

November 12/13, 2022

Every day, on Mission, with Christ

Rooted in Christ Series

Colossians 4:2-6

Pastor Josh Luse

Let's get into it this morning; we've got some good stuff to tackle this morning. I'll ask you a question first. "Anybody get to the grocery store at all this week?" Quite a few of you. "How about the gas station, anybody fill up with gas?" Quite a few others. "How about school or job? Anybody get to school or job?" Okay, I think that's everybody in the room, right? Imagine if you will with me, that you went to the grocery store this week, and as you're pulling in, somebody was in front of you in the parking lot and took your space, which already kind of frustrated you. So, you kind of mutter some things under your breath, drive around, and find another spot. You go into the store, and as you're going into the store, your mind is already going through the things you need to get, and what needs to happen after, and your schedule is packed. You kind of walk right by the sign that's posted by the door for the contest that's happening. You go and get your supplies. You get to the checkout lane, and you're trying to hurry to get through, but the person in front of you is paying with a check. How dare they, right? For those that are 30 and younger, a check is like Venmo, only paper. *(laughter)* And they're sitting there balancing their checkbook while they're waiting to get out of the line. So you get up, frustrated with the cashier. You go through the line, and as you walk out and you go home that night, you're watching the news, and you realize that grocery store comes up on the news. That contest was there. Those signs that were posted by the door were an opportunity to win. All you had to do going through that checkout lane was to say a couple of things, and you would receive a brand-new car, and you missed it. Not only that, they continued to talk that there were opportunities at your work. Another contest—you missed it. At the gas station—you missed it. Your job, school—you missed them all. You went through every opportunity, and you didn't take one of them. What if there was something more significant than a brand-new car this week? What if this week had tons of opportunities, and you missed them...every single one of them? That's what we want to talk about this morning. Before we get into it, let's pray.

God, thank You for the chance to open Your word. God, we pray that Your Word would be clear this morning, that You would eliminate any distractions, and that Your Spirit would open our hearts to hear from You. God, we want to receive Your words to us. We want to hear them, and we want to act on them. We need Your power to do all that. So, God, we pray that You give us tender hearts, and hearts ready for action. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

We're in Colossians chapter 4 this morning. We're almost ready to wrap up this book. Before we finish out, Paul has got a couple of really important things that he wants to cover over these next two weeks. We went from all of this incredible super knowledge about Christ and who He is, and all that He is, and what that means in our lives, into some practical application as Bryan walked us through what that means in our work. What does that mean in our families, in our homes? How does this play out? And Paul is going to continue to turn that corner this morning and say, "With everything you have in Christ, what are you going to do with it?" All of this is not meant to be

hoarded. It's meant to be shared, and there's going to be tons of opportunities. That's where we find ourselves in Colossians chapter 4, verse 2, and he says this:

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;

(*NASB, Colossians 4:2)

He uses this word **devote** yourselves. Or maybe your translation says **continue steadfastly**. It's the idea that suggests our sincere passion, along with deliberate purpose. In other words, it's heartfelt conviction with continuous prayer. So why, why be continuous in our prayer? What's up with that? Is it because we're like some annoying toddler that has to somehow wear God down so that He'll listen to us? Or get off His phone and pay attention to what we're saying? That's not it! Is it because God is obstinate, and we somehow have to keep asking and asking to somehow break Him down to listen? That's not it. Scripture tells us that God loves to hear our prayers. Scripture tells us that our prayers are a sweet incense to Him. So, could it be that in praying, prayer actually does something to us in the process as well?

I'll suggest a couple of things I think prayer really does in our lives, as we continue steadfastly in prayer. First thing, I think it really, at times, is used to build our faith, to show us all that God can do as we talk about the impossible things that we see—but only God could do this. I think He uses prayer to build our faith. At other times I think He uses prayer to prepare us for the answer that He's going to give, because it's not the answer we're expecting. I think prayer is a part of that process in our lives for that, and I think other times, we continue steadfastly in prayer because He's going to use *us* as the answer to that prayer, and *we're* just expecting an immediate answer from somewhere else.

