

Colossians 1:28-29

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 August 2018

Preacher: Jonathan Camiré

[0 : 00] Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Help us to engage with our minds what your Word has to say to us this morning. Help us to engage with our hearts, Lord, that we would not be apathetic to your truth, but that we would engage with it with our hearts, with our affections.

Lord, would you pour out your Holy Spirit upon us? We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. So some of you maybe are new today. We are going through a series called Meditating on God's Word. And so what we're doing is taking small sections of the Bible that are either memorable, they're really good to memorize and feed on as we study them and read them, contemplate. And they generally have one idea. So it's like one, two verses. They have one or two ideas. And today we're looking at Colossians chapter 1, verse 28, particularly verse 28. So there's this one big idea, but there's also a big objection when we look at this verse.

And the big objection is that as Canadians, we want to foster respect for other people's beliefs and would rather just live and let live. As Canadians, that's what we value. And when it comes to Christianity, one of the big objections is that it works in the opposite direction. You kind of have to adopt the whole Christian belief, and then you have to make other people believe it as well.

And it's your job that people would be overwhelmed by that faith, as if your faith was better than somebody else's. That's really the core of it. And that's just not cool with Canadians. We just don't go there. So instead of doing what our culture tends to do is critique from far away, we're going to look at what the Bible has to say. So it would be helpful to me if you have your Bibles with you.

And we're going to look over this verse over and over again. So I'll read it again. Colossians chapter 1, verse 28. It says, Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. So hearing words like this, alarm bells are probably setting off in our ears.

[2 : 20] What do you mean, proclaim? Like, is your belief better than somebody else's? Like here it's commanding us to proclaim the Christian faith. And as Canadians, we want to be agreeable. That's one of our highest ethics. And it's what keeps, we believe that keeps us strong, is our unity. And we don't want to divide things. So things like religion, we just have to see them as, you know, on the side. We have to put them on the side and not have them as the center of our lives. So the Canadian claim would go something like this. You can have Jesus, you can have Muhammad, you can have Buddha, you can have yourself if you're a humanist, but we will all have to work together and unite and or find common ground in our humanity because our humanity is what transcends all these different beliefs.

So that's probably the more positive way of thinking, isn't it? This is something we call pluralism.

And we see it in our workplaces, in our schools, we hear it on the radio, we see it on the TV, in politics, in the arts, in our local coffee shop. It's everywhere in Canadian culture.

And it's the idea that all paths are equal. All paths are equal and not, there shouldn't be one path that goes above another one and like all paths are equal. We don't want to assume that one is better than the next. And that's the expected belief for Canadians. Several months ago, there was a beautiful article written in the Huffington Post by Surjit Singh Flora that sort of hashed out this Canadian ideal of pluralism, this goal that we have as a culture. He wrote, Now, it's hard to disagree with this statement, isn't it? And as Christians, we find much common ground when we hear something like this. And it's not only that we find common ground, is that a list of virtues like this can be intimidating to Christians.

It's not because that, you know, it has something better to offer, but it's so agreeable to us that there's so many things that, you know, our Christian faith compels us to do things like that, yet it's not the same. So resisting it makes us look like a threat, a threat to something that on the surface seems good. But here's the problem for our Canadian culture. The best that it can offer is a list of

good things to do, a list of good behaviors. And we all know that a list of good behaviors is not really inspiring. It has its own limits. We know that when we tell a child to do something, they often don't do it. And if we're honest, as adults, things don't really change all the time. We also have that thing continuing in our lives. So being told to be a better human is not very life-changing. So here's the first point, if we can have it. Martin, or Sana, thank you.

Christianity proclaims a person. Canada proclaims values. Christianity proclaims a person. Canada proclaims values. British historian Tom Holland, who's an agnostic, said in a conversation that they had with N.T. Wright, who's a Christian, he's a bishop of the American church, and he's a theologian apologist. So in a conversation that they had, Tom Holland, an agnostic, said, compacted in this very small amount of writing, Paul's writing he's referring to, is almost everything that explains the modern Western world. And also how the West has gone to shape concepts like international law and human rights. Ultimately, they don't go back to Greek philosophers. They don't go back to Roman imperialism.

[6 : 23] They go back to Paul. Paul's letters, I think, along with the four gospels, are the most influential, the most impactful, the most revolutionary writings that have emerged from the ancient world.

Now, I'm not bringing this out to say that, you know, Canadian culture is actually Christian. I don't think that's the case, or I'm not trying to say that the Apostle Paul is a superior human being, but rather to show that when we talk about tolerance and equality, human rights, and so forth, they have a source. This idea comes from somewhere, which Tom Holland claims is the Christian gospel.

