

# A Together People

*Colossians 2:1-5*

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- I. Knitting Together
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So one of the things that continually amazes me is how people who as far as I know are not Christians and may not even believe there's a God can end up saying very profound and true things. Too often it seems to me that some Christians act like no one but Christians can ever say anything that is true or of value.


The reason God has enabled people to say things that are true about Him, His creation and His people even if they don't believe in Him is because of what we call natural or general revelation or common grace. The Bible teaches that there are general or natural truths that are wired into the fabric of the universe and who we are as human beings that are common in all of us (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:18-20).

How about this weather this weekend? Feels like we finally got our sun Diego back eh? I don't know about you but that along with the time change and it staying light later has just made me smell summer. I can feel it coming!

Now, I don't know about you all but I'm a music guy. I'm almost constantly listening to music every day. I wake up to music on my alarm clock. Then we turn the stereo on in the house right away in the morning. Music is on in my truck during my commute. I listen to music when I work out, when I'm studying, while I'm in the shower, pretty much all the time. I actually used to work at a record store when we first started this church and the church couldn't pay me. That was back before digital music and I think other than being a pastor it was my favorite job.

So I'm a big music guy. I'm always listening to music. I love Apple music and more than get my monies worth each month. But I'm not just into having music on as background noise. I'm really into music pairing. It's kind of like wine pairing, where certain wines go with certain foods. Music pairing is where you listen to certain kinds of music during certain kinds of activities. When I'm working out, it's gotta be upbeat, get your blood pumping music and when I'm chilling, it's gotta be low key jams.

This week, with our sun coming back out to play and then while studying our sermon text for today the perfect music pairing song came to mind, by Jack Johnson. If you don't know who Jack Johnson is, he's sort of the king of mellow surf and sun jams who writes these sweet chill vibe songs while sitting on the beaches of Hawaii.

I brought a little clip with me today of this song, so here is "Better Together" by Jack Johnson. 

- | Love is the answer, at least for most of the questions in my heart
- | Like why are we here? And where do we go?

| And how come it's so hard?  
| It's not always easy and  
| Sometimes life can be deceiving  
| I'll tell you one thing, it's always better when we're together

| It's always better when we're together  
| Yeah, we'll look at the stars when we're together  
| Well, it's always better when we're together  
| Yeah, it's always better when we're together

With that, let's go ahead and read our passage for today from the Bible and I think you'll see the connections right away. We're in Colossians 2:1-5 today in a sermon I've titled, "A Together People."

### **Colossians 2:1-5**

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

Let's jump into this first point, "Knitting Together."

## **I. Knitting Together**

I'm taking the name of this first point from this incredible picture we're given of what church relationships are supposed to be like where in verse 2 it says we're to be "knit together in love."

I didn't really know anything about knitting going into this week, so I sought out one of the resident grandmas of our church and had her sit me down and talk to me about knitting. What I found out was phenomenal. Just taking two sticks and a couple of balls of string you can do this magic where you can make beanies, scarfs, sweaters, slippers and even blankets! It's amazing.

What I learned about knitting is that it's a very time consuming but enjoyable activity. You take these knitting needles, wrap yarn around them and then you loop the pieces of yarn into each other, intertwining and joining them together. When you complete the project, you end up with something that is strong and warm. You can't pull apart the individual pieces of thread apart and their interwoven unity makes something that can protect you from the cold.

It's pretty fascinating and a wonderful picture of what healthy relationships are meant to be like. We wrap ourselves around each other with love, intertwining our lives following the pattern of Jesus Christ. When we do that the result is something that is strong and protects us against the ailments of the dark and the cold. So basically a good and healthy church knits together. Sound fun? All the girls are like, "Yeah!" All the guys are like, "You're weird."

Our text today highlights a few things that contribute to this knitting process. First, it's a "struggle." The word translated "struggle" here actually comes from the word "agonize" basically saying, it's not easy.

This last week I heard that our Finance Deacon, Carson Kvaternik got a hold of his wife's knitting needles and thought he'd try his hand at it. Apparently, it didn't work out too well. He ended up stabbing himself and bleeding everywhere. Knitting ain't easy.

In our text, being knit together is a relational thing. And here's the thing, Relationships are not easy. They're often easy at first when you first get to know someone but once you start spending more and more time with a person and really get to know them, it gets hard, it can be a struggle to love others when they're not being very loving or lovable.