Paul says, “*Continue in prayer.*” Now this week I looked up all sorts of stats about how much the church in America prays, or maybe I should say about how little the church in America prays. I could read those to you, but they don't really matter. You know why? Because what matters is how much *we* pray in this room. So the question that I better ask is, “*Are you continuously praying with God? Are you **devoting yourself to prayer**?*” This is an imperative statement that Paul has given us. It's not just something nice we're going to say like, “Bless you,” to someone or, “Thoughts and prayers.” There's actually something that impacts when we pray. Church, imagine if we could understand the impact that prayer has. Imagine if prayer would become as normative to us as breathing. As this ever-present God walks with us through the day, what if we could have an ongoing, constant communication and dialogue with this God? Imagine how that would change your days. I've read this quote a million times in this church, and I'm going to keep reading it, because I want it not just to be something we know, I want it to be something that lands in our hearts. From Oswald Chambers, and he says this, “*Every time we pray, our horizon is altered, our attitude to things is altered, not just sometimes, but every time, and the amazing thing is that we don't pray more.*”

So, Church, the first question I have for you is, “*Are you continuous in prayer?* Are you walking with God in prayer?” Not only that, but he says being watchful, or he says **keeping alert in it**. So as we're praying, this is the time when we should pray with our eyes open. We're watching to see what God could do in and through the process. If I were a weather forecaster on prayer, I would say there's a 100% percent chance that God is at work in it. So we're praying with a posture of activeness and readiness, to see how He's working, and join Him in it. But it's sure easy to get

distracted in that isn't it? Prayer helps fix our eyes and focus our eyes on what God is doing. Have you ever gotten a new car, or a new car to you, or a new haircut, and the second you get in that car and you're driving around town, you start to notice there are tons of people driving that same model of car? Anybody ever had that? You go...What???? I've never seen this car before now, and now everybody's driving it. Something's changed. Your perspective has changed, and now you're looking for that thing. Prayer does that in our lives. It changes our perspective and allows us to be watchful. So, before we go try and talk to people about God, we should go talk to God about people. So the question I have for you this morning is, *"Who are you praying for?"*

Over the years, in my family, we've made a practice of praying for other people. So we've made different lists, and there's been a lot of different people that have come on our list, or different things from that list. In fact over the past year, two people that have been on our list have trusted Christ as their Savior. But over the years, it's been different people. At one point it was a father from Sudan that I got to connect with as he was learning English. Other times, it's names that my kids come home from school talking about, or at other points it's been a new family that moved to our block from out of state. Sometimes it's been a young girl at the grocery store that my wife intentionally would go to every time to check out, so she could continue a conversation. And God was opening something in that. Sometimes it's been kids on our kids' sports teams, and then their families and their parents as we got to know them. And as we are intentional with prayer, we notice opportunities pop up. So we would make lists and put them on our refrigerator and ask if anything's happening in those relationships that we're praying about after dinner? Sometimes, for me, the best thing is to make a list on my phone, because I can pull it up; I can put information in as I'm learning about it. We've made a map of our neighborhood before and written neighbor's names down. We even wrote their dog's names down on this map. So as we're walking around, we could greet them by name and say "Hi" to Fido as well, looking to advance opportunities for a chance to share about God that has transformed us so much. In fact, one point when my son was in middle school, we were noticing this young mom that would come walking by our house every morning, walking her kids to school. As it would get later in the year, as it is similar to now, they would continue to walk to school every morning, and it would be cold. We were kind of praying about who are the people that God is bringing across our paths, and literally God is bringing this person across our path—our sidewalk in front of our house. So we just start praying, start looking for opportunities, and God opens the door for us to give a couple of rides when it's really cold. We start praying for an opportunity for transportation, and we start praying for this young mom and her kids. Actually, one morning my son and I were out to breakfast with another person. We're telling them about this person we're praying for. Before we finish breakfast, we pray all together, and we pray for this person. We get in the car. I'm driving my son to middle school, and as we cross over the street, we see this gas station and this woman walk out carrying a jug of milk. I said, "Hey, Ash, look over, and check out who it is." He looks over, and it's that woman that we had just prayed for. He said, "What? What? No way!" He couldn't believe the way that God had just provided an opportunity for us to see her right there, yet again. When we pray, it changes our perspective.

