

Sermon Study Guide

Pastor: Pastor Ashwin Ramani

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Sermon: Entrusted with a Secret (Part 2, Colossians 1:24-5:2)

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. When have you had the responsibility of taking a message to someone? (i.e. work situation, family situation, etc) What happened?
2. What memories do you have as a child, dealing with a secret?
3. What person do you know (yourself?) who has an all-consuming passion?
4. Tell of a time when you or someone you knew was taken in by a smooth talker.

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Knowing that the letter to the Christians at Colossae was written by Paul because of doctrinal heresies infiltrating the church, why is this study of Colossians valuable for us as a church?
Why is it crucial to believe in the deity of Christ?
2. Explain why Paul used the word 'mystery' (used 3x in this passage).
What is the biblical definition of 'mystery'?
3. Paul articulates the 'mystery' in Colossians 1:27. (Read NLT translation)
What was the special 'news' that this verse gives? Why was it so 'important' for the Colossians to know? Why is it important for us to understand?
4. In this passage, Paul emphasizes that God has entrusted us with this 'Secret' (1:25)
What does this mean for each person who is a follower of Christ?
Give examples of how this might be played out in a workplace situation, in a family situation, in the neighbourhood.
5. Paul also emphasizes that suffering is inevitable in advancing God's mission (1:24)
How did Pastor Ashwin link this statement with Jesus' words on the cross, 'It is finished'? (John 19:30)
Give examples of how this might be played out in a workplace situation, in a family situation, in the neighbourhood.
How do we find the strength to live a 'counter-cultural' life?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. What 'fine-sounding arguments' (2:4) challenge you? How does this study help you counter/answer these arguments? What further explanation would be helpful for you?
2. Pastor Ashwin said, 'Paul is so captivated by this idea of who Jesus is and what He has done that it re-altered his past convictions and he became a minister /servant of this gospel!' What captivates you about the gospel?
3. "Apart from faith in Christ there is no explanation for such a life." (on Borden's tombstone) What is the explanation for your life?
4. In what ways can you be a steward/servant of the gospel this week? Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear your 'compelling vision'?

UP – IN – OUT *reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

THE WORD (NIV)

Colossians 1:24-2:5

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering 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. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

² I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ² My goal 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, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵ 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.

Colossians 1:27 (NLT)

²⁷ For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.

Resource:

William Borden story,
<https://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/regret.htm>

Sermon Study Summary

Colossians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in the city of Colossae which today is part of modern day Turkey. The Apostle Paul wrote this key letter to deal with some doctrinal heresies that were infiltrating into the Colossian church that undermined the deity of Jesus. Situated on a major trade route, the city of Colossae was a perfect breeding ground for cults and counterfeit spirituality. Thus the focus of Paul in his letter to the Colossians was the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Centuries later, Paul's message still speaks to us in North America where we are confronted by a plethora of religious ideas and beliefs and variations of the gospel. In Col. 1:15-23 Paul proclaims the preeminence of Jesus – Jesus is God Himself; 100% divine, 100% human; and, Jesus is the undisputed head of the Church.

Col. 1:24-2:5 reveals the driving passion of Paul's heart – the reason for his living and the purpose of everything he did. This one thing changed the trajectory of his life and it caused him suffering and sacrifice. It is the mystery or secret which had been hidden for ages and generations but has now been revealed! God had personally entrusted this secret to Paul – he was the guardian of this new revelation and he lived every day of his life to promote this message! Paul's heart was captivated by the mystery of God – the mystery of the ages. Col 1:26-27 **the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people.** ²⁷**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.** The word 'mystery' in the NT denotes that which can be known only through divine revelation!

Paul says the mystery has been unveiled in Christ and made available to not just a select few but to all who trust in Jesus. Jesus the Messiah did not come just for the Jews – He is the Savior of the world! Jesus is God's secret unveiled! The mystery or secret is for all the people of the world – it is universal. God does not live today in Temples made with human hands – He lives in the heart of men and women who love him and worship him.

When person puts his faith in Jesus Christ – Jesus Himself comes to live in the heart of that person through the Holy Spirit. Jesus alone fulfills that person's spiritual aspirations and offers a glorious hope for the future. (Col. 2:3) If you are a Christian – Jesus is in you! If you have put your faith in Christ – **you are a spiritual billionaire now** and you have been promised a future glory that no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind has ever conceived! The trajectory of your life has been changed.

1. Paul emphasizes in Col. 1:25 that **God has entrusted us with this Secret** and our one purpose in life is to announce Jesus' salvation
2. Paul also emphasizes that **Suffering is inevitable in advancing God's Mission Acts 9:15-16** (Paul was in prison)

Suffering is part and parcel of faithful Christian living. Paul rejoices in his suffering because his suffering served an ultimate purpose – the advancement of God's mission. (V. 24) Jesus has not given us a kingdom that advances by the sword or military conquest or force– this is a Kingdom that advances through loving sacrifices of God's people. Rarely would you see someone come to faith in Jesus Christ without the sacrifices of other Christians.

There are many places in the world today where suffering is a day to day reality – and Christ's mission advances through pain and affliction. Look at Paul's labour as a servant of the gospel: **Col 1:29 (NLT) That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me. Col 2:1 I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally.**

It does not matter what our geographical context is – we are called to labour in this manner to advance God's mission – with our heart, soul, mind and strength. Left to ourselves we will all pursue the Canadian dream, and live in ease and comfort and waste our lives on trivialities. **But the Jesus who lives in us makes all the difference. He fills us with His love, His passion, His power and His priorities so that it is no longer we who live but Christ lives in us and through us. God has entrusted us with the secret – His plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Has your heart been captivated by this? Are you a good steward of this news?**