

It is Good to be Full

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

- [0 : 0 0] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 63.! In the Scottish Psalter verse in Psalm 63, we're going to sing from verse 1 down to verse 8.
- ! The tune is Jackson. Lord, thee my God I'll early seek, my soul doth thirst for thee, my flesh longs in a dry parched land wherein no waters be. Psalm 63, page 295, we stand to sing to God's praise.
- Lord, thee my God I'll early seek, my soul doth thirst for thee, my flesh longs in a dry large land wherein no waters be.
- Psalm 63, page 295, verse 1. As I thy power may be whole, and brightness of thy face, as I have seen thee clear to forth within thy holy face.
- Psalm 63, page 295, verse 1. Since Bethany's time of the light, my lips be patient near.
- [1 : 3 9] Psalm 63, page 295, verse 1. Psalm 63, page 295, verse 1.
- Psalm 63, page 295, verse 1. Even as with marrow and with fat my soul shall fill it thee, then shall my blood with joyfulness sing graces unto thee.
- When I do thee upon my bed, remember with delight, and when on thee I meditate in watches of the night.
- Then shadow of thy wings I'll join, for thou my wealth must be.
- My soul re-follows far than me, thy light hand doth sustain.
- [3 : 2 0] Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our gracious Father in heaven, we come in your name this evening, thankful for an opportunity again this day to gather in worship.
- Thankful for your word to us. Thankful to be able to sing your praises as we come. With these words on our lips just now, that we would come with that longing, that desire, coming into your presence, longing like the dry parched land, to meet with you as our true and living God.
- That we would know, Lord, the power of your name in our midst this evening. For we know that if we are just gathered here by ourselves, if we just come as the people that we are, just seeking to talk with one another, to say words that maybe just come from our own lips.
- We know that in ourselves there is no good, and in us there is no power. But we thank you that as we come, we come in the knowledge and assurance that when we gather in your name, that you are in the midst to bless.
- And that is what we seek in you this evening, to know your presence with us, to know in the quietness of our hearts your voice speaking to us, ministering to us in every need that we have, ministering to us, Lord, knowing that you have every concern and care that we carry, sometimes we feel by ourselves that you already know them.
- [5 : 0 2] And so that we are not alone, even if we are sitting by ourselves in a pew, even if no one has said a word to us, even as we have come in. We thank you, Lord, that your voice is there to speak to us.

And that through it, Lord, we know that you are God and there is no other. And so we come, Lord, yes, to meet together and fellowship with one another.

But we come especially to meet with you as the living God. And so, Lord, be pleased to come. Be pleased to be with us, Lord.

Be pleased to hear our prayers, even at this time, and to hear us and encourage us in our hearts as we offer up our praise to you. And as we read your word and as we share from it, Lord, that your spirit would help us to understand and to hear what God the Lord is saying.

And we do thank you, Lord, that we come with that prayerful spirit, that even as we are gathered here just now, that it is not just one voice praying, but many, and many in their hearts.

[6 : 08] And so, Lord, even quietly just pleading with you and praying to you for so many different things, personal things, very private things to ourselves, perhaps, but also for our congregation, for our people here, even those who are at home, Lord, tuning in in their own quietness of prayer just now as well, that we can offer that up together as the fellowship of your people, and that we can come, Lord, with the prayers for all around us as well, praying for those who would say to us quite naturally that they want no prayer from us, that they want nothing to do with us.

But yet we thank you, Lord, that we can come praying for them, praying for them just as we were, in ignorance and darkness, and yet praying, Lord, for your light to shine into their hearts, shine the beauty of Christ towards them, that they might be overwhelmed and overcome by the sense of God and the sense of your power all around us.

For we see it in so many ways. We see it in the creation, in all the wonder of it, whether it's the beauty of sunny days or even the clouds that come with the rain, the clouds that water the ground and give growth.

We see that just now, Lord, as we see plants and trees and grass begin to flourish. We see new life in the fields around us. We see a freshness in it in so many different ways.

We thank you, Lord, for every season that you give and give with a purpose, whether it's winter, spring, summer or autumn. We thank you, Lord, that each of them have a purpose in our life and in our years.

[7 : 56] We thank you, Lord, that you have ordained all, that you have created it by your power, through your word and for your glory. And we pray, Lord, that you would help the world in which we live to know that you are its God, its maker.

For when we see how much we've turned away and how much we've rejected you, how much we see it in our day, Lord, as we thought of this morning, and yet thankful that your voice goes out, thankful that you still call people to you, to all ends of the earth, that you have the word preached in every nation, through every tongue, to every tribe.

And yet we know, Lord, that still your word reaches out to people who have not heard it yet. But we thank you that it never returns empty or void. And so we pray that that word gone out today would be blessed by you and accomplish great things for you.

And we pray that for this evening hour as well, that you would help us to be still before you, to know you with us, and to hear our prayers, Lord. And we do pray for our people here, Lord, thankful for everyone, thankful for your goodness to us, thankful as we look ahead to the week before us, Lord, that you are with us in it, that you go before us, that every plan and purpose that we seek to put into place, they're all ordained by you and given blessing by you.

We do pray, Lord, that you will be pleased to meet with us in the week ahead, when we think of all the different things going on, whether it's groups meeting in the hall or prayer meetings going on, whatever is taking place, Lord, that you would be pleased to bless.