But it's often through those difficult times and seasons that you end up really loving each other and end up have a deeper love and appreciation for one another. Ever had that happen where you get in a fight or an argument with a person but you work through it and the result is a major uptick in the love and trust between you?

The tone of the text here is very affectionate. Paul, who is the guy God had write this talks in a very personal and intimate way about how he feels for the people in the church at Colossae and the church in Laodicea, which was about eleven miles away, both being churches planted by Paul's pastor friend Epaphras.

Look at a couple of things he says, "I want you to know..." and he expresses this longing and desire to see them "face to face." Letting others know we love them is an integral part of healthy relationships. We have to tell those we love that we love them often and then we have to show them we love them when it's hard and a struggle.

When was the last time you told somebody you love them? When was the last time you did something to show you love them? Like maybe writing them a note, a text or a letter like Paul is doing here.

When we do that what we end up doing is encouraging others. That's one of the ways our text says we knit, we make stitches together by encouraging one another hearts..." that their hearts may be encouraged."

The word encourage means to pour courage into someone or to come alongside them. In my opinion, we tend to judge, criticize and discourage others far too easily and far too often when people are struggling. Instead, what we need to do is in love come alongside them and pour courage in.

Is there someone that comes to mind God wants you to encourage? Someone, you just need to spend some time with and tell them to hang in there, let them know that they are doing a good job, pour courage in and tell them they can do it, to keep fighting and keep striving and keep going after what God has put in their heart?

Encouraging others is a powerful tool of love in our knitting. You can do that from a distance to an extent, but like our text mentions there is nothing like face to face. “Face to face“ is this special phrase in the Bible. In fact, the whole theme and goal of the Bible is that we as human beings would one day be able to be present with God in His glory face to face.

When we’re face to face we bring our personal presence, our body language, our facial expressions, the sound of our voice, its tone and our touch. So much more can be accomplished face to face than what can be communicated just through text alone. And I think this is an important thing for us in our day and age.

Sherry Turtle in her book “Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age” says this,

*“Face to face conversation is the most human and humanizing thing we do. Fully present to one another, we learn to listen. It’s where we develop the capacity for empathy. It’s where we experience the joy of being heard. And conversation advances self-reflection.*

*But these days we find ways around conversation. We hide from each other even as we’re constantly connected to each other. For on our screens, we are tempted to present ourselves as we would like to be. Online it is easy to compose, edit and improve as we revise. It all adds up to a flight from conversation in which we allow ourselves to be fully present and vulnerable where empathy and intimacy flourish.”*

This is one of the reasons we try so hard as a church to encourage you to be physically present here each Sunday and why we push community groups. I know some of you are introverts and that really getting to know other people can be scary but we honestly believe it’s in healthy God loving relationships that we flourish best as human beings.

It blows me away what people will do for love today. People will compromise themselves just so someone will love them. People will put up with abusive relationships because they want so bad to be loved. People will spend gobs of money trying to get someone to love them. People will do almost anything to be loved.

And I get it. I think we all want to be loved. I think that’s a fact of human life. And it’s into that reality that the Bible in our text today gives us a pathway and a pattern for that love. It’s through struggling together, being together and encouraging one another with God’s help that loving relationships are formed. Otherwise known as knitting together.

So from now on, it’s our goal to be known in San Diego as the knitting church. What do you guys think? Maybe we should just stick with Resolved? True story though, for the first three years of our church my beginning of the year vision sermon was titled, “Resolved To Grow and Build in Love.” Pretty much the same thing as knitting church!

Well, let’s move on to our next point, Treasuring Together.

## **II. Treasuring Together**

I'm taking this point from verse two and three which explain that this knitted together love comes from knowing and understanding God in and through Jesus Christ. When we see that and believe that verse two says it's true riches and verse three says in it we have discovered a treasure of wisdom. First, let's talk about true riches and treasure and then how God is made known in Jesus Christ.

I don't think we'd be too far off to say that money makes the world go around. We live in a global economy and like we talked about last week we've all gotta have a job in order to make money so we can buy food and shelter. Because of that, it's very easy to think that the goal of life is to make money and that the more money we make the happier and free-er we are as human beings.

And it's been that way for a long time. Ancient Laodicea during the time when our book of Colossians was first written had one of the most well-known banks in it of the ancient world. They dealt with the desire for material prosperity just like we do today. Throughout time people have thought that having riches is the goal of life.

