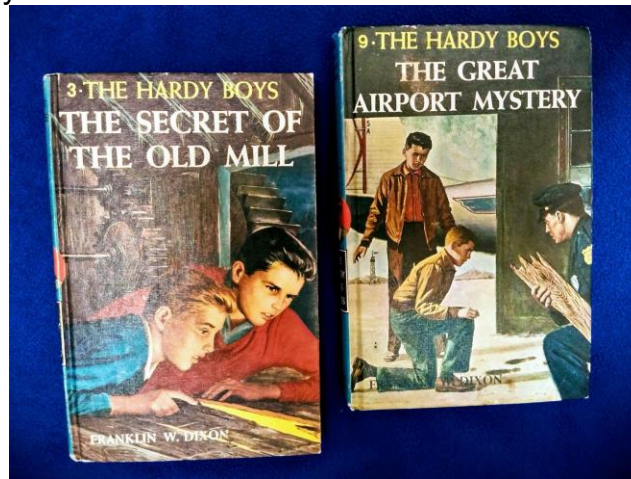


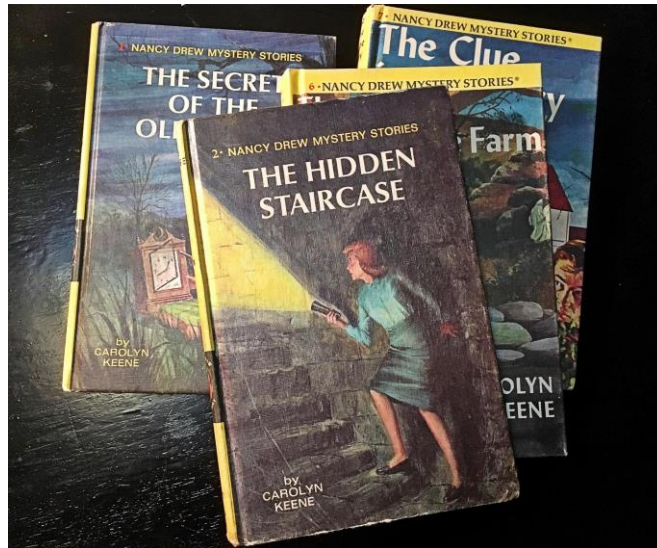
How many of you have ever played this game?



Clue, the great MYSTERY board game of WHO DONE IT! Everybody loves a mystery...I grew up with these...Hardy Boys Mysteries...



My grandmother was a librarian and got me hooked on those. My sister read these...



Nancy Drew Mystery series. Yes, people love mysteries...through the years some of the most popular TV shows were mysteries...like Columbo, and Angela Lansbury's, "Murder She Wrote," to the more modern, X-Files, Bones, CSI and The Mentalist. People love mysteries.

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Even today, my kids enjoy playing that old board game of Clue. Of course, if you know anything about it, you have to work hard to figure out who committed the "dastardly deed" and in what room, with what weapon...I don't know about you, but filling out one of these things...



is like almost impossible for me. I get so lost with all that's going on. But, in the end, the cards are pulled out of the packet and it might be: Colonel Mustard who did it...in the Billiard room, with the lead pipe, or perhaps Mrs. Peacock in the Conservatory with the candlestick. Honestly, if and when I do win, (which is very seldom), I'm usually the most surprised person in the room, because I have no idea how I figured it out. It's just a guess for me! **Mysteries...people love them.**

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Well today, we're going to talk about a mystery that involves **me and you**...literally...everyone in this room. We're going to see today that we are all part of a mystery that the Apostle revealed to the church at Colossae. The title of this morning's message is: "**Mystery Revealed.**"

**Colossians 1:24-29**

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

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Paul said in verse 26, "the mystery hidden for ages and generations..." Now this mystery wasn't something eerie and frightening and it wasn't something that was ethereal or based on some secret knowledge. This was a mystery that God revealed according to His divine plan, at exactly the right time...and we'll see that as we go through the message today.

Now remember, the entire reason the book of Colossians is being written is because the Apostle Paul has been informed that the people are beginning to follow false teachers, heretics. They are known as Gnostics. They taught that Jesus was not the Son of God and He was not human...but instead was some kind of emanating spirit from heaven. The Gnostics taught you had to have some super-intellectual ability to understand all of this secret, mysterious knowledge of God. Paul is combating this false teaching...these lies from Satan...that are being used to deceive the people. The mystery Paul is describing is not a mystery that only the intellectual elite can learn...not at all, this was instead, a sacred mystery that God wants every single person to know.

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But there's a problem! Why would these people, in Colossae, listen to the Apostle Paul in the first place? After all, he's chained to a Roman soldier, as a political prisoner of Rome? Would anyone listen to someone who's in jail? This is an issue.