So I wonder, who are you praying about? He doesn't stop there. He says, **Devote yourselves to prayer. Keep alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.** Why an **attitude of thanksgiving**? Why be thankful? Because the answers to our prayers may not always be the answers we are hoping for, or the answers we are expecting. They may come in ways that we wouldn't say we're grateful that they're being answered in that way. Paul has journeyed around sharing the gospel, all

the while looking for opportunities. And where does that land him? In prison. But Paul realizes Rome didn't put him in prison. God has provided an opportunity in prison. Paul's posture and his attitude of thanksgiving changed everything. Sometimes the best opportunities to soften a hardened heart for the opportunity for the gospel, are through hardship. Something in the midst of pain, at times, that can open the door for a chance to share the hope that we have. Now I'm not saying to pray for hardship. I'm not saying that we look to try and get into difficult situations. But what I am saying is when they come, are we prepared? Are we ready to look for an opportunity to share the hope of the gospel? Because it may come in a hospital room. It may come through the loss of a job. It may come in the midst of a difficult situation. It may come in the death of a dream. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, ***Father, Your will be done, not my will be done.*** Our perspective changes to what God is doing, and joining Him in it. 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 18 says this: ***Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***

As we watch God answer prayers, we graciously accept what He's doing, and look to join Him in the process. Who's to say the difficult situation you might be in right now is not the best spot to give you the best chance to share the hope that you have in Jesus? Who is to say that the difficult spot you're in, is maybe not the spot that would shine and show Jesus the best? That's why He reminds us to be thankful. He goes on to spell that out even more in verse 3:

...praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word...

Open doors! As Christians, we love open door terminology, don't we? "When God closes a door, He opens a window," right? But for us, as we talk about open doors, have you ever noticed this? It's so me-centric. I'm praying for an open door at my job. Why? to share the gospel? No, so I can advance in a position. Or I'm praying for an open door into this program, or I'm praying for an open door for some kind of career change. There's nothing wrong with praying for that, but the most majority of our stuff is focused on *me*, not what God might be doing through me, or the open doors he has. In fact, if you go through and you look through terminology with open doors throughout the New Testament, you find it's always about what God is doing, the way that He is at work.

1 Corinthians 16, verses 8 through 9 says, ***But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.***

2 Corinthians 2, verse 12 says this: ***Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord...***he goes on to talk about what happened there. Why did he come? To share the gospel because God had opened the door.

In fact in Revelation 3, verse 8, when talking about it is God who opens the door, he says, ***Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut...***

When we talk about open doors, it's always about what God is doing. It's focused on God and the work He's doing and the way that we can join Him in that work.

That's why John 6:44 tells us that ***God is the One who pursues, and God is the One that draws people to Himself.*** He just invites us to join Him in that. It's not like we have to be going all *Chuck*

Norris like and busting down doors and making people listen to the gospel. Instead, we're prayerful and we're watchful. And we're grateful when God opens the door to step in and join Him and use the opportunities that He provides.

I think of a very vivid story of an open door that happened earlier this year in our lives. My wife, when she was in high school, through a friend inviting her to youth group, heard about the gospel and chose to put her trust and faith in Jesus Christ, and that radically transformed her life. And at that point on from high school, she started praying that her family too would experience this radical transformation of Jesus and what He had done, and the hope He had given her. She started praying for her dad. Her dad didn't really want to hear anything about it. And later on in college, she met this guy named Josh, and he was pastor, and we got married. So obviously her dad was going to hear more about this Jesus, too. And so we had conversations over the years. We talked about Jesus, but there was never really an openness to it. There was kind of more of a desire not to talk much about it at all. About four years ago, her dad ended up in the hospital, an extreme situation, and we were praying. We didn't think he'd come out of hospital at that point, so were praying for an opportunity to share the gospel, praying that he'd trust Christ, but he didn't want to hear it. Remarkably, somehow through this, he started getting better. Doctors released him; he went home, and his health started to increase for a little while; and he continued on really well.

