

Restart Series

Sermon 3

Life on Mission

Col 4:2-6

For the last couple of weeks we have looked at what it would take to restart our faith journey as adults. Often times through the rigors of life we get bogged down with the unnecessary and as Christians lose sight of our original purpose and mission. The first week I simply challenged you to rediscover the resurrection. Our faith in Christ hinges on the foundational truth of the resurrection, and for us to regain the vigor we once had for our faith, for us to restart this Christian journey then we must go back to the beginning, and for all of us who are professed Christians then that starting point is the resurrection of Jesus Christ alone, and if we are to move forward, restart our faith, then our focus must return to the resurrection.

Then last week we looked at the story of Zacchaeus and focused our attention on the final verse of that narrative; v-10 “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” This was and is the mission of Jesus as stated by Jesus. If upon rediscovering the resurrection we are not compelled to action then we have missed the point, however, if our response to this as believers is to join the mission of Jesus, then we must recognize the mission of Jesus, and Jesus was very clear in stating that he came to earth to seek and to save the lost. To search for those who are lost; without a relationship with God, and return them securely to the Father. Lastly I gave everyone a prayer guide for the week and on that guide I challenged you to pray specifically for one person whom you knew was lost, and listed for you specific prayers each day.

So we have seen that the starting point or restart point for our faith is the resurrection, and then discussed the singular mission of Jesus while on earth, and this week I want to look at how we live a life on mission, and join the everyday mission of Jesus. How do we get from a spoken faith to a faith that produces results, and not just any good thing that could be tied to moral behavior, but results that affect the kingdom of God, and are in line with Jesus stated mission as seen last week in Luke 19:10

This morning I would like to begin with our text which is found in Colossians 4:2-6. If you have your Bibles you can turn there with me or it will be on the screen so you can follow along. Before we look at the text let's talk about the church at Colossae for just a moment.

Certainly Paul was much more eloquent in his speech than I, but I believe that the words of Paul written to Colossae were to remind them of the starting point of their faith just as we have been discussing for a few weeks. There are a couple of things you need to know about this letter.

First Colossae was not a church founded by Paul, but none the less he felt responsible for their well being as a church.

Secondly this epistle (or letter) is one of four prison epistles as Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned which we will read in few moments.

Lastly Paul was writing to address the church at Colossae because it seems as though the Christians at Colossae faced a major threat to their orthodoxy. Like many letters, this one countered a specific movement threatening to remove the church from Christ. Paul affirmed the centrality of Christ in both doctrine and practice. While most commentators agree that a problem threatened the church, there is no consensus as to its

exact nature.¹ None the less Paul urged them to remember Christ above all, and in all. It is Christ and Christ alone that brought salvation, not traditions, or the philosophy of man, but the life death and resurrection of Christ.

While there have been arguments about the specifics of the threat facing Colossae it is never clearly stated and the deeper problem may have been the age-old clash of the human mind versus the Spirit or human tradition versus the revelation in Christ. At many points, merely human ideas attempt to reformulate Christian truth, to remake it in their image.²

On the other hand, the problem also arises when Christianity becomes only tradition. The specific practices addressed in Colossae may well have had revelational roots. They were extensions of Old Testament law, creeds without conviction and structure without substance lead the unsuspecting away from God.

To counter the subtle philosophy that threatened Colossae centuries ago, Christians today will find it imperative to know Christ personally and intimately, theologically and practically.

So it seems as we read the letter that the Colossians needed a restart with Christ as the center, much like myself, and many of you as well. Thus finally Paul gives some final instruction in ch.4 that applies to the life of the church at Colossae, to Paul's ministry, and to us as we seek to walk with the Lord today. So let's begin then.

¹ Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 171). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 183). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

*****Read Col 4:2-6*****

Explanation

There are some very clear takeaways for us in this passage. If we are going to join the mission of Jesus then we must first pray. The church must be characterized by prayer. Paul goes on to give some specific parameters for this prayer.

Watchful Prayer – we must be aware of what is going on around us. The connotations of watchfulness are mental awareness or alertness. In basic training our drill sergeants would sound off with “STAY ALERT” and we would reply with “STAY ALIVE”. It is not wise to move around in a combat zone unaware of what is going on around you, and likewise it is not enough for us to pray haphazardly or without an awareness of our surroundings particularly in regards to what would affect the spread of the Gospel.

