

AM John 14:1-23 & Colossians 1:24-29 Christ in you

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Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] Bible. We are going to look at another passage from Colossians later. Earlier in the year when I was preaching here, I began a series on Colossians and we've got almost to the end of chapter 1. We'll look at that later. But first, we're going to read John 14.

A lovely passage, very familiar to many of us, much loved, but it contains some very deep things. We're going to read the first 23 verses. John 14.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, but also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you're going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works.

[2 : 40] Believe in me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or else believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas, not Iscariot, said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?

[4 : 36] Jesus answered him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

We now turn over to Colossians chapter 1 And verses 24 to 29, which we will be looking at later. Colossians chapter 1, verse 24 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.

[6 : 39] Let's join together again in prayer. Well let me ask you to turn please to Colossians chapter 1. Those verses that we read.

I'll read again verse 27. 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.

Being a keen reader, I have numerous bookmarks.

And one of my favourites is this one, with a prayer on it, known as St. Patrick's Breastplate. Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

St. Patrick was a 5th century missionary in Ireland. Whether he actually wrote this prayer, I don't know.

[8 : 34] But it is a very fine prayer. And I think that Paul would have agreed with it. For him too, Christ was everything.

Our text today concerns the second of those phrases in St. Patrick's Breastplate, Christ within me. Paul rejoices in Christ in you, the hope of glory. He calls this a mystery, hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

Literally, his holy ones. In other words, Christians. And he clearly regards it as a very great mystery. speaks of the riches, of the glory, of this mystery.

This really is the climax of this chapter. Having spoken of Christ earlier, from verse 15 onwards, as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of creation, the one in heaven, the one in heaven, the one in heaven, who holds us hold together, the head of the church, the firstborn from the dead, the redeemer of his people, reconciling us to God, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[10 : 09] He now tells us that this same Christ, the Son of God, actually dwells within us, if we are Christians.

How amazing is that? We'll focus on that mystery this morning, though I do want us to look at the whole of the passage.

It's summed up in three words, all beginning with the letter M. Ministry, Mystery, and Maturity.

And those will be my three headings this morning. First, ministry, in verses 24 and 25.

Let me read those verses again. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction, 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.

[11 : 29] Paul has already called himself a minister, back in verse 23. Now he uses that word again.

A minister is a servant. That's what the word means. He is a servant of Christ, and a servant of the church. And the great work that has been given to him as a servant is to preach the word.

And he is eager to do that. He says that a stewardship has been given to him by God for this purpose.

The Greek word there is *oikonomia*, from which we get our word *economy*. It means literally household management. God has given him the task of distributing spiritual bread to his people. First and foremost, as a missionary, preaching the gospel to the world, but then also as a teacher, preaching the word to the church.

[12 : 43] And Paul wants to fulfill that ministry, to make the word fully known. Not just a few favorite passages, not just a few favorite doctrines, but the whole word.

The word, the whole word, and nothing but the word. Calls it elsewhere, the whole counsel of God. That is Paul's aim, and it should be the aim of every Christian minister.

And in order to do that, he was willing to suffer. Paul was in fact in prison when he wrote this letter. Says in chapter 4, remember my chains. And it was for preaching to Gentiles, like these Colossians, that he'd ended up in prison.

After a riot in Jerusalem. And this was only the latest in a long list of sufferings. To Corinthians 11, he tells us some of them, how he was beaten, and stoned, and imprisoned, and shipwrecked, and endured all kinds of weariness, and anxiety.

[14:01] He writes very boldly here, of filling up what is lacking, in the sufferings of Christ. Not that there's anything deficient, in the cross.

The cross is fully sufficient, for our salvation. But making that salvation known, comes with a cost. And Paul is willing to pay that cost. Indeed he rejoices, at the privilege, of suffering for Christ. And his suffering, is in a sense, also Christ's suffering.

Do you remember how Paul, when he was on the road to Damascus, Christ said to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Now Christ is being persecuted again, in Paul. Many of our brethren, around the world, know what it is, to suffer, for Christ.

[15:08] Maybe our, Iranian brethren, know something of that, at first hand. And certainly, they know people, who have suffered, in Iran, for their faith.

Maybe all of us do. To some extent. Certainly, every minister, must be prepared, to endure, hardship, for Christ.

Many don't, want to do so. A friend of mine, who is trying to find, a minister for, his church, tells me, that all the men, who apply, want an easy life.

They want to be paid well, but they only want to, preach one sermon a week. That isn't, Paul's concept, of the ministry.

Now, Paul couldn't, preach to anyone, in prison. Except, maybe a few prison guards, who might listen to him. But he could write. And that's what he's doing here.

[16:14] Preaching by letter. And he has one, rather special doctrine, that he wants, to share with them. Let's, come now, to the mystery.

In verses 26, and 27. The mystery, hidden for ages, and generations, but now revealed, to the 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. Twice, he calls it, a mystery. We need to understand, what he means by that.

A mystery, in the Bible, is a secret, known, only to those, to whom, it is revealed. We use the word, nowadays, sometimes, to mean something, that no one knows.