But over the last couple of years, his health has been declining over and over and over again. Earlier this year, I got a call that he had been found unconscious in his home. The ambulances were coming. We went there immediately, and then to the hospital. We started talking with the doctors and the doctors said, "This is not good." He wasn't responsive. There was nothing that was looking really good in the situation. We started praying very specifically for two things: another chance to share the gospel, and that he would be open to hearing it and receiving Jesus Christ. Somehow he'd become responsive enough so that Julie and her two brothers could say goodbye before he passed away. For five days, in and out of the hospital, waiting, no responsiveness. That Friday, my wife is in the hospital, and somehow, remarkably, he opens his eyes. He's hooked up to all these machines and tubes, but he starts trying to communicate. My wife starts talking to him. She starts saying, "Dad, this is kind of the situation we are in; this is what's happening." She said, "I want to talk to you about Jesus," and he said, "No, I don't want to talk about that." Imagine a life-long crushing moment! We get the opportunity and, yet, he doesn't want to hear it. My wife actually had to leave that morning to go to her uncle's funeral. As she's leaving, she said, "Dad, I'm going to be back. Josh is coming. You know what he's going to talk to you about."

And I remember driving over in my car. I remember praying, "God, I don't know what to say. I don't have the words. I don't know what to do. You have to do something through me." I got into the room and started talking to him. I don't know why I used this phrase. I've never used this phrase, nor would I ever again use this phrase. But, in that moment, I just had this thing pop into my mind, and I started talking to Jim. I said, "Jim, have you made peace with God?" He looked over at me and goes, "That's a serious question." I said, "Jim, we're in a serious moment." I started talking about the spot he was in with his health, what the doctors were saying, and about the gospel. In the midst of that a nurse came in and started doing some procedures and checks, and the conversation kind of got derailed. And I thought maybe that was it. Later on he's kind of getting the checks done, and he looks back over at me says, "Josh, I haven't been very good at being religious," and I realized that whole time he's been sitting there thinking about it, mulling it over. I said, "Jim,

that's great because none of us are. I'm not good at being religious. That's why Jesus came, because none of us will ever be good enough. There's nothing we can do on our own to receive salvation. It's what He's done and provided for us. We simply need to trust Him and believe." I talked a little bit more, and he looked over at me. You've got to know this is a guy that loves history. He's read parts of the Bible just because he wants to know the historical things. But putting your faith in who Jesus is—everything we've talked about from the beginning of Colossians—that takes a lot of trust. So he said, "Josh, what do I have to do?" I said, "Jim, there's nothing you have to do. Jesus has done it for you. You simply need to trust, to have faith." He said, "A belief? Just a belief, to believe that Jesus is who He says He is, and put my faith in Him?" And I said, "Yes, that's absolutely it." He said, "Okay, I'll trust in Jesus." My wife had been praying for 28 years for a door to be opened, for him to come to trust Jesus, and in less than 24 hours after that moment, he passed away. Open doors are not something we can manipulate, that we can do on our own strength. Open doors are a work that God is doing, that He allows us to join into, but we've got to be watching. We've got to be ready. So I have to ask you, *"Who are you praying for? Are you ready to speak when that door is open? Are you ready to join God and what he's doing?"*

The end of verse 3 says,

...so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

Paul is in prison, and he's more concerned about an open door for the gospel than he is an open door to get out of there. Paul is on mission with God through this. He's talking about this **mystery**. This isn't the first time we've seen this word show up. In fact, we saw it in chapter one. You remember we talked about it then. This mystery was something that was previously unknown, now has been made known by God. The curtain has been pulled back. It's not anything that we could have investigated or found out on our own. God has chosen to reveal it to us. What's this mystery? This amazing truth that *Jesus is God, and that His heart is for the whole world*. All along God's heart has been for the Gentiles too—that they too might experience these magnificent riches that we have in Christ. Paul longs to speak this. But what it says in verse 4 is he desires that he would speak it clearly. Right:

...that I make clear in the way that I ought to speak.

