

The Resolved Church

Pastor Duane Smets
September 22nd, 2019

Colossians | The Glories of Christ

“A Missional People”

Colossians 4:3-6

I. Insiders & Outsiders

II. Message & Method

It was nearly twenty-three years ago when after a period of running from God for some years I discovered the peace of Christ that came and found me. I was a freshman at college in 1996. I immediately went home and couldn't wait to talk to my friends about the things I was discovering and coming to believe about God and the Bible story of His love and grace sent to me in the person of Jesus.

In the coming years my desire for more and more people to hear the wonderful goodness of this story grew and grew resulting in me starting this church fifteen years ago this month in my wife and I's apartment in Pacific Beach. The way I did it was by working a bunch of different random jobs, make friends with people, talk to them about Jesus and then they'd start coming to the church.

This year as a church, together we've been reading through and studying the book of Colossians in the Bible and the next little section we're coming up on today is a handful of words in a paragraph about the passion of God and how those who've been affected by His love and grace can spread this word through the doors of as many houses as possible.

Why don't you all stand with me for the reading and hearing of God's Word today?

Colossians 4:3-6

“Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

- Pastoral Declaration: This is the Word of the Lord.
- Congregational Response: Thanks Be To God.

If you're new and happen to be here for one of the first times, we're glad you're here and hope you have a great time with us today.

I titled my sermon, "A Missional People." The book of Colossians has winding down. We only have one more sermon in it if you can believe it! If you haven't heard the word "missional" before, it's kind of a newer word. The people who work for the words creating agency (heard about them?) came up with it a few years ago to describe a person who takes on as part of their life goals, their mission, to share the goodness of God's love and grace to as many people as possible.

In very rare form for me, I only have two sermon points from our text today instead of three. "Insiders & Outsiders" and "Message & Method."

I. Insiders & Outsiders

I'm taking this first point primarily from the word "outsiders" in verse 5 which means if there are outsiders then there are insiders.

Have you ever felt like you were on the outside? Like you didn't belong? Like there was some group of people who we're super cool or had it good and if you could somehow get in or get to their level then your life would be great? Ever felt like that?

In my life, I've been on both sides of that fence. My dad was a traveling preacher, which meant that three-quarters of the year or more my dad was preaching at a different church every week. So I was homeschooled while sitting in the back seat of a car traveling from church to church all over the United States and Canada.

The side effect was for the few weeks of the year that we were home where I could go to school like a normal kid, when I did go I was the weirdo. No kid had ever heard of anyone who had a job like my dad's. We didn't have a lot of money so I didn't have nice clothes and backpacks and shoes that a lot of other kids, so I didn't look like I fit. I was gone in the car a lot so I didn't have the chance to learn how to play sports and stuff so when I was home and at school, I'd always be picked last for every game at PE.

Now, before you feel like I'm just selling you a sob story I got to tell you that I've been on the other side too. In reaction to that horrible feeling, what in many ways led to my running away from God was an effort to do whatever it took to be liked

and accepted, to be in the inside. And I've been in on the inside of several different groups through the course of my adult life. I figured out how to become cool and how to jive and get along with anyone from a homeless friend of the street to a high-level multi-millionaire executive. I can hang with both crews – that was my week this last week.

With my homeless friends, I'm one of them who understands their plight because I never really had a home growing up other than the blue velvet of a two 1976 Buick Regal. Just ask guys like Aaron, Erik, and Joseph who show up during the week while I'm working in my office – guys who came to our church through the free food our church hands out every Tuesday night on the patio.

I've never made much money in my life but on paper, I'm the CEO of a successful startup that's fifteen years old and can talk their talk and feel comfortable with a guy on a million-dollar yacht talking life, business and play. That was my Thursday this last week.

But here's the funny thing about hanging out with both groups and getting on the inside with each of them. Both groups ridicule, make fun of and maybe even in their hearts despise those who are on the outside. There is an air of pride and judgment that sets in towards those on the outside once you feel like you're on the inside.