BTW...I believe it's important that we know why Paul is under house arrest in the first place. Do you know why Paul has been arrested? **False accusations**. Same thing that got Jesus killed. In the book of Acts, chapter 22, the Sanhedrin, the highest court in Israel (like our Supreme Court), had arrested Paul and accused him of being a traitor to Judaism. Paul was giving testimony to the Tribunal and they were listening until he said one word: "Gentiles." Paul said that God wanted to include Gentiles in His Kingdom and upon hearing that...these Jewish men said, "No way!" See Acts 22:22.

**Acts 22:22**

<sup>22</sup> Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live."

They were prepared to Paul until he revealed a very important fact. The fact that he was not only a Jew, but a Roman citizen. And because of that fact, he appealed to Rome for another trial. And so, they put him on a boat and shipped him to Rome...where he was kept under house arrest awaiting trial. You know, church family, Paul could have spared himself a great deal of suffering, by simply excluding the Gentiles. Don't worry about them. Don't rock the boat. He could have kept his mouth shut. Go along with the crowd. But he refused. Listen, don't compromise when you know the truth! Be bold...be kind...but be willing to stand for what is right! Paul did and he suffered for it! And he said as much...verse 24...

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### Colossians 1:24

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

Suffering...Paul suffered for Jesus and he said something that seems odd... "I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions..." What does that mean? Was there something lacking in what Jesus did on the cross? No! Not at all...and it's the rest of the sentence that makes clear the point the Holy Spirit is seeking to make. "...for the sake of his body, that is, the church." Listen carefully, Paul was experiencing persecution that was intended for Jesus... You understand that to this day Satan continues to try to hurt Jesus...to bring Him harm...and he does that now through the Church...the BODY OF CHRIST...the family... Think about it...if someone wants to really hurt you...do they try to hurt you, or someone you dearly love? You want to hurt me the worst...you come after my wife, my children, my grandchildren...that's how you get to Kevin Brown the most. Satan knows that!

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No...there was nothing lacking in what Jesus did on the cross. That work of Jesus was complete. But, remember the heretics said Jesus didn't have a physical body...Paul was refuting that and in essence said: "Not only did Jesus have a human body, but today...we the body of Christ suffer for Him, in His stead, on His behalf. That what Paul told the churches in Galatia in Galatians 6:17.

### Galatians 6:17

<sup>17</sup> From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

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Today, when we suffer for Jesus, we bear His reproach...we suffer persecution in His place. We take it on His behalf.

### 2 Corinthians 1:5

<sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

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They're called: "Christ's sufferings," even though we're going through them. **Turn to Acts chpt 9.** Do you remember Paul's conversion experience, as he was on his way to Damascus to kill more Christians?

### Acts 9:1-5

<sup>1</sup> But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

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Paul (Saul at the time) was killing Christians...yet Jesus said, "You are persecuting me." Why? Because you hurt Pam, Clara, Andrew...one of my grandchildren...you hurt me. That's verse 24. **In spite of the fact, Jesus is no longer here in bodily form on this earth**, Satan seeks to hurt Him, by coming after us and yet, that actually works in our favor, because when we suffer, Jesus is especially near and dear to us. Oh in our struggles and hurt, we experience the presence of Jesus in such powerful, poignant ways, that we would never experience otherwise.

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You see, suffering is part of God's plan for us...to mold us...shape us...refine us. This was God's plan for Paul...see it down in verse 16.



## **Acts 9:16**

<sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

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And Paul did suffer in his ministry...he considered it a privilege...that's Colossians 1:25, go back...

## **Colossians 1:25**

<sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

Christians in the room...do you know what we are in the kingdom of Jesus? You say, “Children, joint-heirs with Jesus.” That's true, but here is another description: STEWARDS...and that word in the NT is often used to describe a SLAVE who was given charge of the household affairs of a master. We are stewards, SLAVES for Christ. Is that okay with you? Are you okay being a slave...having no ownership of your life...it's not yours...it's His...Jesus! I have no problem with it at all...I'm honored to be a child of the King...a slave for His kingdom for the glory of my Master!

**Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4.** Paul viewed his ministry as a stewardship to the Lord, and he told the church at Corinth as much. You see, Church family, we should see our lives...as Paul did... a gift from God, our lives are His...our abilities, our talents, all of it...are to be for the Lord...not ourselves...we should use our gifts...for Him and for His glory!

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## **2 Corinthians 4:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. <sup>8</sup> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Jump down to verse 16...

## **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self<sup>[d]</sup> is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

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Don't lose heart! This life is hard...this life is a war! But, the war has already been won and heaven awaits! This life is temporary! It's an eyelash. Yes, our lives may be difficult in many ways...but, Jesus knows all about that...He experienced that... His life wasn't easy and ultimately Jesus defeated death, Hell and the grave by way of a cross. He knows pain, suffering... So, He can comfort us with His presence because He knows. He's been here! Let that sink in today and let that sustain us! Oh...don't lose heart...keep going...keep living...for Him! That's our job...see it...to make Him known...

## **Colossians 1:25**

<sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

Are you making Him known in your life? Do others hear you talking about Jesus. Don't hide Him...make Him known...that's our ministry!

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**And now the MYSTERY REVEALED!**

## **Colossians 1:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.<sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Did you know, BTW...Paul revealed this mystery to the church at Ephesus? Just so you'll know:

**Ephesians 3:6**

<sup>6</sup> This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

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So we're back to that word that got Paul in so much trouble: GENTILES. Paul is talking about Gentiles and saints in the same breath. What's a saint? A Christian. Church family, the mystery revealed is the fact that God has chosen to include everyone in the plan of salvation...not just the nation of Israel, which includes Gentiles...BUT...this mystery is even more profound than that. The mystery revealed also includes the fact that God would actually come and indwell the lives of His believers! God living IN US! This is astounding when you think about it! William Hendricksen, the great Bible Commentator, said it this way:

**“It is almost beyond comprehension that Christ in all His glorious riches, would actually dwell through His Spirit in the hearts and lives of His people, including Gentiles. In all the preceding ages this had never been seen, but now every child of God could bear witness to it...that the Gentiles would one day constitute part of God's people.”** William Hendricksen, Bible Commentator

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Think of it! Jesus Christ living in you...You see, as Jesus followers, we're not just living our lives knowing Jesus at a distance...but actually having His Spirit dwell inside of us. Wow! You know, we think Adam and Eve had it good when God walked them in the cool of the day...but...we've got Him living inside of us through His Spirit! Talk about a better end of the deal than even Adam and Eve had!

You see, the Old Testament saints and prophets had no idea about what we know of today. Those from the nation of Israel...those from the seed of Abraham were blessed...YES...God called the nation of Israel to be His people, He gave them His Law (including the priesthood and the sacrifices), He gave them a wonderful land, Israel, the Promised Land, AND He promised them a King who would one day establish a glorious kingdom (we talked about that last week, the Millennial Kingdom).

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**Turn to John 14.**

Listen...the nation of Israel was blessed...but, here's where it was hard for the OT saint to understand. They knew the Messiah would come from them...from the line of Abraham, and they knew that He would one day rule and reign, but they couldn't see us. They couldn't see the Church. They couldn't understand that the Church would come in between the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom...and they know idea that the Messiah...**Jesus would actually inhabit His people by way of the Holy Spirit!**

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Think of it...right now...at this moment...if you are a follower of Christ...if you are born again...you house within you the Spirit of God. Jesus talked about this in John 14:

**John 14:23-26**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. <sup>25</sup> “These things I

have spoken to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

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When did the Holy Spirit come? At Pentecost...50 days after Jesus' resurrection, the believers, about 120 of them says, Acts 1:15, were gathered in the Upper Room, and the Holy Spirit came and indwelled the believers.

Indeed, the mystery of all the ages that's been revealed is the fact that Gentiles can be saved...and that fact is marked by way of the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within us and guide our lives. And so, what's our response?

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### **Colossians 1:28-29**

<sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

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Paul was energized by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Jesus to everyone! Amazing isn't it! He struggled with all of that energy that the Lord gave Him. Just reading about the life of Paul will wear you out. Listen, Jesus energizes us to live our lives for Him... You make money at your job for Him... Yes, you buy groceries and pay the power bill, but that's for Him too... You eat food to stay strong, you have power to have lights, and to have the internet...to do more than just watch TV or YouTube...but, to proclaim Jesus through Facebook, Instagram... Do you see? Our life is for Him! Proclaim HIM!

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And we proclaim...did you catch it...by WARNING! Verse 28... "Warning Everyone!" Aren't you thankful the DOT does this...



What is that? It's a warning! Bridge is out! DETOUR! They don't want you getting hurt! Hey church, what's the worst thing that could happen to a human being? To run off a bridge? Possibly...if you run off a bridge and die...and don't have the Holy Spirit living inside of you.

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And that's the point...we're to be like the DOT for heaven. We are looking out for people's lives and we don't want them to go to Hell. So, we proclaim Jesus and seek to flag people down...but, we're to do more than just stopping them, we're also to teach them. See it again...watch the flow...

### **Colossians 1:28**

<sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

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Yes, we warn them, but, then we show them the Detour... See it again...



We mark the better way...we teach them SO AS to lead them to maturity in Christ. We say, "NO...NOT this WAY, but THIS WAY!!! Are you doing that? Are you mature enough to show others the better way...the detour...the way of Jesus? Or are you removing the warning sign by the way you are living...living in compromise and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings? Listen, every Christian has the responsibility to proclaim Jesus...lovingly and kindly, but we have to warn that the bridge is out ahead...

Yes, we are servants...stewards, slaves...children of God... We have the reality of that which the OT saints could never know...Jesus living within us... experiencing the joy of changed lives...empowered by the Spirit of God...energized to do His work! And so, to put in the language of the old Clue board game... **Jesus did it with a cross on Calvary, and knowing that will win you the game of LIFE...so that you can know Jesus forever, and that's no mystery!!!**

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