Now in Greek, as you look at verses 3 and 4, it's one giant run-on sentence. So in the ESV, they tried to break it up by putting a dash in between verses 3 and 4. In the NASB, you'll just see they loaded it up with semicolons. But there's this purpose clause: *to make something clear*. After you go through and work through it, you can see that ties to maybe three different possibilities through this verse.

The first one would be: the purpose would be the clarity of the gospel, right? The reason that I am in chains is to proclaim this mystery clearly, to proclaim the gospel clearly. So, *clarity of the gospel*. The other one could be that Paul is trying to gain clarity in how he presents the gospel. I pray that *I would proclaim it clearly—the words I use*. The third one would be linking back to God, that *God would open the door for it to be clear*. If you follow the train of thought, I think that one makes the most sense. God is the one who opens the door. God is the one who reveals it and makes

it clear. But it's not without Paul and his words that God chooses to work through. So, as Paul is thinking through what to say, he wants to join with God in it, and he wants to be thoughtful and clear. It reminds me that I need to think not just about what I'm saying, but how I'm saying it. He goes on to show there's other ways that bring clarity to the gospel as well. In verse 5 he says:

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

Now in this verse, there is a massive assumption that we are around **outsiders**, the outsiders simply meaning somebody that does not know Jesus. I grew up in a church that had a little bit more of a fortress mentality. There were a lot of rules, a lot of legalism. The idea was like, we need to come into the church and huddle up and keep the world out.

As we read through the King James version, we get to a verse like 1 Thessalonians 5:22: ***Abstain from all appearance of evil.***

We think there are places we can't go; there are people we can't talk to, because we don't want to have an appearance of evil. A better translation can be found in the NASB, where it says, ***Reject every form of evil.*** Not an appearance, but every form. Don't join into the sin but go to be with people that need Jesus. That's why John 1:14 says when Jesus came, ***He became flesh and He dwelt among us.*** He put on skin, and He moved into the neighborhood. Maybe at times we forget that we once were outsiders, that Jesus came for us. In fact, he goes on in John chapter 17:15-18, to say this: ***I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world.***

We are on mission in this world with a message. We have to be around people that don't know this Jesus in order to share this message. Now I've found, over the years as a church, we can do a lot of good stuff. But could it be that at times, all the good stuff we're doing keeps us from going out and taking this message? We can have basketball leagues in the church; we can have basket weaving leagues in the church—baskets and Bibles, right? “Come bring your Bible and weave some baskets.” But, what if instead of doing them all here, what if we found a basketball league in the city and we went and played what we love to play, but we did it with an intentionality, watching and looking for a chance to share with someone that is outside the church, this incredible message that we have? What if we took our hobbies and things we love to do and, rather than clustering up together in the church, we went out and we did those with others to gain a relationship? What if, rather than my first intentionality being, “I've got to go be with somebody in our church,” what if “I've got to go be around somebody that I long to think, at some point, would know Jesus and be a part of our church?” What if the first step to that might not even be inviting them into this place, but instead inviting them into your home, getting into their world, and letting them get into your world? As they start to see you and see how you operate with Jesus...in fact he said earlier, **conduct yourself with wisdom**, you know, that means *to walk in wisdom*, or the NIV says, ***Be wise in the way you act.*** The way I live displays this truth that I've found in Christ. Now, all through Colossians we've heard and learned about this *super knowledge*. Why are we learning all of this knowledge? So we can gain more, so we can be smarter, so we can answer other people with wiser debates or different things like that? Colossians chapter 1, verse 9-10, says this: **Be filled with the knowledge**

of His will, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that I may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Come to know Jesus. Why? So you can become like Him. Why? So you can help others to do the same. When others see your life in a dark and confused world, does it stand out? Does it shine a light? Does it show them there's something different that you've found in the way, not only you talk, but the way you walk...the way you live?

Pastor Eric Simmons, displaying this beautifully, said,

“When a person who does not know Jesus scratches the surface of our life and witnesses our actions, our motives, our decisions, as well as how we handle our money, and our time, and our energy, our pleasure, and most importantly of all, our sin, that person should be struck with how glorious Jesus is, and how amazing the salvation is that He offers.”