So what does this mean for Canadians living in Canada? Does it mean that we, since we have a distant heritage of Christian values, that we should just concern ourselves with being good Canadians?

Would that not be enough? Can we have our second point, Sana? The gospel is inspired by a savior, not just a better way of living. The gospel is inspired by a savior, not just a better way of living. This is hugely important because, like every other worldview, Canadian pluralism or Canadian values present us with a potentially better way of living. It could work in the end. So it's really just a list of things to do, and that's the starting point. It gives us the task, and it says, go for it. Be a better human so we can live together in harmony.

And on top of that, you can't, well, you can have your religion, the religion that you want, as long as you're a good person, as long as you're tolerant in other beliefs, and that you don't push your beliefs on other people. So pluralism is often explained in this analogy. So there are three blind people that are walking around in a zoo, and they arrive at the elephant. And so the one person who obviously is blind, they can't see the elephant, they start feeling the elephant, and they feel the leg, and they say, wow, like the elephant is big and round, and it's like a tree. But then the other person says, no, no, no, I'm touching something that's very flat, very soft, and that's what the elephant is like.

[8 : 45] It's flat and soft, almost like a stingray or something. And then the third person is saying, no, no, no, you have it wrong. The elephant feels like a snake. It's narrow, and it's like, and they're touching the trunk, right? And so this is what, this is supposed to be compared, or supposed to be an analogy for all the worldviews, that we only have a part of the truth, only a small portion of the truth. But all together, everyone sees a little part of the truth. Now that sounds very, very humble, very tolerant. But here's the thing. There aren't only three people in the zoo. There has to be a fourth person to say, no, no, no, that's not what the elephant is like. That's only part of the elephant. And the assumption is that this fourth person is not blind. This fourth person can see perfectly the full image. They don't just see a portion of it, or they don't just feel a portion of it. They see the whole thing. That's why they can say, what you're touching is a leg, not the full elephant, or the trunk, not the full elephant. So we have a problem with this worldview, is that when it says that all views are equal, it doesn't live up to its own standard. It self-implodes.

Tim Keller, in response to this analogy, wrote, how could you possibly know that no religion can see the whole truth unless you yourself have the superior, comprehensive knowledge of spiritual reality?

You just claim that none of the religions have. So there's a problem with this. It claims that all religions are equal, and then you have to live up to this standard in order to live in harmony. But in contrast to this, the Christian worldview has a different starting point. It says that the gospel, the sacrificial love of God, God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that whoever believes

in him shall not perish but have eternal life. That is the starting point of the gospel. And that's what we see in verse 28 here in the Bible.

That it says, him we proclaim. Him we proclaim. It's not saying values we proclaim. This is a better way of living. These are the 10 steps for your, I don't know, freedom or whatever, how to lose weight or whatever, right? It's saying him we proclaim. It's a person, that there's a person who inspires us, a person who changes our life. And it's this love that Jesus had that led him to the cross.

But first, he came to earth, took on human flesh, took on the human experience, and he became one of us, lived a perfect life, and he went to the cross in order to save us, in order to save us from this bondage that we have that is stuck, that has crippled us in our hearts and our souls.

[11:48] So Christianity is about the person and work of Jesus. Can we have our next point? Christianity is about the person and work of Jesus. Friends, this is how we ought to read the Bible. We read it in the lens of Jesus. Whatever we read, we want to see Jesus. It talks about Jesus. This is how we grow and spiritual maturity. We look to Jesus. We look to what Jesus has done, what he's accomplished, who he is, the love that he has for us. And this is how we grow in joy. Our faith is completely about the person and work of Jesus. So who is Jesus? And what did he do? This is a big question. We don't have 10 hours to talk about this, but see, this is a good question. We were supposed to proclaim Jesus, who is Jesus. The rest of chapter 1 in Colossians gives us a really, really good summary of that.

And I'm just going to condense it so that we can read it together. So if we can have the next point. So let's read that together. This is basically a summary of what Colossians 1 says about who Jesus is.

