

COLOSSIANS

A B O V E A L L



COLOSSIANS: Find His Fingerprints

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Donald Zimmerman

Colossians 1:15-23

Hi, Doxa church. My name is Tim Patton. I'm one of the elders and serve on the staff team. Super pleased that you chose to join us today and if you're new, we'd love to meet you and help you take a next step to get connected. So we've got staff and elders that are available on the chat. Don't hesitate to let us know that you're new this morning. We'd love to welcome you.

Family, I want to give you an update on our family finances. We talk about this each month because financial stewardship is a matter of discipleship. It's an act of worship. So each month I give an update to let us know what came in and where it was spent as we evaluate this part of our discipleship and worship. Now let's start on the upside. While we haven't advertised or officially fundraised for any money yet for this new building that we're in, a family that has been paying attention, relatively new, saw some of Doxa's needs and wanted to get more involved. They gave a \$50,000 kickstarter for our future building campaign. I mean, praise God for this kind of unprompted generosity. That is just like our heavenly father. He knows what we need and he blesses us before we can even ask for it-just incredible! At the same time, I want to tell you that March was one of our lowest giving months in the history of Doxa. You'll see here on this slide, that \$118,000 came in for operations and our goal was \$160,000. You heard last week that we gave our kind of update week to week for April, and we're trending positively, thankfully for April, but we're adding now to our year-to-date deficit with these March financial results. Family, this is the time to pray, discern and commit. And we should be doing this in every area of our lives and especially with our church home.

So I want to talk about those things with you. I want to encourage you to pray. Talk to God about your finances. Ask the Spirit if your current commitment to the local church is sacrificial

and joyful. Those are some of the marks the Bible gives us. Does your checking statement look like the spending habits of someone committed to Christ. And every time your income changes, that's a good moment to say, God, I want my whole life to be yours. Help me to use the dollars that you've loaned to me. I'm a steward, your steward. They belong to you. I want to put your kingdom first. Those are the types of prayers that we need to pray and go to God with. And secondly, discern. Listen for what God is saying in that conversation. Take your questions, take your reflections, bring them to your DNA. Bring them to an elder. Bring them to your MC leader. Talk with others and get feedback on how is your giving. What does that stewardship look like for you and how you might grow. And then commit, taking action right away, whatever God leads you to do.

If you're giving 2% today, get online and change your monthly contribution to four. If you're at four, then make the move to six. If you're giving 12%, 15%, that's incredible-share with your DNA or your MC how God has provided for you along the way and encourage them. Be a leader amongst us in that way. And if you've committed, but you forgot to give in March, I want to ask you to consider making up that gift in April and catch up. You can give right now by texting "Doxa give" to 24587. Now, I know, we know that many of you have prayed, discerned and committed to Doxa, so I just want to say loud and clear this morning-thank you. You know my family's giving is represented in these numbers, your staff and your elders, we're in this together. We're a family doing this together. So thank you for being a part of what Jesus is doing in and through this church.

Good Morning, Doxa. It's so great to be with you this morning. If you're new, my name is Grace and I am so glad that you're here. I miss seeing a lot of you here in person, but I'm really grateful to see you still attending online. We've been in the book of Colossians for a couple of weeks now, focusing on the fact that Jesus is above all. And when it comes to our posture of worshiping Jesus, we worship and praise him for what we know of him, for what we think to be true of him. And if we believe and recognize that he is above all things, that he has conquered all sin, and has given us the power of his spirit-that is really exciting news that is true for us every single day. And therefore what we do with our lives and how we praise Jesus with our words-that is greatly shaped when we believe those things to be true.

So now would you close your eyes or maybe put out your hands as a posture of receiving as I read this Psalm over us as a call to worship this morning. Psalm 145, it says, "I will exalt you my God and my King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness." Let's stand and praise him together.

Hi, good morning, Doxa. My name is Natalie and I work as a deacon on staff. We are reading scripture together this morning so you have your Bible near you please grab it. We'll be reading from Colossians one verse 15 through 23. Please stand for the reading of God's word: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For, by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones or dominions or rulers or

authorities; all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning, the first one from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself, all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you who were once alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, became a minister." This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Good Morning, Doxa. My name is Donald one of the pastors on staff here. I just want to say, thank you for allowing me to be one of your pastors. It's a great privilege to be a part of what God is doing through the people of our church. My kids had spring break a few weeks ago, and I was working with our team here to put the last pieces of the Colossians series together to be ready for that launch. And so my family couldn't necessarily do any big out-of-state trips, but we looked for a fun day trip to do together. And we ended up heading out to Deception Pass and you'll see in the video, here's a few clips of our day. It was gorgeous-sunshine in the sky, low tide so the beaches were huge. We did some light hiking with the kids. We walked across the bridge and felt our stomachs turnover inside of us.

And as you look out from the trails, you see this absolutely stunning view of the water and the coastline. Now most of us appreciate a scenic view or a pretty sunset but for some of us like myself, I need in a deep and significant way, regular time in the outdoors to reset. Time to be surrounded with the natural elements, time to rest and just unclog my thoughts. The outdoors often feels like a holy place for me. I experience God in a special way when I'm waist-deep in a stream, fly fishing or hiking someplace where there isn't any man-made structures or signs. There's something deeply significant about being surrounded by the creation that Paul says was made by Christ, through Christ, and for Christ. And we're going to look at some of that today. Now this is part three in our series in Colossians so I want to briefly remind us of just a bit of our context.

We're going to see Paul writing this letter from prison to a church plant that he's never been to, but was planted in part because of the discipleship that he did a hundred miles away. And he's writing because there are already heresies or false teachings rising up and breaking out about Christ in this region. And it's all happening in the year 62 AD which is not just a random historical fact. I'm not trying to sound smart. I want us to understand this book is being written while people are still alive who saw Jesus rise from the dead. This is not hundreds of years removed. It's not someone's interpretation of someone's interpretation of someone's interpretation. This is being written in a time when there were many who saw him after he walked out of the grave and had very strong opinions about what was true and not true about Jesus because they watched him preach, they watched him heal, because they ate meals with him, because they went on walks with him. And we're going to see today that Christ sits over all of creation and not just trees and mountains and coastlines, but societies and social constructs, and identity, and sexuality, and governments. All of creation, wherever we find his fingerprints, we find his reign. So let's pray together.

Jesus, help me communicate your word clearly. Work in us, change us, transform us. Let us listen for your voice. Let us submit our lives to your word because you are good and you are for us. I pray we would see ourselves as sent ones, that we would not settle for the peace that the world offers, but instead ask you to give us peace on the inside. We recognize that you rule over all things, including our lives. So we submit our lives to you in this moment. We pray these things for your glory. Amen.

Verse 15, chapter one, he starts like this. He says he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Christ shows us who God is. There are shadows and hints and clues in other places, which if God made everything would make sense because his fingerprints are on all of it, right? And this verse opens the door for us to talk a little theology. In fact, you're all theologians. I don't know if you knew that. A theologian is one who studies the nature of God. And we think that theologian means degrees with lots of letters after their name or bookshelves floor to ceiling in our zoom background, but all of you have studied the nature of God. So here's your theology lesson for this morning. There are two types of revelation, general and special. General draws lines and shapes and special fills in the colors and textures. Article two of the Belgic Confession helps explain the difference between general and special revelation. It says, we know him by two means. First by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small are as so many characters leading us to clearly see the invisible things of God, his everlasting power. Second, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine word, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation.

So let's start with general revelation. General revelation tells us general things about God existing and his power. Every created thing reveals to us that there is a God in heaven. And in addition, inside of every man, woman and child is our conscience, is the awareness that we are a made thing under the watch of he who made us.

Now if you're not a Christian in here that might sound a little bit offensive or even controversial to you, but we can agree that we as humans don't always fully understand what is going on inside of us. I mean, have you ever lost your temper and been a little bit surprised at what came out of your mouth? Have you ever been surprised that as you age how much you occasionally sound like your mom or your dad. Have you ever been surprised by how tired you actually felt once you laid down at the end of the day? All I'm saying is that we aren't always great at fully understanding what's going on inside of us. And it's possible that even the furthest person from God today has something inside of them. It might be silenced or suppressed, but because they are made as a reflection of who God is, they will never be able to fully shake the sense that something is bigger out there.

Now what about special revelation? Now in times past special revelation came before the completion of scripture through the prophets by means of dreams and visions and theophanies. But now special revelation has received its permanent form in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This is in part why we love our Bibles. Now if you walk out the back of Doxa church here in downtown Bellevue, at least pre-Covid, you would be pummeled in the face with the smell of the Asian-fusion restaurant that is directly behind us. The air ducts and vents pump the air out of the restaurant right into the parking lot that we share. And the smell of that food

is a stronger experience than just seeing a picture of the food that they serve on a poster. But the fullest experience is sitting down and actually tasting the food.

Now all of creation says something about who God is and what he's like. Mountains are like that photo of the food and image in their majesty and grandness. Those redeemed by Christ, you and I, are one step further, a level up. We're made in his image. So we're more like the smell of God, at least when we were living in our identity in Christ. And that's not just some kind of clever illustration. In fact, in Second Corinthians, Paul says it. He says, but thanks be to God who through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. We are the aroma of Christ. But for the fullest experience, if you want to know exactly what brings God joy, what he is all about, what he cares about, what he wants, what he despises, what he celebrates, Christ is "the" image, not "an" image, "the" image. He is the full flavor experience, not just the smell or a photo.

Now this verse says that Christ is the first born. And this feels a little weird. I mean, if Christ is the always existing member of the Trinity living in eternity past, present, and future, why does it say that he's the first born. Paul here is making the point that Christ has all the rights and privileges of a firstborn son. I want to be super clear. Jesus is not a part of the created order. In fact, 130 times this "firstborn" language is used in the Septuagint and it's consistently a reference to status and power. Christ has the rights and privileges of a firstborn son. He has the right to reign like his father. He has the right to give and take life like his father. He has the right to bless and heal like his father. And to a church and a culture that we're constantly confronted with thinking about birth order, this is a powerful statement.

We don't think about this much but for example, Bill Gates, he has three kids, Jennifer, Rory and Phoebe. His oldest daughter Jennifer is 24 years old. If Bill and Melinda pass away, those kids have rights and privileges to the Gates' wealth and empire. And Paul's statements here are simply pointing out the rights that Christ has as a member of the triune God and the power he has access to. Turning water into wine kind of power, making a storm stop in its tracks kind of power, making a heart that stopped beating start pumping blood again kind of power. Know your thoughts before you say them out loud kind of power. For by him all things were created. Verse 16: "For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created through him and for him."

Paul is directly going after Caesar and the ways in which Caesar talks about himself, namely as the son of God, creator of the empire, savior of Rome and the one who is holding Rome together. Now part of what was common in Rome was for Caesar's image to be plastered on absolutely everything—currency, architecture, artwork. And it's in this moment that Paul writes a subversive and frankly, even treasonous poem in verses 15 through 20. This section of Colossians is often seen as a hymn declaring Jesus to be the image of the invisible God through whom all things were created and for whom all things were created, including everything in the Roman empire. And here's what I love about this. Other than the fact that Paul is just stirring things up, he's using the Roman logic, their cultural cue, that anything with Caesar's face on it, anything with his fingerprints on it belongs to Caesar.

And Paul says...I love that. I love that thinking and that line of logic, let's talk that out. Where do we see the fingerprints of the living God? Because wherever we find his fingerprints, we find his reign. Paul says, if it's visible, it's under the reign of Christ. The physical realm, everything you

have seen and touched and tasted and heard, his fingerprints are on all of that. And wherever we find his fingerprints, we find Christ's reign. And then there's this whole invisible realm. If you're not a Christian and you're with us here today, I just want to speak on behalf of all Christians and say that we believe some pretty crazy stuff. I know that. I know that we do miracles, and the virgin birth and heaven and hell. One of the things we believe in are angels and demons. We believe those are real entities.

And for us as Westerners, it's actually easy for us to ignore angels and demons and equally easy for us to make far too much of them. Because at the end of the day, we know that they all have to obey Jesus.

If this topic of angels and demons or spiritual warfare interests you, two resources I would commend to you: Sam Storms is a great theologian teacher and pastor. He actually just this week released a book called *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*. I have not read the whole thing, say that right up front, but I've read a bunch of the stuff that he has put out on the topic and trust him. His material is usually great. So if that's a topic that interests, you check that out. If you typically learn through fiction, then I'd encourage you to read CS Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*. It's a fascinating story and actually shares a lot of biblical wisdom with us about how the enemy attacks believers and tries to rob us of joy and just the vitality in our spiritual life.

So you have the visible and the invisible realm. And here's what's interesting about the stuff that God makes. Almost everything in the created order can be twisted in such a way to leave its place and purpose and become something dangerous. More on that in a minute. Paul was making his point here in a culture not unlike our own that says whether you like him or not whoever sits in the chair of authority, so in our case the president, and their case the emperor, that he has the rule of the land. Now obviously our governments are set up differently, but the idea is the same. Even today people refer to the American president as the leader of the free world. But when Obama or Trump or Biden or Nixon or Lincoln vacates that seat, that seat of power, whether by death or by end of term, their authority goes away.

And Paul's point here is simply this-Christ has no term. Christ has no term. He has always had power and authority. He has it now, and he's always going to have it. He isn't running out of anything, energy or authority or term. The only thing that's running out is time. And that's for you and I, not for him. He will return when he has predetermined and nothing will stop him. Verse 17 says, "And he is before all things and in him all things hold together." This verse says he's before all. Christ has always existed. And we often forget that the Father did not make the world as a solo effort. In fact, it was a team project. I love thinking about the Trinity working together to make the world, the Grand Canyon, or Bamf, or the great barrier reef or Yosemite or Machu Picchu or the Rainbow Mountains in China or the cherry blossoms in Japan. We don't often think of Jesus in this way, or even thinking of him in the old Testament at all. But he is there because Christ has always existed. He is above all and holds all things and everything together.

Bible scholar, David Garland says something about this that I love here. He says Christ is the system of systems. He is the basic operating principle controlling existence. The universe is not self-sufficient as a believed in the deistic model, nor are individuals, no matter how much they may deceive themselves into thinking that they are. Even those who do not acknowledge Christ's reign, and those who actively oppose him are entirely dependent on him. So in him all things hold together. He continues on in verse 18, he says, "And he is the head of the body, the

church." Jesus is in charge of every true local church. The church capital "C" is his bride. And while I know that we mean well when we say these kinds of things, when we say Judah Smith's church or Matt Chandler's church, it actually reinforces a broken view of who's actually in charge and of who's ultimately responsible for what goes on in the local church.

You know the church can be a hot mess some days and that's because of you and I, but we have a good leader in Christ Jesus. And Christ lifted up in the local church always has been and is today God's rescue plan for the world. He is the beginning. "He is the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent", this verse says. And this verse says that he's the beginning because Christ has always existed. He uses this firstborn language again, further driving home the point that Christ is above all and has every right and privilege to rule the way he sees fit.

He is first and ruling over everything from creation, all the way to death, right? That really covers the whole spread.

Now not counting the final resurrection of the saints, the Bible accounts for nine different people resurrecting other than Christ from the dead. But they were all raised in the flesh only to die again. Christ intervenes and alters the way that death will work. Death previously had the freedom to do what it pleases. But once Christ steps in death's territory gets very, very small. Verse 19 says, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." This is some great special revelation here, right? It says "fullness" because Christ was not simply a resident of heaven like the angels, or just the smell of God like you and I, but God, in his fullness. "And through him", it says in verse 20 "to reconcile to himself, all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." And this is interesting at first glance, it looks like this versus saying that everyone will be saved. And that's not what it's saying. It's saying that the blood of Christ has secured the victory and that the day is coming, when all things that are in the new heavens and the new earth will be entirely reconciled to God with no remaining rebellion.

Now wait, in Philippians 2:10 Paul says whether on earth or in heaven or under the earth, every knee will bow. But here in talking about what is reconciled, he says on earth and in heaven, there is no mention of under now, why is that? Is there a difference between that which is redeemed and that which bows on one knee? Interestingly, the answer is yes. Philippians 2 is Paul's description of who and where all will bow and recognize Jesus as Lord. And we know from the New Testament that that includes everyone. I mean, even the demons in the New Testament are consistently getting that part right with Jesus. In fact, they're one of the only ones who do. Every time he shows up the demons say some version of we know who you are. You're the son of God. In Matthew 8 they do this. Again in Luke 4 they do this. Mark 1 says that Jesus wouldn't let the demons speak because they knew who he really was. So we can be confident that a day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. But for those of us in the new heavens and the new earth, not under, but in the new earth, that will be a joyful bowing, a bow of gratitude and honor of his mercy and kindness towards us. For those under the earth, that bow is something else. And so the place under the earth, the place we call hell, home to those unreconciled beings-that doesn't take away from the all things being reconciled in heaven and on the earth in the age to come.

In the back of my garage I have a small shop. It's where I do projects and fix and tinker and repair my kids' toys when they get destroyed. And pre-Covid it was a pretty tidy place. Every

tool in its place, everything put away. But during the early stages of Covid I was cutting some planks of wood for a new countertop in our TV room. And as I fired up the circular saw and plugged it in the power on that circuit went out. So I checked all the outlets and the breaker and everything looked fine, but I couldn't figure it out. So for a few months I didn't have electricity going to the outlets in my shop. And most importantly, the lights stopped working. So when you look at those outlets, they looked like outlets. They still looked the same. And those light fixtures still looked like light fixtures, but there was no electricity coming to them. So functionally, uh, they were dead. They didn't help me. And frankly things started to stack up and get pretty disarrayed and messy in there.

You know, one thing about the enemy that's interesting is that he's actually not very creative. He just rips off and duplicates everything that God does. But without God, you kind of cut the power off and end up with a light that doesn't turn on and outlets that can't power anything. Satan has placed counterfeits for almost everything God has made in this world. There's a counterfeit option for almost everything in the kingdom. And that's why we can get sleep that doesn't give rest. It's why we find ourselves in friendships that only take. It's why money makes us slaves rather than serve us. It's why we look for and long for intimacy and instead end up in sexual enslavement and addiction. It's why food that's meant to be enjoyed, turns into a monster that we have to manage having way too much or perhaps far too little. It's why we cling to our stuff instead of freely giving to the places that need it most. Listen to me, Doxa, it's why for many of us we rarely experience the peace that the Bible talks about. And when we do it sticks around for maybe a few minutes. It's because the power has been cut off and the lights can't turn on. Counterfeit peace is peace on the outside. It's always a little slippery. It's always just a little bit further out, just a little more getting done, and then I can have it, right?

Outside peace is not inside peace. And you know how you can tell this difference? Because you have probably in the last year sat in moments of pure silence with every screen off and every person gone and you have felt your insides rage just tumultuous and noisy and rumbling and anxious. Outside peace is not inside peace.

Some of you know for a long part of my life I traveled with worship bands and I traveled with an improv comedy group, actually. There was a ministry we played shows in colleges and theaters and coffee houses and churches all across the country. We drove 60,000 miles in one nine month period and performed in 40 of the States. And there was a question we would often ask our audiences. We would wait for the crowd to call something out. One of those questions was to think of a fictitious place. And the weirdest thing was regardless of demographic or age or what state we were in, 95% of the time somebody in the crowd would yell out, "Never Never Land." That was their answer.

I think the most commonly mentioned fictitious place in our lives today is this place called "When Things settle Down" or "Once I Get Ahead". That's not a real place. And those are places we actually talk about a lot as though they could offer us some kind of inside peace. Now Rome had their own outside peace, right? They called it Pax Romana or Roman Peace. It was a 200 year period of time with no significant wars. Rome exploded to 70 million people in the empire. The economy was booming. But even in that 200 years there was still really dark things happening in the empire and many people in the region didn't get to enjoy that peace.

Christ offers a real peace. One on the inside. Not a fake one. Not a counterfeit one. What is outside peace? Well outside peace requires circumstances to be great. It requires an absence of

conflict. It needs everything to go well, including the things we don't even have in our control. Outside peace is smoking weed or drinking five or six IPAs until you just don't feel stressed anymore. Outside peace is spending your evenings answering work email while your family does their thing in the other room. And sometimes we actually ask God or at least wish that he would give us outside peace. But what he promises is the inside kind. We want him to change the jerk that we work with and instead he says, I'll change you so that that guy doesn't have control over your day and your mood. We want him to make our kids obey us and not throw tantrums. And instead he says, I'll free you from needing them to make you feel better. And then you can enter their world as a comforting force in their lives.

Outside peace is like handing you a magazine in the waiting room before a life-saving surgery, something to distract yourself with. Real inside piece is Jesus Christ holding your hand, looking you in the eye and promising to not leave you as they put you under for that surgery. And anytime we reach for or settle for the counterfeit, it costs us something. We pay a price. In fact, if you listen to most people's conversion story, it almost always involves a part about them trying to find peace in some other place, and then experiencing true peace, the peace that comes from Christ.

So how do we not settle for Pax Romana or Pax Americana? How do we get the peace of Christ? How do we get the lights back on? Well, I'll say right up front, if you're looking for a new strategy or some mind-blowing formula, that's not what I have for you. The key to experiencing the peace of Christ is experiencing the presence of Christ. I want you to pay attention to two things. Pay attention to your formation. You need times in the word and both talking to and listening for God's voice far more than you can possibly comprehend. Come to Sunday gatherings ready to participate, not just spectate. Our liturgy is designed from top to bottom to form you to be more like Christ. So pay attention to your formation. And I know it's hard and life feels fast and complicated but the system and the way of living you have right now is perfectly designed to give you the results you have right now.

So if you're tired, if you're constantly fatigued, if you're lonely, if you're going back to sin over and over and over again, then your life is designed in such a way to bring those results back to you over and over and over again. In other words, if you're tired of the way things are going, you have to make a change. Someone really wise once said that we only make changes when the pain of staying the same finally exceeds the pain of making the change. And some of you have been playing church for a long, long time, and you can fool your friends and your family. You might even dupe your spouse. The two people you cannot fool is yourself and Jesus Christ. And he's for you. And he loves you. And he wants you to experience his real peace on the inside. So if you want the lights on, if you want inside peace, there's no shortcut or way around it. You have to get after the presence of Christ.

Number two, I want you to pay attention to your community. Do the people that you spend the most time with know what you look like when the power is on and when the power is off? Do they talk about Christ when you get together? I'm always amazed at how seldom Christ even comes up in some of my relationships with other Christians. And I'm not saying every hangout has to be a scripture battle, but if Christ never even comes up, that's something probably worth paying attention to. Again, the presence of Christ, that's where his peace comes from. This verse concludes in verse 21, he says, "And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present

you Holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel you have heard which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven."

I love this verse because while Christ is above our past and our present and our future, remembering what we came out of, and I am especially talking to those of you who grew up in church, remembering what we were saved out of is a part of what keeps us humble. And it's what gives us a heart for those who are in this same place today. Our past does not define us as Christians. But Christians that forget how badly they have needed grace and how bad they need grace today are the worst kinds of Christians. Put in the positive, Christians that remember that they were once hostile in mind and doing evil deeds and have been reconciled by Christ's good works-those are a joy to be around. Those are the ones who smell like Christ. He presented you holy and blameless. You didn't make yourself those things.

Now it's interesting, this verse says, "If indeed, you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast" and people understandably get pretty fired up about that language. And people in general get hung up on reformed theology sometimes, the idea that God knows who will be saved and who won't, and it's a big deal. But in reality, what does that change for us? Not a whole lot. I'll say the one positive thing is it makes me more courageous as a witness. Why? Well, because I know that some of the people in my life who don't know him today are going to. That if that weren't the case, Jesus would have already come back, that he's still at work. And so when I interact with other parents at my son's baseball games, when I talk to people at the grocery store, when I interact with non-Christians that live on my street, I'm constantly hopeful and aware of the fact that Jesus is still at work, that he is still calling those home to him. He's still going after the lost sheep.

Let's close with this. What does it look like to be the aroma of Christ? What can we do? Well, I want to give you a few examples. Christ is above all, rules over all, reigns overall and yet he lays his power down to live life like you and I and die in our place. That means there's going to be times when maybe you are called upon to set aside the authority or the power that you have in your workplace to benefit someone who may be undeserving. I think it looks like treating people better than they deserve, and that could apply to a waitress giving poor service. It could be your next door neighbor that drives you nuts. That could apply to the people on the road next to you when you drive home from church. It might mean moving towards those that are a little more socially awkward at work, or even around here on Sundays. And there's plenty of them. This is Seattle. Here's the tough one- parenting with grace. This one's so hard, right? There's a difference between venting anger or correcting one that you love to see them formed into the likeness of Christ.

Kids, I want you to listen to me. This is an interesting one-one of the best ways that you can be the aroma of Christ to your friends and to those that know your family is simply by listening to your mom and dad. I know that sounds bizarre, but I was recently having a conversation with Beth Flower. She's the wife of our church-planting resident, Ken Flower. And she recently told me that she has asked her kids when they're in public, like playing at the park for example, to come when she calls them and pack up the first time that she asks, because that's one small way they can look super different than all the other kids on the playground.

Singles, dating and relationships are a tough place to smell like Christ. But please know that he is with you. Date as though you are a son or daughter of your Father in heaven. Your heart is

worth guarding. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Maybe in your professional life there are shortcuts in your industry that everybody thinks are okay. Christ didn't take any shortcuts because he was holy and blameless. There's lots of ways this can play out. And if you have the courage to make time to get in his presence, you're going to see his power run to all of the areas of your life. You're going to feel inside peace, not in the absence of chaos, but right smack dab in the middle of it. He has already presented you holy and blameless. It's time to embrace that, to receive that gift, to live life in a way that smells like the kingdom. His fingerprints are on you, church. You belong to him. Nothing can change that. Let's pray.

Jesus, we recognize your rule and your reign, not over creation and the things that we look at out there, but over our hearts in here. We recognize the ways in which we have frequently settled for the peace that the world offers, its distractions. And we ask you to give us true meaningful kingdom peace. Peace on the inside. The peace in the storm. Peace in the chaos. Let us see ourselves as sent ones bringing that peace to others who need it. And continue to shape our lives that we would smell more like you, that people, when they spend time with us would experience in small ways the kingdom of God. Help us for our good and your glory. Amen.