He tells us to make the most of every opportunity. Another translation would say, *making best use of the time*, and others would say, *make the most of every opportunity*. It literally means redeeming the time, buying up every opportunity.

Now this verse first became real to me when I'd moved to Colorado. We were part of starting a church there. Because, for the first time I was outside of an established church, and when Sunday came, I could show up to a place and nobody else was going to show up. Because the church is people, not a place, and so I started thinking, “How in the world is there ever going to be a church unless we start to go around people and they come to know Jesus, and then they gather together?” So it changed the intentionality of every day. What am I doing throughout the day that I could use and look for opportunities to be able to invest in people's life, to live out my life in Christ around them and hope for an opportunity to share the gospel? So much so, that in our apartment complex, we would put the trash by the front door. If we heard a neighbor coming down, we would kind of run to the door and open it up and pretend like we're taking the trash out. “Hi, I'm Josh; who are you?” My wife would go to the grocery store, but she wouldn't just go to the grocery store. She'd be on mission now. “I need to go get things,” but I'm also looking at people that are around us. Things that we were doing with our kids started to become *on mission*. We're doing something with our kids, but we're also looking for opportunities.

You know what's been one of the greatest challenges for me when we moved back to Lincoln? Every week I can go throughout the week and not worry about any opportunities. And when I come to Sunday, I can show up in this room and thousands of people are going to show up, and it makes me think I don't need to look for opportunities. I don't need to live on mission, I can totally get the whole focus on me when I go to the grocery store or when I go to the gas station rather than thinking about how God can be using those opportunities for opportunities to build the kingdom. So why in the world do we do this? I think most of the time we don't look for opportunities because we're just too busy. Most of the opportunities that God is going to bring along in your life are going to be interruptions. And, Church, most of us don't have any margin for interruptions, even if it's an interruption from God. I think we're too busy. I think another time, another reason that maybe we miss opportunities is we're too tired, or too distracted, or too me-focused in the process. We're not looking for those opportunities.

This hit me a couple of months ago when I was going to one of my kids' sports games. I showed up and I was tired, sat down on the sideline, and I'm sitting there, kind of thinking I want to be

quiet. I want to watch the game. I want to get up and sneak out—totally thinking about Josh. Why? Because I didn't have enough margin and I'm too tired. So, I go through and there's opportunities all around me, and I'm not taking advantage of any of them. Something's totally shifted, right? The third reason why I don't think we take advantage of opportunities is, we're too scared. What if God actually does give me a chance to talk about Jesus? I don't know what I'm going to say. We're too scared. So, we don't take advantage of opportunities that God has there because we feel like it's all about us rather than His Spirit working in and through us.

As I was reading through this, this week, in fact just two days ago, I was getting my hair cut and I'm having to wait, so I'm kind of reading through this again. I started realizing, “Man, I’ve got to continue to make those lists, look for those opportunities. And in that moment, while I'm sitting waiting to get my hair cut, I thought I ought to pray that God would give me an opportunity while I'm cutting my hair right now. And then I can even share this opportunity on Sunday. So I go sit there, what are they going to do? They're sitting there. They’ve got to listen to you, right? But I just asked him questions we're talking through. You know, it didn't really pan out to any opportunities, but you know what I did? I started a new list. I got a name, some information about this person. And there's a change of perspective that's happened in my heart, and my life. Now I can be praying for somebody. I can continue to be intentional with a haircut to try to look for opportunities.

You know what was crazy though? After that, my wife called me and asked me to pick up some food from kind of a little Mom and Pop Shop that we've gone to before. We hadn't been there for a while, but several years ago, we went as a family, and we got to know one of the waiters through it. And just a great experience! He was an international student that had moved here to Lincoln to study, and we got to know all about him. We went next time and kind of developed that relationship more. And I realized as I was going to pick up this food, that that person could be there. So I'm kind of pulling up my list, looking through names, because it's been a long time since I've prayed for that person. Sure enough, I found it. Well, I walk in, walk in towards the register, and I see this guy and his eyes light up. I realize it's him. You know, he said, “Hi, Josh.” He remembered me, and I realized this is something that God could continue to cultivate and to build. We talked for a while; I got our food and went home. I told our family about this, talked about the fact that we need to start praying for this guy and being intentional. You know what one of my kids said? “Yeah, dad, and we should have him over here.” I thought, “You're absolutely right.” That's what it means to be around *outsiders*. That's what it means to be watchful. That's what it means to take advantage of opportunities, knowing that God could use those opportunities to share the gospel, to build into somebody's life.

