for though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Sermon

Good morning everyone. Glad you are with us today. I have the privilege today of sharing some thoughts from this amazing New Testament book, the book of Colossians. Paul writes so many New Testament letters, and in this book he talks about the supremacy of Christ, the maturity that we can have in Christ. He's so Christ-centered in this book that we understand what Paul is trying to say. If someone is having a conversation with Paul, Christ is going to be in there somewhere.

First, middle, and last equation. Christ is the center of all things. Take Christ out of the word. Take Christ out of the world. Nothing exists. All things were created by him and for him. And because of that, we have the privilege to come together today and just listen to some of these words that Paul shared. People are becoming Christians in Colossae. They're growing in their faith. Their lives are changing for the better. They no longer live just for themselves. They want to know Jesus more and more. They want to love Jesus more and more, and they want to share Jesus more and more. And I wonder if we could do the same. Living life worthy of the Lord. And so Paul begins this very optimistic book. It's a very, very optimistic book. And he thinks of the people. Just like you and I over the years think of people who have passed or people who aren't here because they've gone someplace else. It doesn't matter if they're not in body. We remember them. We hold them up. They're as real to us, even though we're not going to see them until we get to heaven. There's this connection that is through the creation of God himself. And we're part of it all.

And he asks us these things. He says, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you because we have heard of your faith. How's your faith? In Christ Jesus. And the love you have for all the brothers and sisters. The faith and the love that spring from hope that is stored up for you, stored up for us in heaven. And then in verse nine, he says, for this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will. Through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. I think if we lived several lifetimes, we wouldn't be able to get all that. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord. Let me ask this question, even though it's so very, very personal. Are you living your life worthy of the Lord? It's a question that we should always ask ourselves. And it's a question that we can meditate on and grow stronger in. He says, I want you to be strengthened in all power. That you may have great endurance and that you can have patience and that you can joyfully come to the Lord. Because Jesus has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. He has already brought us into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, who gives us forgiveness of sins. And let me just share with you what Paul says about Jesus. What does Jesus look like? What does God look like? Well, here's what he looks like. Verse 15, Christ God is the image of the invisible, or we can read it this way. He is the visible of the invisible God. That's Jesus. He is the visible of the invisible God. When Jesus was on the earth preaching and teaching, you're looking at God. When he shares, you're looking at God. When you see the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you're looking at God. God was with him every minute, every second. He was with him even before the beginning of time.

And so in verse 19, he says, for God was pleased to have all Christ's fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things. Take Jesus out of the equation. Nothing exists. And so he asks us to establish ourselves in great faith, to be firm, to not get caught up in all other kinds of philosophies and so forth. And so in chapter two, he says, I want you to know, and here's Paul, I think of him sitting in a room, maybe with a candle, writing these things out. He's thinking of people he loves. He wants to encourage them. He wants to strengthen them. What's he going to say? Chapter two in verse one. Paul says, I want you to know just how much I'm struggling for you and for those that lay a to see you. For all who have not met me personally, my purpose is that they would be encouraged in heart, united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order, listen to this, that they may know the mystery of God. And the mystery of God is Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments. For though whether I'm with you in the body or not, I want you to have your firm

faith in Christ Jesus. And so then in verse six of chapter two, he says, so then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, stop. Stop. Do you remember? Do you remember the day that you said, Jesus, I believe in you, I love you, I want my sins forgiven, I was baptized into Christ Jesus. Do you remember? Do you remember that time? Do you remember how you felt maybe when you were baptized in the water, coming up out of the water, and thinking Jesus lived, he died, he was buried, he came up out of the grave, he went to heaven, saying, I'll see you again. And one day we're going to see Jesus face to face. It's not an exaggeration. It's the absolute truth.

So then just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, don't give up. Continue to live in him because God lives in us. Be rooted in God because Christ and God and the Holy Spirit are rooted in us. They're rooting us on, encouraging us on, and all the faith that we have to share. And then in verse nine he says, for in Christ, all the fullness of God's deity exists in bodily form. If you're looking at Christ, you're looking at God. He is the head of every power and every authority. And then he says in verse 12, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. And if you're contemplating baptism, I would really encourage you. It's this physical understanding of standing in the water. There's a baptister behind us. So many people have been baptized in that baptister. Some in rivers, some in lakes. And a person is there and asked the question.