Like, you ever had a new job and you're the new person? It's the worst. Everyone knows each other and knows what they're doing and you're just trying to figure it out. But once you do figure it out and you're in and then there's another new person who starts you're now on the in and you start picking the person apart. What they're wearing, how they work, what they're like and on and on. It's sick.

C.S. Lewis said that two often Christians are like this. They end up like Giraffe's whose heads are so high up looking down on everyone they're no real hope for anyone to ever see how good the view is light and love of Christ shining throughout your eyes.

The heart of our passage from Colossians today is all about is why it is crucial and critical for Christians not to be giraffes but eagles who swoop down into to people's live to show them we care, pick them up and bring them to a place where they feel God's welcome, His love, and grace. The thing is it's a really special place because, in this crew, the ones who are really in this group never look down

on, judge, make fun of, dismiss or ridicule those who are on the outside as though they were better.

Instead, the heart of those in this group is to bring as many people in from the outside, in into the inside so that they might see, experience and know how good the good news of God's love in Jesus is.

Often it's been said people need to feel that they belong or could belong before they can believe. And that is why it so so so so so important that we hear and learn what God's Word is teaching us today. It's the desire, heart, goal, and resolve of our church to bring as many people as we possibly can in, into the inside so they can experience the love and grace of Jesus too.

My heart and prayer is that such resolve would remain amongst The Resolved Church for however long God deems it fit for her to serve Him and His purposes on earth. The day The Resolved Church decides to become a church that builds walls to keep the bad people out instead of a church that seek to build bridges in is the day I pray it shuts down.

The heart of our passage today is about how God wants and means and advises how outsiders can become insiders. In our text, the insiders are the one who are in the community of faith who have each experienced the life, love, and grace of God given to us in Jesus personally and then have joined in with a community of people who are pursuing Him and partnering in His mission together.

In the true community of faith, no one ever looks down on the outsiders with a feeling of superiority but instead with a passion that outsiders might come in too and experience how good it is on the inside. Because you see, everyone on the true inside of the true community of faith we're all outsiders at one point.

This is why I believe there's a big difference between just going to attending a church and becoming a member of a church who has real relationships with real people there. You gotta start somewhere though, so we're fine with attendees here. But our heart and desire will always be to bring you in, into the inside.

John Calvin from the 1500s, who's probably my favorite theologian and pastor who has ever lived said this about the verses we're looking at today, "The church is like a city wherein all believers are inhabitants. They are connected in a special relationship that unbelievers are strangers or foreigners too."

In my pursuit and preparation of becoming a church planter, I ended up studying theology for eight years in college and doing three degrees. I did my Master's Thesis on one Greek Word, "*euangelistes*" which English Bibles have translated as "evangelists." It's a word used to describe a person who has an extra special passion and gifting for hanging out with people who are not yet Christians and introducing them to the goodness and love of Christ.

I was about to do a fourth degree, a Ph.D. in theology to study under a man named Michael Green. The reason I didn't end up doing that was I decided to plant this church instead. I wanted to study under him because he wrote an incredible book unpacking how people in the first few centuries after Jesus spread the goodness of Him and His message across the Roman empire so much so that in three centuries the Gospel spread world-wide with even the Emperor becoming a Christian in 310AD.

Here's how Michael Green says they did it in his book, "Evangelism in the Early Church"

"During the first century, the house was the fundamental unit of society. It was one of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity. It had positive advantages: the comparatively small numbers involved made real interchange of views and informed discussion among the participants possible...The sheer informality and relaxed atmosphere of the home, not to mention the hospitality which must often have gone with it, all helped to make this form of evangelism particularly successful."

It was so successful that Acts 17:6 says people said the world was being turned upside-down with it.

Really what the whole outsiders becoming insiders thing is all about is Jesus. Who Jesus is and what Christianity is all about is the true story of a God who took on human flesh in order to hang out with sinners, all of them, priests and prostitutes and then die for them so that both groups could come in, into the inside of God's family of love and grace.

Where are you at today? Are you on the inside? The outside? Where do you want to be? The way you know you're on the inside is you want more people to come in and enjoy the party with you? The way you know you're on the outside is you believe God only loves you if you're good and hide your guilt, fear, and shame from Him and those around you.