He goes on to verse 6 and says:

Your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Your words reveal something about your heart. He talks about **seasoned** speech. Now there's two forms of salt, right? There's salty speech and there's speech seasoned with salt. One is snarky, and it's prideful and selfish. The other is humble, and it's full of flavor. I wonder which one Paul is talking about here. Man, Christians in America in 2022, if we could realize the impact of our

speech, the impact that it has in opening a door for opportunities for conversation or shutting it down. Don't you wish sometimes you could have a mute button with certain people, right? "Don't say that!" With other people, you could unmute, "Please share the hope that you have." He's talking about *always*, not *sometimes*, but *always* letting the words that we say be full of grace and seasoned with salt.

I heard a story that a pastor shared about one of his friends that was having a campus Bible study. As he walked in, he saw a bunch of gamers, he called them. They were in all black clothes, kind of Goth looking, black eyeliner, and huddled around this game that they're all playing. And as he looked at him, he just said, "Hey, guys, I've reserved this room for a Bible study. You're more than welcome to stay, but I just wanted you to know we're going to start up in a little bit, and I'm going to need the room." And one of the guys stands up from the table, turns around and looks at him and says, "I'm going to eat your soul." Now, I don't know what you would respond with in that situation, but I'm not making this up. You know how that guy responded? "Well, don't fill up on that. We've got free pizza afterwards." (*laughter*) And all of his friends reacted the exact same way you did. They laughed. He had a smile on his face. He was gracious. Every single person around that table stayed for the Bible study. Church, **let your speech be full of grace and seasoned with salt**. Why? So, you would know how to answer everyone. That gives a big, big assumption again, that we're actually listening to the other person as well.

First Peter 3:15 says, *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...*

Church, I wonder, "Are we taking advantage?" This week is going to be filled with opportunities in the normal, everyday, mundane things of life, to live out this truth we've revealed through Colossians, and to share the hope that we have in Jesus, I wonder, "Will you take advantage of it?" It could be through school, a person you're sitting by in that seat assignment, could be through work, the person across the way in the cubicle, could be through the grocery store and somebody you bumped into, or could be the gas station even.

I remember there was a guy in our town where we lived previously, and he always had cheaper gas, so I'd always fill up there. He owned the place, and he worked the place. It was always just him there. So I continued to go time after time to that same gas station. We talked for a while after. He was this Iranian guy that had lived in Australia, and now in the US—an incredible story! I remember asking him at one point, "How do you get your gas so cheap?" It was cheaper than everywhere else. And he said, "I put water in it." I just kind of laughed, but my car kept going, so I kept going there. (*laughter*) I remember one day, I'm in the park with my kids, and all of a sudden, who do I see, but Mike from the gas station, walking with his kids? Because of the opportunities in the old normal, everyday, mundane things, and the setting, God opened a door for an opportunity there that I could have never tried to fabricate on my own. But it's just looking and watching and being ready to share the hope that you have in Jesus Christ.

So, Church, maybe for some of us in this room right now, it's a prayer, "God give me a heart for the lost, because, if I'm honest right now, maybe they kind of annoy me. God, I want Your heart for the lost." Maybe for some of you in this room, the prayer would be, "God, bring someone across my path that I could share the hope that I found in You with." Or maybe, "God, redirect my path to put me around people, so I could get to know them, invest in their life, and look for an

opportunity to share the hope.” Maybe for some others this week, it's just an encouragement to continue praying, and being watchful, and when that opportunity comes, being ready to speak the truth. Church, may we be a church that lives every day on mission with Christ.