It's a mystery, where those, missing keys have gone. But quite, clearly here, there are some, who do know. Paul knows, the saints know, and he wants, these Colossians, to know, as well.

[17:37] It's often, likened to, a murder, mystery, novel. If you, read the novels, of Agatha Christie, for example, I must confess, I don't, but, those who do, greatly enjoy, trying to guess, who the murderer is.

But they don't actually know, until the very end, when the author, reveals it to them. But there is a difference. Reading a novel, is just for fun.

This is a matter, of great importance. Or we could, liken it to, the mystery, of the pyramids.

To the untrained eye, it's a mystery, why the pyramids, were built. But there are, experts, who have studied it, and if you, read their books, or listen to their lectures, then you will know, why the pyramids, were built.

But again, there's a difference. Paul hasn't reached, this understanding, by study, but by revelation. God has revealed, it to him, and now, he is revealing, it to us.

[18:55] The word, mystery, occurs in the, New Testament, quite a few times, maybe more often, than you think.

To quote, just a few, Matthew 13, Jesus says, to his disciples, to you, it is given, to know, the mysteries, of the kingdom, of heaven.

But to others, in parables. Later, it says, that he did this, spoke in parables, to fulfill, Psalm 78, which we, sang earlier.

I will open my mouth, in parables, I will utter, what has been hidden, since the foundation, of the world. Almost exactly, the words, that Paul, uses here.

Romans 11, Paul speaks of the, mystery of God's, dealings with Israel. Romans 16, the mystery of the gospel. 1 Corinthians 1, we speak the wisdom of God, in a mystery.

[20:04] 1 Corinthians 15, there's the mystery, of the rapture. Ephesians 5, the mystery of the church. 2 Thessalonians, the mystery of iniquity.

1 Timothy 3, 16, the mystery of godliness. Revelation 1, the mystery of the seven stars. Revelation 10, the mystery of God, is finished.

Revelation 17, the mystery, Babylon the great. And there are others. We could speak of heaven, as a mystery.

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, what God has prepared, for them that love him. But, God has revealed it to us, by the spirit.

Just like, the mystery here. The word was also used, in pagan religions. The most famous, were the, Eleusinian mysteries, the Orphic mysteries, and the Dionysian mysteries.

[21 : 15] The stories, the ancient mysteries, and the Dionysian mysteries. Google Translate probably won't help you with those words. Ancient mysteries in the pagan world. These involved a secret knowledge, granted only, to those who went through, the appropriate initiation ceremonies.

It's quite likely, that some of those mysteries, were known, in Colossae. Well, says Paul, here is a better, mystery.

So, what is this mystery? Christ in you, the hope of glory. There are two parts, to that. A present reality, and a future, prospect.

First, the present reality, Christ, in you. Here is the great, secret, of the Christian life.

That Christ, himself, dwells within us. The Lord, of the universe, the saviour, of mankind, dwells, in you, if you are a Christian.

[22 : 24] In particular, in the context, Paul is saying, to these Colossians, Christ, the Jewish Messiah, dwells, in you Gentiles.

Now, that really was, a radical idea. Paul, in his earlier days, as a Pharisee, would have been, outraged at that. And yet, it's true.

Christianity, is a universal, religion, for all, nations. Paul, could speak to us, here in this congregation, and say, Christ, is in you, English Christians.

Christ, is in you, Scottish Christians. Christ, is in you, Iranian Christians. Christ, is in all, believers, Jews, and Gentiles.

And that is still, so relevant today, isn't it? With Israel, at war, with the nations. We would like, to see, Jews, and Gentiles, today, living at peace.

[23 : 40] But something, even better than that, is possible. Jew, and Gentile, can be, united, in Christ.

But only, in Christ. This was the, mystery, hidden for ages, past, but now, revealed, to the saints. It was hinted at, in the Old Testament, that the Gentiles, would be saved. But now, the full glory, of that, has been revealed. Now, how can it be, that Christ, who is in heaven, can be, in our hearts? Well, the simple answer is, by the Holy Spirit. We see that, in John 14, that's why I read, from that chapter.

Jesus himself, promised there, verse 17, that he would send, the Spirit. And he told the disciples, you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be, in you.

[24 : 52] He also said, in John 14, 20, in that day, you will know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I, in you.

And again, in verse 23, if anyone loves me, and keeps my word, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home, with him.

Father, and son, dwelling within us. So, Paul wasn't, inventing this doctrine.

Jesus had already, declared it. It had been revealed, to the saints, by Jesus himself, and now, Paul was expounding it further. Now, Christ, within us, changes our lives.

Paul says, in Galatians 2, 20, I have been crucified, with Christ. It is no longer, I who live, but Christ, who lives, in me.

[26 : 02] We have the love, of Christ in us. We have the mind, of Christ. We have the power, of Christ, working within us.

I was once, asked by someone, what makes you, tick? What motivates you? What gives you, the ability, to do what you do?

Well, the answer, for any Christian, is, Christ. Christ, is the secret power, inspiring, that we do.