So let's read it together. Jesus Christ is Lord over all creation. He entered history to reconcile us with God through his death on the cross. His resurrection is victory over death, providing us eternal life by faith. He will make all things new at his return. Amen. Now you might be thinking, Jonathan, this is all great, but there's a catch. I can smell it. See, I can accept that Jesus did all these things, but that's not all. Now the expectation is that I'm going to have to jump through all these religious hoops to impress God and become like every other Christian. Is that true? Now let's read again verse 28. So it says, See, as Canadians, we love our personal comfort. And when we read words like warning and teaching, again, the alarm bells, ding, ding, ding, ding, they go off. And we get uncomfortable by that because as Christians, or it's trying to say that Christians only stay Christians because of fear and brainwashing. So you get in, you get into the Christian faith, things are good, but then you have to change your life. And then fear comes in and they try to fill you with fear so that you won't leave. Is that really what's happening? No. Verse 28 is saying that when we are gripped by the gospel, again, the first statement is so important. Him we proclaim so that when we are gripped by the gospel, we in turn learn to live to God's glory. That is following Jesus' teaching not only in church or at the Bible study, but at home, at work, on the road, etc. It's moving us to integrity.

So if we can have the video at this point. Last week, Daniel Avitan shared an illustration from Seinfeld. And I was so inspired. I thought about it this week as I was studying this. I thought another Seinfeld analogy. And so while Father George is away on vacation, we're opening the big vault of Seinfeld analogies. And we're going to have a video this time. I'm trying to outdo Daniel Avitan here. Okay, so what's happening here? George has two lives. And this is what I will call the George Costanza syndrome, is that George has his relationship life, the life where he goes dating with women. And I don't endorse the show because of a lot of the things that are happening in the show. But he has this relationship, George, and the independent George. And things are well when those two spheres never interact. They never intersect.

Now, this is a human problem. This is not just the George Costanza problem. And if we have our next point, that would be great. There's the church me and the everything else me. I fear losing control of my life if I merge the two. See, this is a common problem. We want to have control of our lives. We want to keep our faith here and have everything else there. Have our faith on Sundays and have everything else happening under our own authority. And in our hearts, in our heart of hearts, we say, stay over there, Jesus. When it comes to things like our retirement goals, our investments, our relationships, sexuality, leisure, work, ambition, etc. We want to have our own space.

[17 : 03] And we want to tell Jesus where he can go into our lives. And it's as if our faith, I'll give an illustration, it's as if our faith was like parsley. Parsley on a plate. You go to the restaurant, you order a nice dish, you have a bit of parsley, and this parsley is supposed to spice up your dish. It's supposed to make it livelier, it smells better, it looks better, has a bit of a taste, but ultimately it's not the dish. Jesus is more than parsley on a plate. He's not a decoration that adds a bit of oomph to your life, like most people would see spirituality in religion. It's a bit hip to have this worldview or, you know, you can get into a circle of friends or what not. Jesus is not like that. I mean, think about it. If Jesus defeated death on the cross and invites us to share eternal life with him, how much should that change our lives?

Like seriously, if he really, really, really defeated death on the cross and opens up the door of heaven so that we can have eternal life in the presence of God, how much should that change our lives? Last year, some family members traveled to Spain, and I remember they were talking with my wife over the phone, and they were learning Spanish, or they were sharing Spanish words that they were learning, and they were learning about the culture, the different foods, and the sites that they were going to go visit, and it was fun. It was great, and that's usually what we want to do, is that if we want to profit the most from our vacation, we look forward to it, and so we're going to prepare for it.

And if we have our next point, Asana. While some say that life is not about the destination, but about the journey, the gospel says that the destination is so good that we journey in light of the glory that awaits us.

While some say that life is not about the destination, but about the journey, the gospel says that the destination is so good that we journey in light of the glory that awaits us. This is the core of the Christian faith, of Christian maturity, is that we want to live in light of the glory that is to come. Our lives become interrupted by the gospel that Jesus comes into our lives, and that the hope that we have, all these things, really influence the way that we live in our journey.

[19 : 38] But the danger is that we leave this whole idea of Christian maturity for other people. Maybe you're more seasoned in age than me, at least, and you're thinking, well, this is something for the younger generation.

They really need to hear something like this. And if you're a teen, you're probably thinking, I'm glad my parents are listening because they're so stuck in 2005. I don't know what that means.

But maybe I'm just past that threshold. But this text is not talking about the other person. It's not calling the other person to Christian maturity. If we read it again, verse 28, we see, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ three times, as Paul says, everyone.

This is an invitation for all of us to experience and taste the glory of God breaking through darkness in this life, in every area of our lives. As a new Christian, I thought that when I was going to church and was hearing the preaching, I thought I will have to abandon my aspiration of becoming a musician and become a pastor.

And I was a bit bummed about that because I love music. I thought that as a Christian, the natural thing that you should do is become a pastor or work for the church or do some type of ministry.