Jesus, thank You for the richness and the fullness that we have found in You. There is no one else like You. God, we don't want to keep this to ourselves and hide it. We want the world to know, so, God, I pray that You would be evident through our words, through the way we walk, through our posture, all throughout the week, that somebody would look at us and say there's something different about that person. God, I pray that You would give us a conviction to be in constant conversation with You. Bring people to our hearts and our minds that we can be praying for, longing that they would know You and have what we have in You. God, give us courage to share the hope that we've found in You. Give us openness to allow ourselves to be the tool that You can use as your Spirit works through us and gives us words to say and talk with people about. God, we long to be a church that shines bright with the hope we have. Even this morning, God, would You get us ready for the opportunities that we're going to see come across all week long. Praying this in Jesus name, Amen.

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FALL 2022 // WEEK 10

Life Group Questions

Colossians – Rooted in Christ // Nov 12-13, 2022

Every day, on Mission, with Christ // Colossians 4:2-6

Introduction

Welcome to the final week of the Fall Life Group Session. After this week, we will take a break for the holidays. Signup for the Winter Session of Life Groups will launch on January 1, 2023. If you are continuing in your current Life Group, you DO NOT need to sign up again! The Winter Session officially starts the weekend of January 14/15, 2023.

If you didn't have a chance to fill out the Life Group Survey last week, please take a few moments to fill it out this week. It will only take 5 minutes of your time. Here is a link to the survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/D10pY0VeZ3> Or use this QR Code:



Throughout our study in Colossians, we've seen Paul take large themes of the gospel message and apply them to the details of everyday life. Last week's theme of relating well to one another brings us to one of the most intimate details of our lives: prayer. Having an intentional prayer life deepens our roots as we live out the gospel.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) If you were able to listen to only one music album ever again, what would it be and why?
- 2) What are three things you are thankful for this week?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives

- c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
 - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) Based on what you heard in the sermon, how would you rate the motivation and intent of your prayer life (1 is haphazard and 10 is fully devoted)? Explain your rating.
- 2) Read Luke 18:1-8. How would you summarize what Jesus says about devoted prayer?

How does Jesus' idea of prayer coincide with Paul's description in Colossians 4:2?

Share a time when you learned the importance of being watchful and/or thankful in prayer.

- 3) Paul refers to "the mystery of Christ" which is something we've heard of before in this letter (Col 1:26-27, 2:3). Remember a mystery is something that was previously unknown has been made known by God. **How would you describe what Paul says is "the mystery of Christ" that has now been made known?** (refer to the verses above and also Ephesians 3:4-6)

Certainly, to a first century Jew the inclusion of the Gentiles in the promise would be mysterious. **How** does the inclusiveness of the gospel inform the way you interact with others who may seem to live outside of your faith community?

- 4) Just as Paul invites others to pray for opportunities to share the gospel, he also wants them to learn to be wise in how they approach those outside the faith. **Based on what he says in verses 5-6, what are the key areas we should focus on?**

In what ways would you like to learn and grow to more wisely interact with unbelievers?

- 5) As you reflect on this sermon series in Colossians, what is a “big idea” God has taught you through this letter? How will this idea make a difference in the way you live going forward? (pro-tip: use this as your Journal prompt in this week’s Spiritual Exercise below)

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Prayer for an Open Door: Paul’s prayer wasn’t for the doors of his prison cell to open, but for the hearts of his jailers to open to the gospel. Take his example by praying with intention for those around you this week who don’t know Jesus as Lord. Here’s a suggested progression:

1. Ask for your heart to be softened and open so you notice those in need of Him.
2. Pray to live out your faith in front of others so they become curious about what makes you different from the world.
3. Pray to have words that invite and are skillful in sharing the gospel in a way that they will understand.

Journal: Look back through your sermon notes or your answers to discussion questions throughout this series. Take note of repeated ideas that stand out to you. Respond with freeform writing, not worrying about punctuation or form but just getting your ideas on the page. If you are more comfortable drawing pictures of your ideas, that’s fine too. The hope is that your writing/drawing will further your understanding of the scripture we’ve been studying.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?