May God help The Resolved Church to always be a place that helps outsiders become insiders.

The goal of our text today is outsiders becoming insiders. How that happens is the subject of our next point today, "Mission & Method."

II. Message & Method

I'd like to draw your attention to a couple of things that are said at the beginning of verse 3. It says that first there need to be prayer and then a door.

We talked about prayer a bunch last week. Prayer is the act of asking God for a miracle, to do what otherwise would not happen unless He acted in some special way.

Whenever anyone becomes a Christian it truly is the biggest miracle of all next to Jesus Christ rising from the dead. Jesus Himself even said when one person comes to faith all the angels in heaven rejoice. There's a lot of people who get excited about supernatural phenomena and desiring to see acts of God that break the laws of physics and science.

So the only hope for that to happen is for God to do it which is why we must pray for it to happen. He's the only one who can truly make an outsider become an insider.

But He loves for us to help. As a dad of three girls, I love it when my girls help me with a project. I don't need their help. I could get it done way faster and easier without them, but I love doing things with them and teaching them all kinds of things while we work together on accomplishing the mission and goal of whatever we're working on.

Now, in looking at our text for today there's a line that stands out in this prayer that gets written down. Paul, the guy God had write Colossians had a very specific prayer request... "that God may open to us a door for the word."

It's a really funny thing to say. It's funny because Paul was writing this letter, this book we call "Colossians" while he was in prison. He got thrown into prison in Rome for preaching about the truth, goodness, and grace of Jesus which was causing so many people to convert that the Roman government thought he was

starting some sort of insurrection to overthrow the city and the government.

But rather than pray that God will somehow open the prison doors Paul asks that the door for the word might be opened.

When the Bible talks about “the Word” it can mean one of three things:

- 1) The written Words of God written down through the hands and heart of men in a book we call the Bible.
- 2) Jesus Himself, who is the pure essence of God and His Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.
- 3) The message of the Gospel, the good news that there is grace and love for anyone, no matter who they are, that gives to us through the person and work of Jesus.

There is a message. Our passage calls it a mystery. And it is a mystery. Why and how the Creator of the entire universe took on a piddly human body to save some portion of the small, insignificant and utterly brutal people of the human race is a true wonder and miracle in and of itself.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a true mystery. Not just because God became man and then died and rose again...which if you're the Creator of the universe doesn't seem like it'd be that hard but even more a mystery that God would do such a thing for us and loves us that much.

Hebrews 4:12 says this, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

There is something special about the message of God communicated to us through the Bible and the story of Jesus that pierces our hearts. It's a wonderful mystery.

If you've been let in on the mystery and get it and believe it then it's like you've been given the secret to this precious jewel or what the Bible calls a treasure that you can't help but want to tell others about. And if you care about something that much then you'll want to be wise and strategic to give it the best hearing possible.

One of the reasons I love the Bible is it gives us very practical advice in the areas where it matters and where we need it. So when it comes to the best way to share the message, our passage for today gives wise guides. Four ways to be wise or as verse 5 says, how to “walk in wisdom toward outsiders.”

1. Be Clear

The first is to be clear. Verse 4 says we should work and pray to make the message “clear” which is how we “ought to speak.”

I find that too many Christians when they get around people who are not Christians not only start acting awkward but in the long shot that the topic of Jesus even comes up, they start saying a really weird thing, get all tongue-tied and start speaking what many people have called “Christianese.” Christianese is this weird language with specialized words only Christians use and can understand that when outsiders hear it sound like we’re aliens from another planet.

The other day I heard someone ask someone if they were “born again”? The person looked at them with this blank stare and said, “I have no idea what you mean.”

My friend Harvey Turner wrote what I think is one of the most helpful books on the best methods or ways of talking to other people about the message of Jesus. His book is called “Friend of Sinners.” I was talking to him on the phone just two days ago. He’s preached here before and said he is praying for us and is behind our church one-hundred percent. Here’s what he says in his book about being clear.

“While the conversation was on the topic of golf, business strategy, or your kids’ school play, you were fine, you were laughing, you were comfortable, you were yourself, and you were having fun. But when the conversation turned to Jesus, you got weird. You got tongue-tied and cotton-mouthed. You started breathing heavily; you got very serious and relationally cold. Any hint of joy was gone from your demeanor as you began to talk to them about the Greatest News Ever.

Do you see the contradiction? When talking about anything else, you’re fine. You’re relaxed. But when you talk about the Gospel, your demeanor betrays your message. Your friends think it’s weird when you get weird. Relax. Trust God. Breathe. And then talk about the Gospel like you talk about other things, naturally.

You don't have to have all the answers to people's questions, you can say something like, 'I'm not sure, I'll have to look into that.' Don't get weird. Don't get defensive, and don't get frustrated. Just be yourself.

If we engage others with a canned approach, they're going to see right through it. They'll be able to tell that they're just a project to you, not a person to be in relationship with. Be interested, and let the Holy Spirit fill you and open the doors to talk about the gospel. Make the conversation about them. Get to know them, their aspirations, dreams, disappointments, and questions. I do this by asking lots of questions about who they are and what's going on in their life."

The best way to be clear is to be you. Be real. Be honest about what you know and don't know and do your best to try to speak the same language the other person you are talking to is. Try to find unique ways to talk about why and how God is important to you and could be so good for them to have in their lives.

2. Be Gracious

The next tip or method our passage gives for sharing the message with outsiders is to be gracious. This is perhaps the most important one.

The opposite of grace is judgment. So if you're in a conversation judging a person, trying to make them feel bad about being a sinner then you're way off. That's not our job as Christians. People feel bad enough. God sent Jesus so we would know He's not mad at us but loves us and gives us grace.

Too many Christians are so judgmental, criticizing and critiquing others constantly as though they were somehow better and if outsiders were good enough, smart enough or spiritual enough then they could get in, into the Christian club too.

The funny thing is not a single person who's in the Christian club got in that way. Every person who got in is a screw up that God had love and grace upon and welcomed into His family because He loves them.

I've found that Christians can be extremely cruel and unkind. It's Christians who have said the meanest and most hurtful things to me in my life. There's something wrong with that. We're not to be that way. Christians should be known for being

nice, not mean.

I was talking with my friend Mark at the gym last week. I've known him for over a year now and we've talked about all kinds of stuff in his life. I know how his marriage is going, I know his vices, what he does for work, how much money he makes and what he likes to do for fun. And I've said little things here and there expressing sympathy and telling him I'd pray for him etc.

Then this last week he said to me, "Duane, you always say that. You're not one of those Christians, are you? I said, "Why?" He said, "My sister-in-law is a Christian and she is the meanest woman I've ever met in my life. She keeps trying to convert me and I don't want to have anything to do with Christians. But I like you."

I had no idea how to respond. But I was in leadership development the night before and Bill Freese, who leads our prayer ministry is in there and he was talking to our group about sharing Jesus with a co-worker and I remembered him saying he simply said, "I'm a man of faith and I love God."

So that's what I said to Mark. I said, "Well Mark, I'm a man of faith. I love God and think Jesus is a pretty loving guy. I'm sorry you've experienced that from someone who called themselves a Christian. It doesn't sound too Christian to me but either way, I like you too man."

Being gracious isn't that hard. Just be nice. The original Greek word we translate as "grace" in our English Bible is "*charis*". It's where we get the word "charm" from. If you want to be gracious to people, be charming!

There's perhaps not a better passage in the Bible on this than Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

3. Be Salty

That brings us to our third tip, to have the way we talk to be "seasoned with salt." Salt tastes good. Ever had popcorn with butter but no salt? It sucks. Salt makes things taste better. So work hard to make Jesus taste good to people.

Paul, who God had write Colossians said this in one of his other books,

“21 To those outside...I became as one outside...that I might win those outside... 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” - 1 Corinthians 9:22-23

So I think being salt looks a lot like trying to find some sort of connection with people, trying to find some common ground, learning about them and finding ways of sharing the goodness of God with them that is going to make sense to them.