The problem with that perspective is when we orient our entire lives around money and getting richer we are placing value on things that have no permanent or eternal value. Get this, no human currency or material of the earth has any inherent value. All dollar bills are are pieces of paper. All gold is a yellowed colored rock. All diamonds are shiny pieces of stone that look like glass.

Thus, it's actually a very odd thing to make it the goal of your life to get these things that you do not get to take with you when you die. They have no eternal or inherent value. But do you know what does? Human beings and relationships.

And this is what the Bible teaches is true treasure. One of the best passages on it comes from what is known as the book of wisdom, the book called Proverbs. Here's what Proverbs 3:13-22 says,

### ***Proverbs 3:13-22***

*13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,  
and the one who gets understanding,  
14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver  
and her profit better than gold.  
15 She is more precious than jewels,  
and nothing you desire can compare with her.  
16 Long life is in her right hand;  
in her left hand are riches and honor.  
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,  
and all her paths are peace.  
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;  
those who hold her fast are called blessed.  
19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;  
by understanding he established the heavens;  
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open,  
and the clouds drop down the dew.  
21 Do not lose sight of these—*

*keep sound wisdom and discretion,  
22 and they will be life for your soul  
and adornment for your neck.*

Wisdom and understanding are better than silver, gold, precious jewels, riches and honor and they are gained by knowing God who gives eternal life to the soul.

Maybe you're here today and this is the thing God is wanting to talk to you about, putting money above Him? Maybe God is wanting to bless you today with true wealth and riches in having you discover the treasure of wisdom and life that is found in knowing God in Christ?

Our text today calls that a mystery. And it is. It's a pretty big claim to say the hope of every human being and of the world is found in Christ. To say there is eternal wisdom and wealth in knowing and believing and having a relationship with just one single person is a monumental claim...and yet that what our text says, that it is all found in Christ.

I've got a quote for you on this and then I'll try to unpack it for us. Alexander Maclaren was a Scottish pastor in the 1800s and here's how he said it,

*"In Christ, as in a great storehouse, lie all the riches of spiritual wisdom, the massive ingots of solid gold which when coined into creeds and doctrines are the wealth of the Church. All which we can know concerning God and man, concerning sin and righteousness and duty, concerning another life, is in Him Who is the home and deep mine where truth is stored...The central fact of the universe and the perfect encyclopedia of all moral and spiritual truth is Christ, the Incarnate Word, the Lamb slain, the ascended King."*

That's a beautiful and robust summary. Here's how I would explain it. The difference between Christ and Christianity and every other religion or belief system in the world is the difference between an idea and a person. Every other religion or belief system is about achieving some kind of right way of thinking and living. All the ideas are different variants of each other but the general scope is the same. If you come to see things the right way and do things the right way you will have achieved wisdom, understanding, riches, happiness, whatever.

Christ is different because the Gospel of Jesus Christ says it doesn't matter how hard you try, how smart you get, how high up you're able to attain, you could never reach all the way up to God and even then it's still just an idea in your brain. The Gospel of Jesus Christ says instead of us trying to climb our way up to God, He came down to us in a person, in Jesus Christ.

Because of that Christianity is essentially a body religion saying God took on a body in order to save and our bodies so that they might be redeemed and restored from their mortal state back to their original eternal form where we can be with God and perfectly enjoy Him and one another forever. All other religions and belief systems are what are called gnostic teaching, from gnosis the word for knowledge, saying it's all about what you know. Christianity says it isn't about what you know but who you know and what God has done in Christ for you that you can't do on your own.

This is what makes Jesus Christ solely unique and necessary for every person. Because then, apart from knowing Jesus Christ, we cannot really know God and His heart of love for human beings. In Christ, God came down to us to be with us and then give up His life for us so that we might forever be with Him!

Jesus Himself talked about the necessity of us knowing God the Father through Him. Here's how He said it in John 14:6-10,

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. From now on you know him and have seen him....Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. 10 I am in the Father and the Father is in me."*

So today if you want to know God, really know Him, we have to look to Christ, for in Him all the mysteries and riches of God are made known. I think it works like this... Earlier we talked about the common knowledge or grace God has left as a witness to Himself in creation. So we can understand a lot of things, but we will not understand them in full until we see them from the perspective of an eternally powerful Creator God who has loved us and made Himself known for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ!

There is no clearer picture of love than looking at the cross of Jesus Christ where God spilled His blood in order to save and redeem His chief creation, human beings. Today, you want to know God and what He's about, there's no better picture than the cross.