[21 : 04] Is this what Christian maturity is all about? And you might be wondering, is this what, is this, like, growing in Christian maturity means that I have to do these things and I don't see that working with me because I love science.

I love art. I love, I want to be a stay-at-home mom. I love computers and I want to go into these things. I feel like God's calling me to that. So what is Christian maturity?

I just don't know if we can have our next point, please. Christian maturity is bringing the goodness and love of God wherever we go.

See, God has given us gifts, talents, interests, so that we should go into those areas and bring the gospel, bring the light of God's good news into those areas so that these areas can be restored, so these areas can, so the people in those places can come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is Christian maturity is learning to see our vocation, our place of influence as important to God and to see and to hear God's calling in that particular place.

[22 : 16] This is why we can be scientists and engineers and artists and electricians and politicians and stay or stay at home moms or dads and stay faithful to Jesus in that way. Just a while back, I met a friend who had just recently converted to Christianity from Hinduism and he told me this story about a friend who's also a friend in common.

I know this other person and they were at university. They both live in a residence, in a Catholic residence at UFT and we all know how university students are filthy rich.

They just have too much money, right? But anyway, what happened was that a lot of the young men in that house were struggling with pornography and so this other friend, the friend that we have in common, he thought, you know what?

This is important. So I'm going to ask the house, the people who run the house, if they can get a filter for the internet and that way these people will be able to, these young men will be able to fight against pornography and so he did that.

He asked and he said, no, we can't do that. It's too much money and just couldn't believe it. Like how, like how is that? So anyway, this filthy rich university student, he's not rich at all, by the way. [23 : 34] He's getting married in a few months. Money's tight. He's doing his masters and he decides to take on the \$250 that it costs to get the filter for everyone in the house and this is, this is what I believe Christian maturity leads us to do is when we're gripped by the gospel that we want to see other people be set free to experience the glory of God in all of life.

At Church of the Messiah we have this, this, I guess our motto or vision statement is that, is to make disciples of all nations who are gripped by the gospel and learning to live for God's glory and that's really the core of Christian maturity is that God's love for us in Jesus propels us.

The beauty of eternity that was revealed in Jesus in his life, in his ministry, in his death on the cross is what inspires us.

that's what makes us want to change. That's what makes us want to experience the truly beautiful in life which is the radiance of God's glory. It changes us in the way we think of our retirement goals and our investments in our relationships, in our sexuality, in our leisure, in our work, ambitions so that we don't waste our time pursuing these things but we see these things in light of the gospel.

We see these things in light of Jesus Christ and we want to live for what really matters which is loving God and loving others. Now just to wrap up here, maybe you're here and you're realizing that you've had Jesus in your life but he was over here and you had the rest of your life there.

[25 : 18] What do I do? Or maybe you've been a Christian for quite some time and you're realizing now that you've loved other things above Jesus. Is there hope?

Well, this text implies that yes, there is hope that when we believe in Jesus, we start walking toward him in steps of faithfulness then we'll be able to grow into a godly service.

Our affections will start changing. This idea of being part of a church is not just to go there on Sunday and leave right away. We mingle with people. We get to learn from other people. We get to share with other people.

We get challenged by other people and we grow in that way. But first, it starts with crying out to Jesus and maybe you've never really done that.

Crying out to Jesus in humility, saying, Jesus, Jesus, I need you. I need help. I need the gospel. And so, here's the last point and I think this is good news.

[26 : 25] This is really the core message of this text. It says, Jesus is my savior before he is my teacher. His salvation teaches me to live.

Now, this next point, I'm going to, I'm going to put up a prayer so that we can pray this together. Maybe this is your conversion prayer. Maybe you've never walked with Jesus before and you want to have Jesus, have the promise of eternal life with Jesus and be transformed by his likeness and by the Holy Spirit.

we can pray this prayer. It's not about the words. It's really about the heart. And maybe you've been wanting to deepen your allegiance with Jesus and so this is a good first step.

So how about we stand together and we'll pray this. Almighty God, you entered human nature and experience in the person of your son, Jesus Christ.

I did not spare him from suffering and death but sent him to die the death we deserve so we could have the destiny he earned. Deepen in us the knowledge of your salvation and pour out your Holy Spirit that we may proclaim Christ faithfully and attain godly maturity to the glory of your name.

[27 : 49] Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Father, would you pour out your Holy Spirit upon us? Lord, as we seek to to have a good life here in Canada, help us to live in reality.

Help us to be real about who we are and to be real about who you are, Lord. Would you lead us to that place where we can abandon ourselves to you and that we can trust you and love you, Lord.

And then we can love our neighbors. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen.