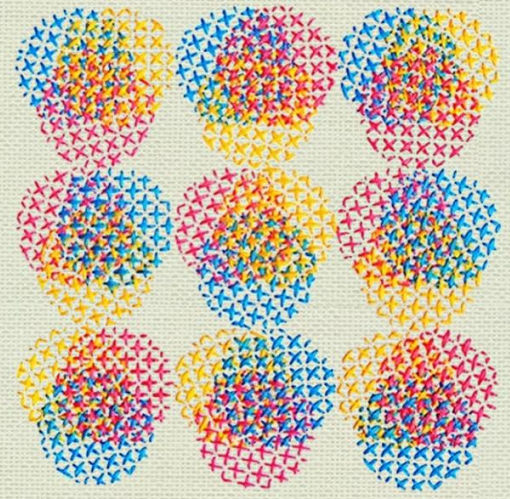


COLOSSIANS

A B O V E A L L



COLOSSIANS ABOVE ALL: THE HOPE OF GLORY

March 9, 2021

[Ken Flower]

Colossians 1:24 – 2:5

Hi, I'm Emily. And today we'll be reading scripture together. If you have one near, please grab your Bible. We will be reading in Colossians 1:24-2:5. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

"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, 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, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 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. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."

Chapter 2.

"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." This is the Word of the Lord. You may be seated.

All right, good morning, church. My name is Ken Flower. I'm a part of the team here at Doxa and I get to give a lot of my time towards helping support and give resource to how we make disciples here as a church. And I am just honored that we get to open God's Word together. And we're back in Paul's letter to the Colossians this morning. Now Louis Zamperini has an incredible story. Maybe you've heard his story before. He was an American Olympic middle distance runner who ran actually in the 1936 Berlin games that were hosted by the Nazis. A few years later then, as World War II takes over the whole

world, he joins the Navy, flying in a B-24 Liberator over the Pacific on bombing runs. His plane is shot down, and then he spends the next 47 days adrift at sea starving and thirsty.

He almost dies just from that alone and then spots this plane that he thinks is there to rescue them. And then all of a sudden, this plane begins shooting at him. He then is captured as a prisoner of war and spends the next two years in internment camps being beaten, starved, doing forced labor, till he's reduced to this ghost of a man before he's finally rescued by the Allies. Now, his story is told in the book and later made into a movie, "Unbroken". And what the movie doesn't actually cover is then what he came home to face, the kind of pain and suffering he encountered when the war ended and he was back in America. Scarred by all of the trauma that he had just endured over the last few years, he then spends the next years escaping constantly to alcohol addiction. It just consumes and takes over and really destroys his life. And he becomes estranged from his wife, from his family, from his closest friends. His life is just completely falling apart. And as I read this book, I gotta be honest, it was just exhausting to me to see how Zamperini suffered. His suffering just never seemed to end. From one thing to the next it just kept getting worse. And on the verge of complete despair, one day, he hears the gospel preached clearly by Billy Graham. And he decides to give his life to Jesus Christ. And from that moment on, everything changed for him. And later on, as he reflects on his life, he wrote this, "One moment of pain is worth a lifetime of glory." One moment of pain is worth a lifetime of glory. Now coming from anyone else that would honestly sound really trite to me. To me, in some ways, it sounds like one of these sayings you would see painted on like the fake distressed wood sign hanging in Hobby Lobby. But Zamperini knew pain. He knew what it was to suffer. And when he came to know glory, it completely changed how he viewed his suffering. And I don't think,

he didn't mean the glory that he then encountered later in life when he came home and got to be celebrated as an Olympian and a war hero. He's not talking about that glory. It was something even deeper than that. The glory he began to experience was the glory that came when he first encountered Jesus Christ. As we continue this morning in Paul's letter to the Colossians, we're going to hear Paul say something that sounds equally crazy. Right in verse 24, we heard this just read, Paul starts off our letter or our portion of the letter today saying I rejoice in my sufferings for you. I rejoice in my sufferings for you. And like Zamperini, Paul was no stranger to pain and suffering. In II Corinthians 11, Paul actually reluctantly begins to kind of list out some of the suffering that he had endured. And in this list, it's just incredible the things that he went through. He says, "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews, the 40 lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods." And that would be by the Romans., By the way, each of those things, the 40 lashes minus one, and being beaten with rods, they were intended to bring someone to the edge of death. And that happened to him so many times. "Once I was stoned." That was meant to kill you. "On frequent journeys," he says, "I was shipwrecked a night and a day I was adrift at sea, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city," and lest you think he is like anti-city, "danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." And apart from all this, he says, "There was the daily pressure of his anxiety for all the churches," which ask any pastor who tried to lead through 2020, and they can tell you how real that pressure felt. And then as this like weird cherry on top of the very end of this, and he says, "And by the way, there's this one time this governor was trying to trap me in a city. And the only way I could escape was by being lowered in a basket, through a window in the wall of the city." Like Zamperini, Paul had faced incredible suffering.

And we just saw this really clear picture of that. So what did he know then that changed how he viewed his suffering? What did he know that led him to say, "I rejoice in my suffering for you"? Now I know that many of us have faced and maybe even right now, some of us are facing suffering and pain. And maybe, yeah, you've never been imprisoned or you've never been beaten like Paul was, but your suffering and

your pain is real. And for all of us then who are hurting right now, who are exhausted, who feel like we have just given ourselves away, I want us to pay attention. Because Paul isn't here offering trite quips. He's not just offering nice things that sound good and look good on a sign. He writes from real experience of deep pain and suffering. He understands what you're going through and what he tells us today will change how we face the pain in our life. It changes then how we give ourselves away to serve others. So what did Paul discover that allowed him to look at suffering and say, "I rejoice in this"?

Well buried right in the middle of our passage today is the key to what sustained him in suffering. And really it's the key that changed his entire life. Right, and literally it's like the structural center of our passage this morning, Paul writes about this mystery that he'd been called by God to go and proclaim. And then he defines this mystery, right at the end of verse 27, he writes this, "The mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now remember what Zamperini discovered. He said, one moment of pain is worth a lifetime of glory. Well, when Paul tasted that same glory, the glory that came from knowing Jesus Christ in him, it reshaped his entire life. And it allowed him to say, "I rejoice now in my sufferings for you," because according to Paul, Christ in you, the hope of glory, changes everything. Now last week, Paul gave us this big view of Jesus. Pastor Donald walked us through this familiar song to the Colossians in verses 15 through 20, where Paul basically tells them Jesus Christ is above all. Jesus Christ is Lord. He's preeminent over everything. He's before everything, everything was created for him and through him, the fullness of God dwells in him. And he is the one who then reconciles this broken world and us broken people to God.

You see the Colossians lived in a culture that was constantly telling them that Caesar, or the Roman King, was all of those things. That Caesar was above all. That Caesar was Lord. That Caesar was the first born, the one who had first place in everything. And Paul's reminding them of the reality that it is Jesus, not Caesar, who's above all. Jesus is Lord and there is no other. Now here's what's incredible then about where Paul goes today. Last week, we're given this cosmic picture of Jesus above all. And now this week, Paul tells the Colossians, or as he continues to write his letter, he tells them that the Jesus who is above all is the Jesus who is in you. Jesus Christ, who is above all, is Jesus Christ in us. The one who reigns Supreme as King and Lord over this entire world, for whom everything was created, in whom the fullness of God dwells, He's pleased to dwell in us. Just a few verses later, in chapter 2:9-10, and we'll highlight this next week, Paul goes on to write that, "The entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ," Right? The entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ. But then Paul says, "and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority." This is incredible. The head over every ruler and authority, in whom the entire fullness of God dwells, is pleased to dwell in us, that we have been filled by him. And Paul goes on to say that Christ in you is the hope of glory. When we use the word "hope" we often use it to talk about something we desire, but we don't necessarily expect that it's going to happen. We hope it happens, but we're not sure it's going to, right?