But secondly, also, there is a future prospect. Christ, in you, is the hope, of glory. Hope, in the New Testament, is not just, wishful thinking.

It's a confident, expectation. If Christ, is in you now, in this world, Paul is saying, you can be sure, of glory, in the world, to come.

[27 : 07] Jesus himself, links those two thoughts, together, in his prayer, in John 17, verse 22, of that chapter, he says, the glory, that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be

one, even as we are one, I in them, and you in me, that they may become one, even as we are one. that's the present. The glory of Christ, has been given to us. But then, in verse 25, it goes on, Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me, where I am, to see, my glory.

So, we have the glory of Christ, in us now, and the glory of being, with Christ, Christ, in the world to come, and of seeing, his glory.

Paul also links, these thoughts together, Romans 8, and verse 11, if the spirit of him, who raised Jesus, from the dead, dwells in you, he who raised Christ, Jesus from the dead, will also give life, to your mortal bodies, through his spirit, that dwells in you.

Spiritual life now, resurrection, later. And that resurrection, is glorious, because we will be raised, in the likeness of Christ.

[28 : 32] We will bear the image, of the heavenly man. In Ephesians 1, he speaks of the spirit, as a guarantee, for the future.

In him you were sealed, with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee, of our inheritance, until we acquire, possession of it, to the praise, of his glory.

Our present experience, therefore, guarantees, our future hope. And that future hope, is glory. this is the mystery, that Paul proclaims to us, the great secret, of the Christian life.

It is in a sense, an open secret, anyone can read it, here in the Bible, preachers the world, over, openly proclaim it, and yet only the saints, will understand it, because spiritual things, are spiritually understood.

May all of us here, understand it, and may it be our experience. But the chapter, doesn't end there. Let's look now, finally and briefly, at those last, at the last, of those three words, beginning with M, maturity, verses 28 to 29.

[29 : 52] 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.

We're returning here, to Paul's ministry. What is the aim, of that ministry? Why is he telling them, this great mystery, of Christ, in you? Because he wants, to present them, mature, in Christ.

Paul wants, not just conversions, though of course, he wants that, but he wants, mature Christians. And to that end, he's working hard, literally, agonizing, with all the power, of Christ, working, within him.

Christ in you, is not just, a comforting thought, for Paul, but a source of power. This is the secret power, that enables him, to do all that he does.

Yes, he is working hard, and so must we, but the power, is from Christ. Now what does he mean, by mature? Greek word, is teleos, it means, finished, or complete.

[31 : 15] The authorised version, translates it, perfect. It's the same word, that's used in Matthew 5, 48, where Jesus says, you must be perfect, as your heavenly father, is perfect.

To be mature, is quite simply, to be like Christ. Jesus says, in Matthew 10, the disciple, must be like his master.

Paul says, in Ephesians 4, that this is the purpose, of all ministry, that we might all attain, to the unity, of the faith, and of the knowledge, of the Son of God, to mature manhood.

The AV has, to the perfect man, to the measure, of the stature, of the fullness, of Christ. That aim is built in, to the great commission.

the disciples, are not only, to baptise, but to teach, everything, that Jesus has taught them. That people, may become, complete, and mature.

[32 : 26] Too, many, of God's people, are like, children, in the wrong sense. It's lovely, to have children, in the congregation.

It's lovely, to have new converts, who are like, spiritual children. And all of us, must be like children, in humility, and simplicity, of faith.

But all too often, God's people, quarrel, like children. And are self-centered, like children. And have the limited, knowledge, of children.

In understanding, and behavior, God, wants us, to grow up. Paul wants, these Colossians, to grow up, and to become mature.

He wants, to present them, before the throne of God, as mature Christians. Only then, can he say, I have finished the work, you gave me to do. And only then, can they say, that they have fulfilled,

their high calling, in Christ.

[33 : 36] And it is possible, through Christ, dwelling, in us. Let me ask you then, as we come to a close, have you entered, into that mystery?

Maybe, this morning, that you're not, yet a Christian. In which case, it remains still, a mystery. This is the mystery, Paul says, hidden for ages, and generations, but now, revealed to his saints.

If you're not a saint, then it will be, hidden from you. You may understand, the words, but it won't be, your experience. But that can change.

If you will come to Christ, in faith, if you will trust in him, as your Lord, and Savior, then he will come to you, and dwell within you.

But first, you must come, in faith. You must be reconciled, to God, through his, redeeming blood. Christ, will not dwell, in the hearts, of his enemies.

[34 : 49] First, you must receive, the forgiveness, of sins. And then, this mystery, of Christ in you, will become, a reality for you. But if you are a Christian, rejoice, in this mystery, that God has made known to you.

He has made it known to you, not just in word, but in experience also. Enjoy, Christ's presence, within you.

Live in the power, power of it, and rejoice, in the hope, that it gives you. Quoted, St. Patrick's breastplate, at the beginning, may that, prayer be fulfilled, in you.

May Christ, mean everything, to you. May we all go, into this coming week, whatever that week, may hold for us, with the love, and power, of Christ, within us.

Amen. Amen.