

Sterling Sermon Guide
Colossians 1: The Mystery of God
Moses Falco, May 28, 2017



How to use this guide

- The main purpose of this guide is to encourage groups and individuals to dig deeper into the topic of a sermon. This guide summarizes the sermon and provides discussion questions and suggestions of how to continue the conversation in order to apply the topic to real life.
- Listen to the sermon online (sterlingmennonite.ca) if you were not in church that Sunday or if you want to hear it again. If this sermon is not on the website, please contact our office.
- Re-read the scripture text and recommended reading.
- Select a leader in your group to guide your conversation and to lead you through this study.
- Use what is helpful for your group, but do not be bound by this guide. Let the Spirit lead you. You may be surprised where you end up.

Colossians 1: The Mystery of God
Part 1 of a 4-part series

Scripture Text: Colossians 1:15-23

Recommended Reading: Colossians 1

Prepare Your Heart: Colossians 1:13

Sermon Nugget: What does God look like? How can we know God? If we want to answer these questions, we must first look to Jesus. Jesus is the best and fullest revelation we have of God. But Jesus also does what no other being has done before. In Him we discover the mystery of God, that God actually wants to indwell us. Not only is God with us, but the “hope of glory” that we have is that Jesus wants to live in us.

Introduction to Colossians and Prayer

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae, a city in Asia Minor that Paul likely never visited. The church was started by Epaphras, according to Paul, who brought the gospel to this very pluralistic society. At the centre of this letter is Jesus. Because of the Colossian context, Paul focuses so much on who Jesus is and what He has done for us. But most importantly, Paul reveals a mystery that has been secret for a very long time.

Colossians 1:1-8 is Paul's introduction and greeting to the church. He is thankful for them and reports what is happening in other parts of the world.

In Colossians 1:9-14, Paul shares with the Colossians how he is praying for them. He prays that:

- God would fill them with knowledge and understanding through wisdom from the Spirit.
- They can live lives worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit, and growing in knowledge.
- They may be strengthened for endurance and patience.

Paul also rejoices in Christ, thanking God for what He is doing for them/us.



Discussion Questions

- 1) How could Paul's prayer for the Colossians serve as a model for how we pray for one another?
- 2) What would it look like to pray this kind of prayer for those Christians and churches we don't agree with or get along with?

Who is Jesus? What has He done for us?

Paul continues in Colossians 1:15-22 to describe who Jesus is and what He has done for us. This list is quite impressive. It gives us a good idea of who Jesus is, and at the core of that identity is that Jesus is the fullest revelation we have of God. If we want to know what God is like, we need to look to Jesus. The Bible is the fullest revelation we have of who Jesus is, and that's why we spend so much time studying it.

This Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God, incarnated Himself and made His dwelling among us. God became man to reconcile us and all of creation to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). We are liberated, set free, free from accusation, because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God did this for His creation.

Activity

Take a few moments to make a list of all the ways in which Paul describes who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Now add on your own descriptions. How have you experienced Jesus in your life?

Discussion Questions

- 3) What does it mean that Jesus is the centre of our faith? What does that look like practically when we engage in scripture and discern difficult topics together?
- 4) Paul is writing to people in a city that has many competing world-views. He is trying to show the difference between other gods and philosophies, and Jesus. How do you think Jesus compares in our pluralistic society? What kinds of conversations could this lead us to with other religions? Could Jesus be the fulfillment for other religions as well? Check out Acts 17.

The Mystery of God

The Christian life is not hard. It is impossible. To live the way Jesus calls us to live would never work, or would only work for a few. But to be perfect is impossible for anyone. How can we transform ourselves into the kinds of people who put others before ourselves, love our enemies, and give our lives over to God? The secret lies in Colossians 1:26-29.

This is the main point of Colossians 1. We cannot live the Christian life by ourselves. The good news is that we don't have to, nor are we meant to. The mystery of God (as Paul calls it), is that Christ is in us. Not only did God make His dwelling among us and die for us, but He offers His life as our source for life. He offers to be our life for us.

The only hope of glory we have is Christ in us. This mystery is no longer a secret for us. It has been revealed and is open for all who choose Christ. His indwelling life will transform us and give us true life.

Jesus uses the image of a vine in John 15. He says "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." We are to remain in Christ as He is in us. What was once a mystery has become a new reality for us. Christ is ready to live in us, to indwell all of our life. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Are you willing to live into that reality?

Quote

"To be *in Christ* - that is redemption; but for Christ to be *in you* - that is sanctification!"
- Major Ian Thomas,
The Saving Life of Christ

Discussion Questions

- 5) As easy as it sounds, it is a life changing decision to have Jesus live in your life. What does it look like practically, in every day life, to have Jesus live in us?
- 6) What parts of your life are you hesitant to give over to God? Into which parts of your life do you not want to let God in? What steps do you want to take to let God in?
- 7) What other thoughts, reflections, questions, or concerns does Colossians 1 raise for you?

Resources for Further Study (available for loan from Sterling)

The Saving Life of Christ by Major W. Ian Thomas (Zondervan, 1961). This book focuses on the indwelling life of Christ and how it can change us from the inside out.

Why Jesus? by William H. Willimon (Abingdon Press, 2010). This is a great book that describes who Jesus is and what He has done.

Colossians & Philemon by Ernest D. Martin (Believers Church Bible Commentary, 1993).

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon by Ralph P. Martin (Interpretation Commentary, 1991).

Developed by Moses Falco, Pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, Canada, 2017.

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11