So I say, I hope that I get to go travel Europe again one day, you know, once COVID settles down. I hope my parents don't make me eat those beets that are in the fridge. I hope that there are sprinkles on the donuts this morning. But the biblical word for hope is not just this desire, something that we want, but we're not sure of. The biblical idea of hope is something that we can confidently expect. It's something that's guaranteed. We know it will happen. It's not if it will happen, it's when it will happen. And Christ in us, as Paul says, means that we have the hope of glory or as someone else translates it, we have the full assurance of glory. Glory is guaranteed because of Jesus's resurrection from the dead, he has received all glory and his people will one day follow in his path and experience a glory that he has prepared for them. In another letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "For this light momentary affliction," he says, "is preparing for us any eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

Because of our union with Jesus Christ, right, that's what Paul means when he says Christ is in you. Because of our union with him, that he is in us, that we are in him because of that. And because of what he's done for us, right? Because he's lived a life as it was meant to be lived. And he did that for us because he went and died on the cross in our place, to take the judgment that we deserved for us, because he rose again from the dead victorious over death itself. And he did that for us. And now because we are united to him, that all of the benefits of what he has done are for us, that we receive all of that, his righteousness, his death for us, his defeat of death, and his resurrection for us. And because of that, we can have full assurance that one day we will experience glory the way God always intended us to experience it. That we will get to be the people of God, the people he created us to be, who rule over this beautiful world that he's created for us and live in a perfect relationship with him, that we get to experience glory forever.

This frankly is amazing news, and it should be shocking to us. It should if we really understand what Paul is saying, when he says Christ in you. It should shock us. We shouldn't be overwhelmed by the thought that the God who is over everything, that Jesus who is Lord over all, is in us. And yet often when we hear this truth, it just lands in our hearts without much impact.

Maybe we've just become used to hearing this idea of Christ in us or of union with Christ. And it's this theological truth that's interesting, but really doesn't change much about our real daily life. Yet for Paul, this was it. This was the most important thing that he could tell the Colossian church. As we'll see in this passage, this was his primary message. This was what it was all about. This was what he lived his life to proclaim. This was what shaped the direction of his own life. It was Christ in you. It was the center of his life and message. It's not just a theological truth that's interesting, right? It is true, but it's not just this interesting side note. This is the core of what life is about. And it changes everything about our actual lived experience. This truth changes everything about our life.

Christ in you, the hope of glory, means that you can joyfully, then, give yourself away over and over and over. Christ in you, the hope of glory, means that you have a purpose and you have a clear trajectory for your life. It means that you're a part of a community that nothing can tear apart. And it means that you have all the wisdom you need to walk faithfully in this confusing world.

And Paul goes on to talk about each of those things, how Christ in you, the hope of glory, shapes us in all of these ways and how it actually hits the ground and changes our real lives. So let's go through these. Let's learn with Paul in this passage, how Christ in you or Christ in us changes us in very real and tangible ways.

And the first thing he says is that Christ in us changes how we suffer. It changes how we give ourselves away. At the beginning, we've already highlighted this. He says, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." Later on in verse one of chapter two, he says, "I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you." Right? He rejoices in his sufferings. He continues in the struggle and he doesn't give up. How can he do that? How can he rejoice? How can he endure? Well, it all comes back to this mystery that was at the center of his message. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

You see for Paul, knowing that Christ was in him, led him to freely give himself away to others. Even when it meant he suffered. There was something about knowing Jesus that changed how Paul viewed his suffering.

Now, when we talk about Jesus, he does call us to take up our cross and follow him, right? He's very clear about that. That to be his disciple is to take up our cross and follow him. And we need to be honest about what taking up our cross means. It does mean giving ourselves away. It does mean suffering. But we also need to keep the goal in mind. The goal is to follow him. The goal is Jesus. There's something that was so beautiful and so compelling about Jesus, that it made the disciples willing to leave their lives behind to follow him. And Paul knew this as well. When he encountered Jesus on that road to Damascus

and was blinded by Jesus, the eyes of his heart were open to beauty and he was captivated by Jesus himself. So that he goes on to write that he was willing to count everything as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ his Lord. Everything he would count as loss because knowing Jesus was so much better. And as we talk about suffering, we need to keep this point in front of us. To truly know Jesus is what our hearts have been longing for for our entire lives. It's where life is found. And when we have been captivated by his beauty and by the life that Jesus offers us, it changes then how we view our suffering along the way. It's nothing compared to what we gain, which is Jesus Christ himself. And when we've been captivated by Jesus, in his love for us, when we know him intimately, the way Paul is talking about here, then we'll be resilient in hardship because he's with us. We'll be at rest.

We won't be anxious in times of need when we don't know how things are going to work out, or we're not sure how we're going to make ends meet because we trust that he cares for us. And he's with us. We'll respond with grace and patience when we're faced with the stress of life, the stress of parenting, because he meets our needs for peace. We'll be able to give our lives away over and over because we're filled up with Christ. We'll be like reservoirs filled up to the brim with the life that Christ is offering us and always then pouring out in overflow, giving ourselves to others. Now, Paul also rejoiced in his suffering because he knew that in giving himself away, he actually was coming to know Jesus in a way that you can't learn in any other, any other circumstance. That it was actually in suffering, that he would come to know Jesus in a deeper way. David Garland, who writes about this passage says that, "We know Jesus best when we share his deepest humiliation with him. It's the glass through which we see God most clearly."

You see, Paul also knew that his suffering for the Colossians was helping him to actually know Jesus more deeply. First of all, he was willing to suffer because Jesus was so much better. That Jesus had given him the life that he truly longed for. And he was willing to give up everything to follow him because Jesus had captivated him. But then he also realized that when he entered into suffering and when he gave himself away for others, that he actually came to know Jesus more intimately because Jesus was the one who suffered and gave him his life for Paul. And Paul came to know him in a deeper way and to encounter Jesus in a real way when Paul suffered himself. He knew him more deeply through his suffering. And not only that, he also knew that his suffering would help the Colossians' experience and know Jesus more clearly. He goes on in verse 25 to say, "In my flesh, I'm filling up what's lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body."

Now this could be a confusing verse here. What does Paul mean what's lacking in Christ's afflictions and how is Paul's suffering filling up what's lacking? Well, Philippians 2 actually gives us a really helpful clue about this. In the book of Philippians, Paul's writing this letter to the church in Philippi and he's in prison and he can't be with them in person, right. There's separation because he is in prison. And so Epaphroditus comes to visit Paul and to be with him because the Philippians can't be there with him. And Paul says of Epaphroditus in verse 29, chapter 2 verse 29, that "Epaphroditus filled up what was lacking in their service to Paul." He uses the exact same phrase that he uses here in Colossians chapter one. In other words, what was lacking in the Philippian service to Paul was their presence. They couldn't be with him.

They were separated. And so Epaphroditus coming to be with Paul actually filled up what was lacking in their service. He brought the Philippians' presence to Paul. Now this, I think greatly helps us understand what in the world Paul is talking about here in Colossians 1. How is Paul's suffering filling up what's lacking in Christ's affliction? Well, Paul giving himself away for the Colossians actually helps make Christ present the way Epaphroditus helped make the Philippians present with Paul, Paul's suffering helps make Christ present to the Colossians. In other words, Paul helped the Colossians see Jesus more tangibly through his own suffering for them. Now here's the point.

When we give ourselves away to serve others, we get to then experience in a very tangible way our union with Jesus. We get to know him more intimately in a deeper way through our suffering, the one who gave himself for us. And we also get to help others experience and see Jesus who gave himself for them. Now, a great example of this is for many of the moms in this room. And we're celebrating mothers today and it is a great day to celebrate our moms. And I think about my own mom and all that she gave and all that she sacrificed to serve, to serve me and my brother and my two sisters. I remember when I was a kid, at one point, she made this trip by herself. We lived in Virginia at the time and she flew down to Florida and basically spent like four or five days in Florida at the beach. I think she even went to Disney World. And I remember as a kid thinking like, why on earth would she go do this amazing trip and not bring us? Like, how could that possibly be fun for her? Like, that sounds terrible just to be by yourself. And I didn't realize that what she needed was just time to be by herself and to rest because every single day she was giving herself to serve me and my siblings. Pouring herself out to love us. I had no idea all that she had given and all that she had done for me and how exhausted she was and that she really just needed a break. For you moms today that are exhausted, that you're tired and worn out, and maybe you're overwhelmed by the responsibilities that you carry, trying to balance everything on your plate, between caring for your kids and work, maybe career, trying to even care for your own spiritual and emotional health, your weighed down, maybe, and feeling like you give your whole self every single day. And you have nothing left to give you feel like. Just know that you are in good company.

That Jesus Christ is in you. That you're not alone, that he sees you and he's in you. And when you give yourself each day, that you share with Jesus in suffering and you come to know him even more deeply and intimately through that. And not only that, that you will help your kids tangibly see Jesus who gave himself for them. And just as after the cross comes to the resurrection, so also after suffering comes glory. So give yourself away knowing that this light momentary affliction, as Paul calls it, is preparing for you an eternal weight of glory. Give yourself away knowing that Jesus Christ will give you all that you've ever longed for and needed both now and for eternity. You see, are you beginning to see, I hope, just the tangible way that this truth, Christ in you, changes everything. This hits the ground in real ways in our lives, because it changes even how we suffer and how we give ourselves away for others. Well, here's another way that it changes our life. Not only changes how we suffer, but it changes the trajectory of our life. It changes the purpose of our life. Paul, from the moment he first encountered Jesus on that road to Damascus, the whole point and purpose of his life completely changed. He says in verse 25, that he had a stewardship from God, a calling, which was given to him to make the word of God fully known, which was Christ in you, proclaiming Christ in you then became the driving vision for his life. His primary goal above all was to present every person mature in Christ.

It reshaped his vision. It reshaped the goal for his entire life. Now I'm not saying that you have the exact same calling or goal in life that Paul had. He had a very unique calling and vocation from God. But I am saying that when we encounter Christ and he comes into union with us, when we have Christ in us, it does change the trajectory and the goal of our life. And Paul talks about that here. That really the goal is maturity in Christ. The ultimate goal is that we become more like Jesus. That when we are united with him, now the goal of our life is to become more like him, until one day we are complete, as Paul says. We are mature. We are fully grown up into the men and women that he created us to be.

And this is the reason we talk so much about spiritual formation around here, because we believe that this is the goal for every single one of us. This is the goal of our life to become more like Jesus. When we are united with him and rescued by him and brought into union, when he comes to be in us, and us in him, then the whole point of our life is that we become like him. So what would it look like then, if becoming more like Jesus was the whole purpose of your life? What if this was the ultimate goal for your life to become more like Jesus in every area of your life? More like him and how you work, more like Jesus in your marriage, more like Jesus in your singleness, more like Jesus in how you use your

money, in how you rest. We could go on and on and on. What would that actually look like? Just as a side thing I want to encourage you. We talked about forming a rule of life just a few weeks ago. Well, that's really what that is all about. The rule of life worksheet and forming of rule of life is really all about saying, okay, the goal of my life is that I want to become like Jesus. That is the new trajectory. That is the new vision for my life.

That's where I'm going, because I have been rescued and Christ has united himself to me or myself to him. And so the goal of my life is that I become like him and the worksheet is actually meant to just help us tangibly think about what that actually looks like in every area of our life. What if our greatest vision for our kids was not that they graduated college? What if our greatest hope for them wasn't just that they had successful careers or found loving spouses or had grandkids for us to enjoy? What if our greatest goal for our kids was that they would become like Jesus to become the men and women that he created them to be?

Your salvation means that God has brought you into union with Christ, and he has changed the whole direction of your life and his goal for you is that you become like Jesus. So again, Christ in us changes everything. It changes how we encounter suffering. Christ in us changes the whole trajectory and direction of our life. Another thing that it changes for us is how we relate to one another. Christ in you changes our community. First of all, this, even this phrase, Christ in you is not written to an individual. It's actually written to a community. The word "you" here, even, in the original language, is a plural noun. He's saying Christ in you, the body, the church. And the fruit of a community that has Christ in them is incredible unity and love for each other. Church, what we share in common as a body, is much more than a common interest. It's much more than a common hobby. It's much more than a common purpose. What we share in common is not just a vision statement. What we share is Jesus Christ in us. That's what we have in common. And Paul says that we are knit together in love here. He says, we are knit together in love and that there is no community on Earth like this. Church, we are the body of Christ and he is pleased to dwell in us to make his home in us. This means that our lives are weaved together through the love of Jesus Christ himself, and we cannot be separated. Now what if we were known for our supernatural love for each other? What if we were known for our unity? But what do you think the church is known for today? I mean, go ask your neighbor, go ask someone at work. We are known for what we're against. We're known for being divisive. We're known for what we disagree about. Are we known for our love and our unity? Now this doesn't mean that we don't disagree, but it does mean that we disagree in a way that's completely different than the way our world disagrees and that we refuse to let secondary matters divide us. Now, the enemy frankly, wants to destroy us. The enemy wants nothing more than for this church and for the church, for the church of Jesus to be divided and to be separated. The enemy wants nothing more. And this year we've seen that in so many ways. That we have let political ideas and visions divide us. We've let how we respond to COVID divide us. We've let something as stupid as a mask on our face, be something that divides us. This was not Christ's vision for us as a church. He did not die for that. He died for a body that was one.

Our union with Jesus means that our union with each other cannot be unraveled. And let's just then refuse, refuse to let anything divide us because we are the body of Christ. So Christ in us, it changes how we endure. It changes how we face suffering. Christ in us, changes the direction and trajectory of our life. Christ in us changes then how we relate to one another as a body. And the last thing that Paul tells us is that Christ in us changes our source of wisdom. In verse 3 of chapter 2, he says of this, he says of Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He goes on then to say, "I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments." You see Paul actually is writing to them about Christ in them to inoculate them with the gospel so that they're not infected by the alternative wisdoms that they're going to encounter in everyday life in Colossi. He knew that wherever they went, they would hear and see other ways of viewing the world.

Other wisdoms, other visions for life and how it was meant to be lived. That's really what wisdom is. Biblical wisdom is understanding life as it was meant to be lived in God's vision. And his proclamation of Jesus Christ in them for them really, it was a vaccination against, against other sources of wisdom. It was meant to develop in them gospel antibodies that would protect them from going astray as they hear all of these alternative wisdoms and stories about what life is really about. He wants them to know Christ in them, and that shapes everything for them. Now, one common story for them that they would hear was that their physical bodies didn't matter. This was rooted in the dualism that Plato and other teachers taught. And so they basically thought our spiritual beings matter, but our physical bodies don't matter. So we can do with our physical bodies, whatever we want.

And you can imagine then how they thought about their sexuality, which they just saw as a physical thing, that for them, their bodies were just vehicles for pleasure. You think we live in a sexually liberal time right now. It is nothing compared with the first century Greco-Roman world. And so, Paul, just even with this one example, wants them to understand that God does have a vision for our bodies, that God does have a vision for our sexuality, a beautiful vision. A vision that gives us true freedom to be the people that God created us to be. And his point is that the only way then, we can be shaped by God's vision and not our culture's vision for life, and what it means to live life is that we have Jesus Christ and know Jesus Christ in us because Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. He reveals the fullness of God in life, as it was meant to be lived. And for us, we just like the Colossians, we face the same danger because we swim in a world of other wisdoms, of other stories, of other answers to what life is about and how it's meant to be lived. And we need in us to know God and his way of life, the way of life that truly gives life. And the only way we know that is when we know Jesus in us. And we watch what life was meant to be through looking at him. We must look to Jesus as our ultimate source of wisdom. So Christ in us changes a lot. It's not just this random or obscure theological truth that doesn't really affect our daily lives. It changes everything. It changes how we endure suffering. It changes then the trajectory and the goal of our life. That it's about becoming more like him. It changes how we relate to each other as one body in which he dwells. And it changes our source of wisdom that allows us to walk faithfully in a culture that's walking away.

Now back to the main point here, Paul is telling us that the God who is above all, that Jesus Christ who is above all, is Jesus Christ in you. This is his whole point, and this is what discipleship is about. This is it. Church, we never need to move past this. I know there's a lot of things that maybe feel like are changing at Doxa, this is in many ways a time of change, but here's what is not changing, that we proclaim Jesus Christ above all and Jesus Christ in us. And that's what discipleship is all about. That's our discipleship plan for 2021, to proclaim Jesus. To proclaim Jesus Christ in us. This changes everything about our lives. So let me leave you today with just one practical encouragement. Seek to know Jesus Christ in you.

If Paul is right, and I think he is, then Jesus Christ, who is above all in whom the fullness of God dwells is in us. Seek to know him. Seek to know him. He is in you. And he invites you to know him and to have a relationship with him. Knowing here, Paul is not talking about just cognitive intellectual knowing. Yes, it is that, but it goes much deeper. He's talking about intimacy. He's talking about attachment. He's talking about knowing him deeply, like someone you love. Now how do we do this? Well, first let me say this. Christ in you is not the default place that we start in life. Remember we talked about last week, this reality that we are separated or Paul says alienated from God, that we are hostile, we're enemies. That our rebellion against him divides us from him. And that it is only Jesus Christ and his work for us, his death and resurrection that can reconcile us and bring us back to God. And so if we put our trust in him, then we're reconciled. But if you have not put your trust in Jesus, then you are still separated and Christ is not in you. And this morning, he is inviting you to put your trust in him. To put your hope in him so that you can experience this union. And if you have put your trust in Christ, if you have been reconciled to him, then here's what it looks like to know Christ. Knowing equals intimacy and attachment with

Christ. Knowing is not just intellectual knowledge, it's to actually grow in intimacy with him. And how do you do that? It's really not that complicated. I don't say that in a demeaning way. I just mean it's really simple. It's to spend time with him. You know, if we love someone and we actually want to get to know them, then we're going to spend time with them. And that's what Jesus is inviting us into. And he's not hiding himself from us. He's not trying to make it complicated or hard. He's just inviting us to come and to be with him and to know him. And what does that look like? It means all the things we've been talking about this last year. It means spending time in prayer, spending time in his word, just hearing from him. It means carving out time to be alone with him.

It doesn't have to be complicated. It's taking five minutes in the morning or 10 minutes in the morning, before you look at your phone and start scrolling the news, or before you look at your work email, just to be still. To read his word, to hear from him, to read a song, to spend a moment in prayer and ask him to reveal himself to you. He is in you, you're united with him, and he's not hiding from you. He wants you to know him, but you do need to pursue him, right? So seek to know him. That's my final encouragement. Seek to know him, not just intellectually, but to know him intimately. The one who has created all things, who's before all things, who is above all things, in whom the fullness of God dwells. He is longing for you to know him. Will you heed his invitation this morning?

Let me pray for us. Jesus. Thank you. Thank you that you don't leave us. That you don't leave us separated, alone, without life. That you came to be with us. That you reconciled us to your father, through your death, through your resurrection, through your life for us and now, and now that you come to live in us, that you've sent your spirit to dwell in us. That you're with us. Lord, help us to understand the magnitude of what that really means that you are in us and how that changes everything about our life. Lord help that to be real to us, help it to change us. Lord, help us to seek to know you more deeply because in you life is found. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.