I love the Salty Crew stuff. C.J. Hobgood, a pro surfer started the company who's slogan is "Stay Salty." By that, he means stay in the water surfing. But I like it for Christians too. Stay salty. Make sure you taste good to outsiders.

A funny question I guess. How do you taste?

4. Be Smart

Well, that brings us to our last tip in what's helpful for outsiders to become insiders, the method of sharing the message...verse 6 says it's "know how you ought to answer each person."

One of the many many things that makes Christianity so unique and so powerful is the soundness of it from a philosophical perspective. Christianity provides very good answers for some of the most difficult questions human beings can ever ask like, "Why am I here?" "Why do we exist?" "Why do people hurt each other?" "What about death?" "Is there purpose and meaning to life?" "Is there hope for us?"

Christianity is both a very simple and very smart religion. If you're a Christian then that means you've decided to follow Jesus Christ and learn from Him as your master teacher. So to be a Christian means you grow in your knowledge and understanding as you follow Him in a life of learning and the more you come to know the better you can answer the real questions people have.

1 Peter 3:15 in the Bible says it this way, "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make an answer to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

So you should read some theology and apologetics and be part of stuff like leadership development and men or women's Bible study so you can learn more about God and how to give good answers to people.

The only danger is becoming a know it all. That's why this passage in 1 Peter says to make sure to give your answers with "gentleness and respect." You can win a philosophical or theological argument but lose the person in the process because you were mean in the way you did it.

Some have said you can either be right or in relationship. The goal and hope for people in relationship with God and it's better to keep relationship with people then alienating them by having to prove that you're right. If relationship is the goal, then there's always hope for them to come around in the future.

And there you have it, four really practical ways or methods of sharing the best message ever to hit planet earth.

Conclusion

I started the sermon today telling you about my passion and desire for other people to hear how good Jesus is since the day I became a Christian.

It's one of the things I've personally been thinking and praying about a lot in how I'm personally passionate and gifted as a follower of Jesus and a member of His church. Mission and being on mission is my main wheelhouse. So it has been a lot of fun today to talk about.

Being in the world with outsiders really is my passion, so myself along with the other three pastors as we've been looking at where our church is at, what it needs and what is best for me and her are working through some big changes for us that I'll be talking about more in the next couple weeks. This month marks our fifteenth year since the embryo of this church began in my apartment and the goal was always to start a church and then raise up someone to hand it off to and we've begun to see some things indicating this may be the time.

The Elders and Deacons today will be meeting after the service to talk through some of the details of that, so you can pray for us. I don't say that to frighten any of you. We're not a church that has anything to hide and desire to be open and honest about the things God is doing in us and how we see Jesus leading us.

I'm actually very excited about a lot of the things happening in our church. God's hand and guidance is all over the place and I believe the best years of our church is yet to come! What makes The Resolved Church a great church and what will always make it a great church is being a people on mission, who spend their hearts and their lives working together to share the goodness of Jesus with as many people as possible.

So let's do this, why don't you pull out the **Response Card** that was on your chair if there is one on the chair next to you. Normally I just kind of leave it up to you all to write down on their whatever you're feeling. But today let's do this, on that "pray for" or "resolve to" line put down one of three things:

- 1. The name of someone you want to hear about the goodness of Jesus.**
- 2. God to give you an outsider friend you can share the goodness of Jesus with.**
- 3. To embrace the goodness of God's love and grace and start following Jesus.**

I'll give us all a minute or so to fill that out and if you're new and this is one of your first times we'd love to connect with you to give you a call and say thanks for coming and send some info your way but we promise not to sell your info or spam you.

Alright, let's prepare for **the Lord's Supper**. If you're an outsider here checking out the inside, I'll just be real honest, this part of the service is weird but kinda cool. The heart of what we believe is that God came to us in Jesus Christ to save us because He loves us.

Jesus did a last dinner with His closest friends and disciples and said to do this when we gather together, to take a piece of bread as His life sent from heaven to us and then to have some wine with it as His blood shed on the cross to cover and erase all of the sin, fear, guilt, and shame we feel and bear. Jesus came and died on the cross so outsiders can become insiders.

To prepare our hearts let's read these words of **Confession** and **Assurance** together.