

## Week of February 12, 2012

### *Christ – the Center of My Church*

#### Passage Outline:

1. **What Is Our Message?** - Colossians 1:24-27
2. **Are We Growing Spiritually?** - Colossians 1:28–2:3
3. **Are We Walking the Walk?** - Colossians 2:4-7

#### What's This Lesson About?

We need to evaluate our church's message and ministry and determine ways we can contribute to keep Christ at the center of everything our church does.

#### 1. What Is Our Message? - Colossians 1:24-27

##### Colossians 1:24-27

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in what was suffered 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. <sup>25</sup> I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. <sup>27</sup> 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.

- A. As Paul took the gospel message to people, he encountered **sufferings** from Jews and Gentiles in his missionary endeavors. Even as he wrote, he was under house arrest in Rome.
- B. In a broad sense, he suffered **for** (on behalf of) Colossian Christians because they received the good news through his ministry, proclaimed by his co-worker Epaphras, as we heard last week.
- C. Paul was convinced he was **completing** in his **flesh what** was **lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body ... the church**. What is Paul saying here?
  - i. Paul was not asserting Christ's death on the cross was insufficient for redemption.
  - ii. Paul identifies his afflictions to be in union with Christ, sharing His pain and suffering.
  - iii. Paul saw his pain and sacrifice as building up the church. While Christ's atoning death completely redeemed the church, and Paul was serving Christ now by suffering for the church.
- D. The church (totality of believers) is "the body of Christ." All believers are interrelated and mutually dependent with vital functions within the body.
- E. Christ's **body**, the church, is not an organization but a living organism. All believers are unified and infused together by Christ's resurrection power.
- F. Paul's primary responsibility was **to make God's message fully known**—to discharge or fulfill his role of proclaiming to the widest possible audience the good news of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.
- G. The Lord also commissions us to spread the gospel. We must take our responsibility seriously.

#### What is Our Church's First Priority?

When we think of our first priority, we should ask two questions:

1. What is the business of our Church? Or, what is the primary work of our Church?
2. How's business? Or, how well is our Church doing its work?

- H. Paul referred to the gospel as **the mystery hidden for ages**, conveyed the idea of something once hidden but now revealed—it is an open secret.
- I. What revealed this? Jesus Christ’s life, death, and victorious resurrection revealed the full scope of God’s provision and purpose.
- J. For the Jews this mystery included God’s intention to make salvation known even **among the Gentiles**. God always **wanted** Gentiles, and Jews, to have access to **the glorious riches of this mystery**—the gospel.
- K. God’s offer of grace in Christ is the very indwelling of Christ in believers. His abiding presence assured Gentile believers they were included in God’s saving purpose. His presence gave solid confidence for the future.
- L. This is the **hope** of eternity, we have in Christ.

### Take a Little Survey - Community

1. Ask people who are NOT members of our church, when I say “St. John Lutheran Church, what’s the first thing that comes into your mind?”
2. Ask people who are NOT members of our church, “What is the reason St. John Lutheran Church exists?”
3. Ask people who are NOT members of our church, “If St. John Lutheran Church were to close her doors would anyone in the Community miss it?”

## 2. Are We Growing Spiritually? - Colossians 1:28–2:3

### Colossians 1:28-2:3

<sup>28</sup>We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. <sup>29</sup>To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me. <sup>1</sup>I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. <sup>2</sup>My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- A. Paul wanted everyone to be perfect (literally mature) in Christ. This was not wishful thinking. How could this happen?
- B. Paul warned (admonished) believers to correct attitudes and behavior unbecoming to Christians.
- C. Paul instructed them by presenting Christian truths that would help them grow spiritually.
- D. The purpose of these admonitions and instructions was to **present** all believers **mature in Christ**. The believer’s relationship with Christ was dynamic, not static. They were to grow in that relationship.
- E. What does being **mature** in Christ mean?
  - i. Spiritual maturity is a process, a goal toward which believers move. Stop moving or stop growing and we move in the other direction, losing what we once had.
  - ii. We become more spiritually mature as our commitment to Christ deepens, our obedience to Him increases, and our lives progressively reflect His character.
  - iii. We mature as we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures and apply them to daily living.
  - iv. Through consistent prayer, genuine worship, and selfless service following Christ’s example, we

grow toward spiritual maturity.

- F. Paul itemized three things he wanted for Christians in Colossae and Laodicea.
- i. He wanted their hearts **to be encouraged**, conveying the idea of being supported or braced, and strengthened for an ordeal or conflict.
  - ii. He wanted believers to be **joined together in love**, literally being “knit together” and expressing itself in unity of love—God’s kind of love expressed in Christ. Only sacrificial, self-giving action on behalf of others would create and sustain the unity the churches needed.
  - iii. He wanted believers to have all **the riches of understanding**. To understand the secret of God’s redemptive purpose is to include all people in His offer of grace.

### Take a Little Survey - Personal

1. Are you growing spiritually? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
2. What evidence in your life says “Yes?” \_\_\_\_\_
3. What evidence in your life says “No?” \_\_\_\_\_
4. What would you like to do about that? Remember, your answer is given to Jesus!

