

Imagine a world...

Where poverty is no more—where no child cries themselves to sleep, and every son and daughter rests under the warmth of love and laughter.

Where fathers rise to lead with courage and tenderness, and mothers walk in dignity and strength, and together they shape a generation that knows the name and the ways of Jesus.

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Where work is holy, and every task—big or small—is done as worship unto the King. Where men and women show up with integrity, serve with joy, and treat one another as image-bearers of God.

Where compassion replaces competition, and generosity conquers greed.

Where we don't just talk about love—we live it. Fiercely. Faithfully. Fervently.

That... would be a **foretaste of glory divine**.

A world where heaven kisses earth, where the light of Christ breaks through the shadows, and the Kingdom of God rises in power and beauty among His people.

Can you see it? Can you feel it?

That's the world our King is bringing. That's the world He invites us to build—right here, right now.

Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.

Six Months ago, I began to dream of what God would do in and through us

- Where could be ... Where should we be in the next decade
- Not just where Thorsby First Baptist would be / Should be, but where would our community – The place we call home – Thorsby, AL
- What would this city be like in 10 years because of God's people

Sermon Title: The Relentless Pursuit

Paul is writing to the Church at Colossae, to a people whom he'd never met.

- The Church was founded by Epaphras, whom Paul "...as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf."

Colossians 1:28-29 - To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Paul's Approach – Proclaim Christ

Colossians 1:28-29 - Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Paul said, ***We Preach Christ.***

- We don't preached politics or philosophy, We don't preach our personal opinion
- We preach Christ and Him Crucified.
- When I say ***preach***, many of us would think of what is done behind this pulpit
 - That's preaching - In reality – Simply proclaiming the Truth
 - Greek word – to proclaim, to openly announce, to declare.
 - Every follower of Christ is called to preach Christ – Proclaim the hope of the gospel.
 - If we are going to push back lostness, if we are heal brokenness, we must proclaim Jesus!
- ***Acts 5:42*** - And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.
- ***Acts 8:4*** - Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.
- ***Acts 4:13*** - Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Preach Christ How? **Warning**

- Admonishing – give notice beforehand, especially of danger...it is done by reasoning with them.
- Alerting them to the seriousness of the consequences of their actions.
- Paul was a master at warning, reasoning.
- Teaching what not to do

Preach Christ How? **Teaching (what we are to do)**

- Paul followed the pattern of Jesus, not only preaching/proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God but teaching.
 - Matthew 4:23 - And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.
- To be a Christ Follower is to ... like Paul ... teach what you've been taught
 - Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
 - 2 Timothy 2:2 - And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
 - Matthew 28:20 - teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.
- Teaching is literally an orderly presentation of Christian Truth so that people can grow to be like Christ.

Paul's Audience – Every Man

Colossians 1:28-29 - Him we preach, warning **every man** and teaching **every man** in all wisdom, that we may present **every man** perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Every man – Means what? Every person, Man, Woman and Child.

- In essence, Paul is saying the Gospel is not just for the Jews, It's for the Gentiles
- Not just for
- Red, Yellow, Black, and White, they are **precious** in his sight
- Every man, woman, and child, regardless of color or creed is made in the image of Almighty God
- This is His Design – **Gen. 1:26-27** - Then God said, "Let Us make man in **Our image**, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
 - **Human dignity and identity:** The doctrine of *imago Dei* is the basis for the inherent worth and dignity of every person, as all are created in God's image. This provides a powerful answer to questions of identity, worth, and purpose that culture often fails to address.
- That person that doesn't look like you...made in the image of God (dress like you, vote like you, like the same music,
- That person that got the promotion, you thought you was yours
- That person who cut you off in traffic, that person who cut in line at the store, or saw you waiting in line for gas, only to leave their car, go in the store ... take for ever (made in image...)
- We are called to be just like Jesus – John said, (**John 1:14**) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."
- Because God has given Grace to us, we should be Grace at Work, play,
 - Extend Grace to Every Person, as Grace has been extended to you!

Acts 19:8-10 - And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

We know that Epaphras came to know Christ

- Most likely during Pauls' stay in Ephesus – Acts 19:10 "...all who dwelt...heard...Jews/Greeks."
- You see a Ripple Effect – Paul preaches and Teaches Jesus – Epaphras comes to Christ, goes back to his hometown of Colossae, and begins to win others to Christ, and teach them how to know Christ – This is what Jesus said to do...
 - **Matthew 28:20** - teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

- It's What Paul told Timothy - **2 Timothy 2:2** - And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Colossians 4:12-13 - Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

This is the verse that got this all started – Acts 19:10 rocked my world

Acts 19:10 - And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. **Put a pin in that, we'll be back to this**

Paul's Ambition – Perfection (Completion)

Colossians 1:28-29 - Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Paul's Ambition – The maturity of the saints, "...that we may present every man perfect (complete, mature, fully trained!

That maturity of the saints

Ephesians 4:11-13 - And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Romans 8:28-29 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Jesus said in Luke 6:40 - A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

We are called to a Relentless Pursuit of Progress

- **1 Timothy 4:15** - Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your **progress may be evident to all.**
 - John MacArthur said in his Study Bible, "The word was used in military terms of an advancing force and in general terms of advancement in learning, understanding, or knowledge. Paul exhorted Timothy to let his progress toward Christlikeness be evident to all."
- It's not about Perfection it's about Progress!
- **1 John 3:1-3** - Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and **it has not yet been revealed what we shall**

be, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

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We see a day when our city is alive with the presence of Christ. The streets echo with stories of transformation, as men and women shaped by the Spirit carry the love of Jesus into their homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Spiritual formation is no longer an optional ministry track but the lifeblood of our church. Children grow up learning to pray as naturally as they breathe; adults walk with a deep rootedness in Scripture and spiritual practices; families embody the rhythms of grace and generosity that mark the way of Jesus.

Mission – *To equip people to discover and pursue God's design for their lives to the glory of Jesus' name.*

Vision - **To Saturate our city and beyond with the gospel bringing renewal and hope to every person and place to the glory of Jesus' name!**

Vision Statement: Bringing Hope and Renewal to every person and every place

Vision Statement Longer Version:

"In the next decade, we see not just a church, but a movement: Christlike disciples, multiplying leaders, and gospel-saturated communities bringing renewal and hope to every person and place."

Live Sent

Pray Fervently – Col 4:2, 12, Luke 10:2

- Colossians 4:2 - Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

- Colossians 4:12 - Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, **always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God**
- Bring Back Monthly 24 Hours of Prayer and Fasting
- Next Sunday, We will begin 21 Days of Prayer
- Pray Luke 10:2 at 10:02 Luke 10:2 - Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Give Cheerfully – 2 Cor. 9:6-7

- Time – It is the only resource of which we have the same amount.
- Talents, We are Building a Database of Gifts, Abilities, and Passions – On App
- Treasure – Are you Consistently, Proportionately, Cheerfully, Sacrificially

Go Faithfully – Matthew 28:19

- **Matthew 28:19** – As you are going – Carry Hope to your FRANS
- **1 Peter 3:15** - But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Conclusion:

- I heard a story about two bricklayers working on a building in downtown New York City. Someone asked the first bricklayer what he has doing. The first bricklayer responded, "I'm laying brick."
- Then someone asked the second bricklayer what he was doing. The second bricklayer replied, "I'm building a skyscraper!" So one bricklayer had a job, and the other had a vision. (Etheredge, The Disciple-Making Leader, p. 123)
 - When you are teaching that class, ***you are bring hope and renewal to every person in every place***
 - When you sing that song...play that instrument...wipe the crumbs off a toddler, change that diaper...when you guard that door, check those children out, so that we can maintain a safe environment for our families...***you are bringing hope and renewal.***
- We must see how their one task accomplishes a greater purpose.

Together, we can bring hope and renewal to Every Person and Every Place, in Thorsby and Beyond.

What would it look like if the "church" gave every man, woman and child the opportunity to hear and understand the gospel and be reconciled to God through Christ without their coming or going anywhere? (Mancini, *God Dreams*, p. 80)

Mancini, Will; Bird, Warren. *God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future* (p. 80). (Function). Kindle Edition.

John Wesley, the great eighteenth-century preacher and founder of Methodism, was famous for saying, "The world is my parish." As he explained in his journal, he felt it was his "duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation." (Mancini, *God Dreams*, p. 79)

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