Which is why 1 Corinthians 1:18-23 in the Bible says this,

*"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified...Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."*

Today if you feel like you don't know God or if it feels like God is far off and away, the answer is to look to Jesus Christ, for in Him we find the source of wisdom and life. We're always better when we're together and what we need most is to be together with God and we can be with Him through Jesus Christ.

Well, we have one last point for today, Standing Together.

### **III. Standing Together**

Earlier we talked about struggle because of how Paul said in verse 1, "I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you..." Now here at the end of the paragraph in verse 4-5, he returns to the struggle and uses a couple of military terms to talk about how we can stand together in struggle.

First, in verse 4 he talks about where challenge and difficulty come from even when we are doing our best to look to God and His love in Christ. It says that even then there is this possibility and temptation to be deceived or deluded by “plausible arguments.”

To be deluded or deceived is the old trick of Satan that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when the first man and woman were deceived by him. His strategy has always been the same, he mixes a little truth with untruth and we get confused and misled. Sometimes I think we tend to think that reason is impervious to error but the reality is our reasoning is not always perfect and reason can be used to trick people into saying and believing things deep down they know are not true.

That’s what this whole “plausible arguments” thing is all about. Arguments back then and still today are a big deal. Some of the best arguers in the ancient world were guys like Aristotle and Plato. Philosophy and being a philosopher was a big deal. People would train in debate and rhetoric and many cities even had designated centers for philosophical debates.

Think of it this way. Think of a smooth-talking salesperson who can convince you that you really need something you don’t and can get your mind all twisted up thinking you have to have this particular item and it’s worth the amount of money you don’t really have to spend it. Any of you ever been to a timeshare presentation? We’ve done it a couple of times for free tickets or vacations. It’s hard. Man, you have to literally say “no” for like three hours straight and somewhere in the middle of it I always find myself thinking maybe it’s a good idea to sign up.

Or think about a lawyer. This happens all the time in courtrooms. Lawyers are masters at using reason to manipulate and trap people. They use clever words and strategies to lure you into a corner where you’re trapped and the entire picture of truth and what really happened gets massively skewed.

How this works with us and treasure we have in knowing Christ is we can be tempted to think life really is about money and making a lot of it so we’ll be happy. We can be tempted to think we don’t really need God in our life. We can get confused by so many ideas out there that we think it’s impossible that we really need Jesus Christ.

The answer, how to stand firm when we experience doubt and confusion and thereby experience the joy of God, verse 5 says comes by having good order and firmness of faith together. Those two phrases, “good order” and “firmness” are actually both military terms.

Good order is the picture of a bunch of soldiers lined up shoulder to shoulder and ready to go into battle. They’ve made a commitment to one another to have each other’s backs. They’re organized and have a game plan and they are ready.

Firmness is a reference to the strength of the soldiers. They are tough, trained, armed and will fight to the death. They have resolve!

Just imagine this with me for a moment. Say you’re on a battlefield. And we are. The Bible says in Ephesians 6, as Christians we’re all involved in a spiritual battle for our souls and the souls of others. So we’re on a battlefield and about to go fight.



What do you think happens to the guy who runs out of the line all by himself right toward the enemy. He gone. He'll get taken down easily.

Now think of the line of toughened soldiers. They stand firm, look at one another and say, "You ready? You ready?" There are strong fierce nods. And then together they charge!

That's us. We are charging together in good order and firmness of faith...with our knitting needles of love. But we're following behind the Lord and victor of death, Jesus Christ who was crucified but rose from the dead. And with Him on our side, as Martin Luther wrote in the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God", there's no way we can lose the battle.

We're always better when we're together and when we're together we can't lose.

## **Conclusion**

Well, it's been fun today. I started out the sermon talking about Jack Johnson's song "Better Together." He's so close.

- | Love is the answer, at least for most of the questions in my heart
- | Like why are we here? And where do we go?
- | And how come it's so hard?
- | It's not always easy and
- | Sometimes life can be deceiving
- | I'll tell you one thing, it's always better when we're together
  
- | It's always better when we're together
- | Yeah, we'll look at the stars when we're together
- | Well, it's always better when we're together
- | Yeah, it's always better when we're together

The only thing missing is Jesus. You see the truth is without Him we'll never truly be for one another, we'll always be for ourselves. We need Him to be together. We need Him to bring us and God together and then when that happens we can truly be with and for each other.

All alone we'll drown but when we're welded and knit together with the love of Christ we are strong and we are rich.