Thankful Prayer - We must pray with an attitude of thankfulness. It would be easy for Paul in his current circumstances while penning this letter to be discouraged, since he was imprisoned, but despite this he instructs the Colossians and us to pray with thankfulness. It is very easy for us to take a quick glance at our circumstances and to immediately be overwhelmed, to be stripped of our joy that comes from Christ living in us. Pray with thankfulness.

Pray for an OPEN DOOR – Paul didn’t request prayer for a door to be opened to walk out of prison, but rather an open door to share the mysteries of Christ. If we are going to have an impact on those around us, if we truly want to join the mission of Jesus then we must pray for doors to be open to share the Gospel. Here is a disclaimer, when you pray this prayer, be ready to share, because God will surely grant this request.

Pray for Clarity – Many of you are like me and the prospect of sharing the Gospel is frightening, and we so gripped by the fear of sharing something incorrectly, or being unclear that we often don't share at all. Paul instructs us to pray for clarity as we share. Pray that your speech would be easily understood, and that your audience would hear the good news of Jesus in a manner that necessitates a response.

Beyond prayer Paul gives us some practical instruction we should apply to our lives as we take the Gospel message forward.

Be WISE – Conduct yourselves accordingly. Walk through life with wisdom as revealed from Christ and in Christ. In particular conduct yourselves with wisdom in the presence of “outsiders,” those who do not know Christ. Don't conduct yourselves in a manner that would deny you the opportunity to introduce someone to Jesus.

Be OPPORTUNISTIC – Make use of every opportunity. Other translations state to redeem your time or to buy up every chance afforded you to share the love of Jesus Christ. We are bombarded with opportunities daily to present the Gospel, and regretfully the overwhelming majority of those opportunities are squandered. Don't let an opportunity pass.

Be Gracious - “Let your speech be always with the graciousness appropriate to Christians, i.e., those who live in a state of grace.” We have been offered grace and those of us who are believers we have received this grace, this free gift of God, the gift of forgiveness found in the blood of Jesus Christ. Let your speech mimic the grace you have received. You neither deserved it nor earned it, thus you should express it in your speech to those who likewise have neither earned it or deserve it.

Be SALTY - Salt had three uses at that time. It could preserve a food, “sterilize” a food (antiseptic), or season a food. Here Paul took the last meaning. Conversation was to be seasoned, i.e., acceptable and inoffensive.

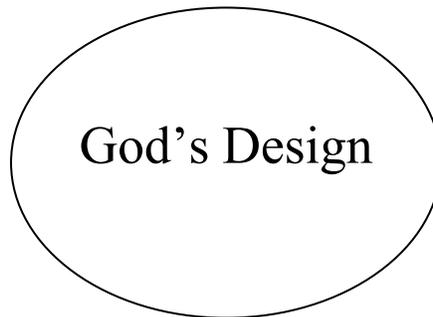
Be PREPARED - Finally, our conversation should be suited to each person. When confronting the masses of people as Paul and the others did, often someone took offense. Paul stated that each one should know how to answer each objector. Sound answers offered with a positive spirit overcome many obstacles to the gospel. This text emphasizes the method of answering more than the content. It calls for Christian graciousness and sensitivity to the person and situation.

So how do we do all of that? What does that look like in real life Josh? Many times we preach about or speak about sharing the Gospel and as we have discussed it is the mission of Jesus, and it is also something that few of us really know how to do. I include myself in that many just like last week I confess my inability to you to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in spoken word to another live human being. I think often times it is such a terrifying thought because we just aren't sure how to go about it. We don't know how to even breach the topic of Jesus, much less tell someone of their need for a savior. So today I want to take a few minutes and I want to share something with you that has been extremely helpful to me. Something that when I heard although I didn't immediately use it, it immediately made sense to me, and I think it will make sense to you as well.

When you came in today each of you received a napkin and an ink pen. Would you hold those up for me? Ok if you aren't holding one up then I'm going to assume you need one, and I'm going to have someone bring you a napkin and pen. Trust me you are going to need it, and it may change your life. Now I'm going to be drawing on this board here, and I want you to copy down everything I draw on your napkin, nothing more and nothing less, basically its fill in the blanks.