As a minister, I've asked this question many, many times. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Sometimes I get funny answers. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the-- one person looked at me and said, of course I am. What else do you think I'm here for? It was exciting. Every baptism is different. Because every person is different. And the baptism is being put down into water, coming up out of the water. It's the understanding of the death the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the return of Jesus Christ. And us living with them, seeing our loved ones again. Just think having-- what would be like having a conversation with Jesus? It's not an exaggeration. Just think of what it'll be like having a conversation with God. Or with Michael the Archangel. Or with your parents. Or with that baby. That's the promise of God. It's not just-- Oh, he's just saying a few words. No. Paul is getting at the center of human existence. God made us alive. He has forgiven us our sins. He's all-- he's there. He's all-- he's there for us every moment of every day. And then continuing on in chapter 3 of Colossians, a very brief book, he reminds us of this. He says, "Since then you have been raised with Christ." He already sees us with him. "Since then you've been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above and not on earthly things. Heart and mind. For you have died." Someone says-- No. I'm here. No, spiritually. Spiritually. He said, "You have died and your life is now hidden in Christ, who is in God. And when Christ, who is your life, appears, you too will appear with them-- help me. You too will appear with me in glory." It's this magnificent promise of God. It's not just a word. It's a promise. And do you think God ever backs away on his promise? God promises us.

So to this church in Colossae that they're trying to deal with life, Paul gets right to the heart of the matter. So then he says this. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as for working for the Lord and not for people, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

If somehow every morning we could just wake up and say, "Thank you, God, for being with me. I want to serve you today. I have a job to do, but in my job I want to glorify you. I want you to know that you're

with me and that I know that that you're with me." And if we could just think of that, several times a day, I think it would be so helpful. So this letter of Colossians is very brief. It mentions people. And the final greetings, and this is a brief sermon today. In chapter four, he says, "Devote yourselves to prayer." And I don't know about you, but I found prayer to be difficult at times. I mean, if our child was sick, we wanted to pray. If somebody was hurting, we'd want to pray. I know all that. But just to pray, to pray, I'm not really sure that that was something that I already thought about, until I thought about our loved ones that have passed. And a prayer would go something like this, and it still does for me. I don't know how you pray. It still does for me. I want to say sometimes, and I do say sometimes, God, could you please share with my mother and father how much I love them?

I kind of think God's going to do that. See, even though they aren't with us in body, they're with us. And even though God isn't with us in body, he's with us. And even though Jesus is not with us in body, he's with us. And I believe that every promise Jesus made, he's kept. And he said this, "I will never leave you." I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you. If we could get that instilled in our heart, I think that's why Paul is writing to this church at Colossae saying it's not about do's and don'ts. It's not about regulations and so forth. It's about love. It's about joy. It's about sharing. Whatever you do, do with it, all with your heart. And then at the end of the book, he just talks about people, loving people, caring for people. He talks about people who are really interesting. I love this. It says, "Epaphras, who was one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings." Listen, he's always wrestling in prayer for you. What an interesting comment that is. He's always wrestling in prayer for you. And he mentions all of this. He talks about our dear friend Luke the doctor, Matthew Mark Luke. He talks about people. And then at the end of his book-- and I conclude with it-- grace, grace. May the grace of God be with you always. When you leave the building today, please just remind yourself as you walk through those doors, Jesus is with me. And he'll never leave me. And he'll never forsake me. Amen.

Song Leader Comment

When Don mentioned about baptism, I was reminded of the time I was baptized. I was a young kid. I was 10 years old. It was a Sunday night service in Toronto at a church in Toronto. And oddly enough, I was picked up that night. My mother and I were picked up by Rudy Zilla at Barb's dad. And he drove us to Strathmore Church. And that night, we used to have invitation songs. And people would respond. And that night, the song that was the invitation song is "Why Not Tonight?" Well, why not? It's a good time. It's a good time. Over the years, I have met people. And they've asked me if I'm a Christian. And I say, yes. Some of them are happy about that response. And some of them are judgmental about that. Also, you think you're better than everybody. No, I don't think I'm better than everybody. Because living a life worthy of the Lord is a life worth living. And if you live a life trying to be worthy to the Lord, you're going to be committed to transformation. If you're committed to transformation, you can say to yourself, I'm not better than everybody else. I am better than I used to be.

Closing

Thank you all served today. Let's go to God in prayer as we leave this morning. Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and all you've blessed us with. Thank you for this time. Thank you for the opportunity to be reminded of your grace, to be reminded of your presence, to be reminded of your power. Lord, help us to live like a people who have been reminded of you and reminded of your saving

grace and in your presence in our lives. As we go from this place, help us to make wherever we are a better place in your name in Jesus' name. Amen.

Contact & Copyright

Thanks for watching or listening. The Beamsville Church of Christ meets at 4900 John Street, Beamsville, Ontario. Scripture quotations marked NIV, taken from the Holy Bible, new international version, NIV. Copyright 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission, all rights reserved worldwide. You can learn more about the congregation on our Facebook page or at beamsvillechurchofchrist.ca.