### 3. Are We Walking the Walk? - Colossians 2:4-7

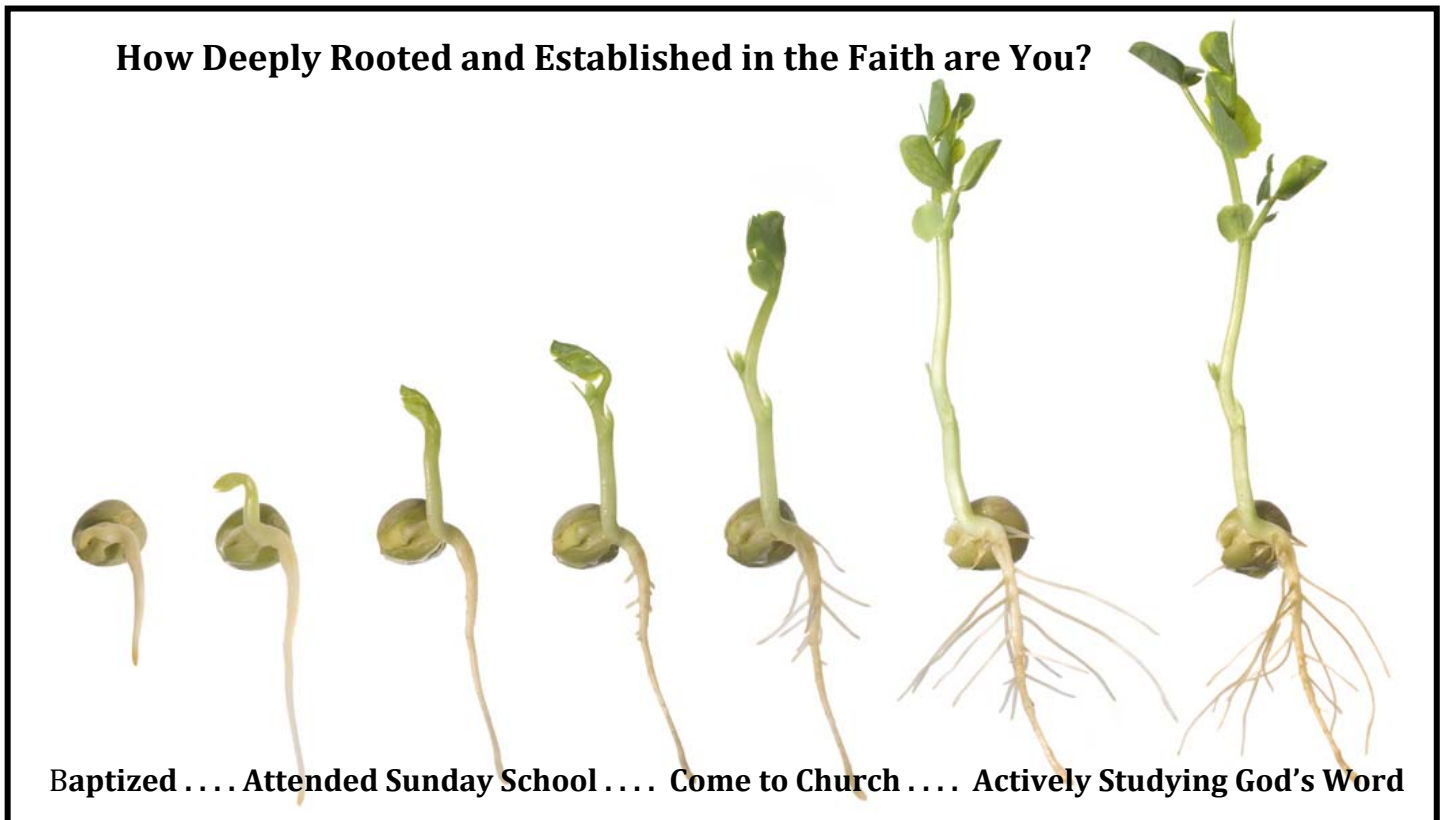
#### Colossians 2:4-7

<sup>4</sup>I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. <sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

- A. Paul did not want believers to be deceived by **fine-sounding arguments**, meaning deception by false reasoning using smooth, glib speech that is long on style and short on truth or facts.
- B. Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest in Rome, so he was **absent in body**, but was present **in spirit**.
- C. Paul had heard reports from Epaphras, that the Colossian believers. Their being **well ordered** and **the strength of their faith in Christ**. This brought Paul great joy. The words **well ordered** and **strength** were military terms for an unbroken line in battle and steadfastness in the face of attack.
- D. Paul sharpened his appeal to the Colossian Christians, by saying that just as they had **received Christ Jesus the Lord** they were to continue to **walk** (live) **in Him**.
- E. To walk as Christians involved all facets of life—attitudes, words, deeds, and relationships. In their daily living, Christians were to reflect the character of the Christ who was present in them.
- F. Walking involves progress toward a destination; thus, believers were to move toward Christlikeness.
- G. Paul used three additional metaphors to stress essential elements of living in Christ.
  - i. The word **rooted** conveys a past event or experience whose effect continues in the present. It implied nourishment and stability.
  - ii. The word **built up** conveys a building process, where Christ is the firm foundation, and on which

believes build up their lives—having everything we need to build a full structure upon Jesus.

iii. The word **established** means strengthened, made firm, like that of an Oak Tree is firm.



### **Biblical Truths in Focus**

1. All Christians have the responsibility of sharing the good news of salvation in Christ.
2. Every Christian's goal should be to grow toward spiritual maturity.
3. All believers are to create and maintain an environment of encouragement and love in their churches.
4. Walking (living) in Christ involves every aspect of our lives—thoughts, words, actions, and relationships.
5. Christ provides all we need for Christian living.