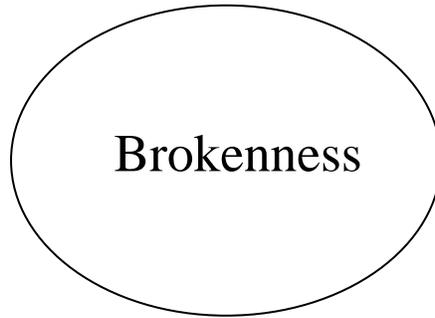
Present 3 Circles

Wouldn't it be nice if everything worked together in harmony? Sure it would. Well the bible tells us that originally the world worked perfectly, and everything and everyone fit together in harmony. We see evidence of this beauty, purpose, and design around us. This was God's original design.



In Genesis 1:31 it says that after God created everything he looked around at all he created and it was very good. God had a design and purpose for everything including man and woman, and it wasn't long before Adam and Eve decided they knew better than God, and they chose to do what they wanted. They ate the fruit they had been instructed to avoid, and thus walked away from God's design. The bible has a word for this it is called Sin.

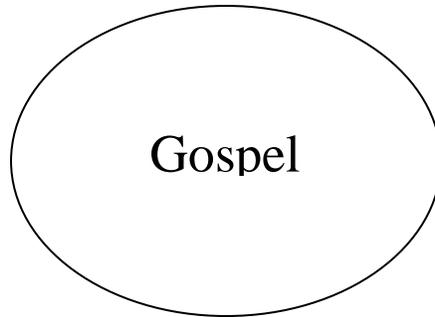
Sin is simply choosing to do what you want as opposed to doing what God wants; deciding that you know better than God. Now you may not be so bold as to make that claim, but essentially that is what you are saying.



Brokenness

When we sin we depart from God's design and that leads to brokenness. Life just doesn't work when we selfishly insist on doing things our own way and we ignore God and his original design for our lives. We see this brokenness all around us and in our own lives as well. We see broken systems, broken relationships, and broken lives. We see brokenness in poverty, pain, suffering, violence, and death all around us.

What happens when we realize that life isn't working we look for a way out. When something is broke what do you try to do? Fix it right? We tend to go in many different directions, trying to figure out the answer to all our problems. Sadly though this never works and if anything we simply become more broken. However, brokenness isn't all bad though, because it is due to this brokenness that we recognize our need for something greater.



Gospel

It is at this point that we need a remedy – some good news. Because of his love God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us (to earth) and lived perfectly according to God’s design.

Jesus came to rescue us – to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead – to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. This is called the Gospel or Good News.

So how do we get this good news? How does that fix our brokenness? Well the bible says that we must repent and believe. Repent is just a bible word that means change. We were going one direction (away from God), and confess our sin to God ask him to forgive us, and turn and go in another direction (towards God). So we must repent. Likewise we must believe. Believe in our hearts that Jesus is God’s son. Believe that Jesus came to earth, lived a sin free life. A life we couldn’t live. He died the death on the cross that we deserve, as punishment for our sin. Believe that he was buried and on the third day raised to life. If we believe this and repent then God is faithful to forgive us of our sins. God then takes the payment given by his Son (blood of Jesus on the cross) and wipes away our debt, our sin, and shortcomings, and we are restored to a right

relationship with God, and have the privilege of spending eternity in heaven in the presence of God. It's that simple.

After we have been restored to a right relationship with God we are then able to recover from our brokenness, and capable of pursuing God's design for our life, the design that he had for us from the beginning. It is when we begin to pursue God's design that we recognize that he has sent us back out into a sinful and broken world to share this Good News so that others may repent and believe, be restored to God, and recover from their brokenness so they can pursue God's design for their life.

How simple is that? Doesn't that make so much sense? If you can memorize those three circles then you are capable of presenting the Gospel to someone who is lost. Does it prepare you to answer every question? No, but it equips you to present the truth needed for someone to make a profession of faith. I have used this on several occasions, and have seen two people so far accept Christ after I presented it to them. It's a tool that works. It's not a tract and it's not designed for that purpose it is designed to direct a conversation that you are having with a lost person to Jesus. It's also not the only tool or only way to present the Gospel, it's just one way, and I would encourage all of you to be prepared to do just that regardless of the method you choose to use.