[9 : 42] We think of the WFM, thankful again for them and pray for the meeting tomorrow evening. We commit the prayer meetings during the week to you as well in Laxdale, here in the hall and in the seminary on Thursday, Lord, thankful for these opportunities that we have to call upon the name of the Lord together, to share from your word, to encourage one another and to meet with one another.

We pray, Lord, for the opportunities we have to reach out to our community as well, to invite people through our doors, whether it's to these services during the week, to our services on the Lord's Day or to the Friday, the free, the over 55, so the youth groups, the toddler groups, Lord, we thank you for all of these endeavours and just pray to see your spirit working in them.

Thankful for every encouragement that you give us, Lord, and thankful for all who come through our doors and the connections that that builds, connections that we see growing and developing in different ways and connections that help us, Lord, to be alongside people in times of need as well.

And so remember those in need at this time. Remember those who are unwell, some seriously unwell, Lord. We pray that you will surround them and uphold them and bless them.

We ask, O Lord, that in every tear that's shed or every prayer that's offered, that you will hear and be near to all who need you in these ways.

[11 : 10] Remember, too, Lord, those who grieve and mourn. We pray that you will comfort us as only you can. For we thank you that in the midst of mourning, we thank you that there are times when we know just the peace of God, that peace that passes understanding.

For when we know the Lord and when we know those who are being called by him home have trusted in you, we thank you for the comfort and the peace that that gives. And we pray, Lord, that those who mourn will continue to know that for themselves.

We pray for our nation as a whole as well, Lord. We thank you for the wider church. We thank you for every place that meets in your name today that proclaims the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and that calls sinners to repentance.

We pray that you would be pleased to build your church throughout our land and that in the midst of our nation and all that we're going through at this time when there's so much confusion and turmoil, so much anxiety and fear, Lord, may you hear our prayers.

We pray for leaders, whether it's our prime minister, our first minister, our royal family, our governments, whoever it might be, Lord, in positions of authority and power, we ask for your blessing, your mercy upon them, to be able to know your goodness and to be able to know your name as a name that's to be called upon, a name that's the foundation of our nation and this world, the cornerstone that is Jesus Christ.

[12 : 44] We pray that his name would be praised in the corridors of power and throughout all our land and to the ends of the earth. So we think, oh, nations in conflict and nations with so many different needs, persecution and famine and drought and so many atrocities going on and so many nations around the world where your people are being put to the sword in so many different ways.

We ask, oh, Lord, for mercy and grace in the midst of all of these things. We do pray, Lord, that you will just hear us now and continue with us as we worship you, as we sing your praise and as we seek your presence.

Lord, may you be pleased to bless all that we do and we ask all acknowledging our sin before you and you seeking pardon for all things, whether it's what we have forgotten to do or what we shouldn't do at all.

Lord, we pray that you would have mercy upon us and hear us as we pray in the name of Jesus, asking all things for his sake and his glory. Amen. We'll again sing to Psalm 44.

We'll sing from verse 1 down to verse 8. Psalm 44, verse 1 to verse 8.

[14 : 10] O God, we without ears have heard, our fathers told us so, what you accomplished in their days, in days of long ago. We'll sing from verse 1 to 8 to God's praise.

Psalm 44, verse 1 to 9.

Psalm 44, verse 1 to 9.

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Psalm 44, verse 1 to 9.

[16 : 20] We're going to read together in the New Testament in Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Colossians chapter 1. And we read from the beginning of the chapter down to verse 23.
Colossians chapter 1.

Find it around page 1182 of the church Bibles thereabouts. Paul, we begin our reading of the church Bibles thereabouts. We begin our reading at verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

[17 : 59] Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, he is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we are redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 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.

[19 : 16] 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 firstborn 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 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 that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. And before we come back to this passage, we're going to sing again to God's praise in Psalm 81. The Singed Psalms version, Psalm 81, page 109 of the psalm books.

[20 : 37] We're going to sing from verse 8 down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 81 at verse 8. Hear, my people, let me warn you, if you would but listen now.

No strange God shall be among you. To a false God do not bow. We'll sing from verse 8 to the end of the psalm, to the tune Stuttgart we stand to sing.

To a false God do not bow.

I do not do love from Egypt, your own God, the Lord, and I.

Open wide your mouth towards me, and your food I will supply.

[21 : 56] But my people would not listen, would not do what I require.

So I gave them up to follow what their stubborn hearts desire.

If my people would not heed me, Israel followed my command.

I would soon, I would soon subdue their enemies, and against them turn my hand.

For to it the Lord would power, and their doom would never end.

[23 : 04] But with finest we die, I feed you, and me from the rock I send.

Amen. We can turn back to our reading in Colossians. Colossians chapter 1.

We're going to focus on verse 3 to verse 8 together this evening. Colossians chapter 1. We just read at verse 3. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all the saints, and so on.

As you read through the Bible, as you go to the different parts, whether it's the letters, as we look at Paul's letters here, or the Gospels, or even back into the Old Testament, do you ever think to yourself, there's a place, if I had a choice, if I could do it, I'd love to go back, and be in that place at this very time, and just see what it was like.

Maybe you've had the privilege of visiting some of these places in your own time, whether it's the Middle East, or different parts of Turkey, as we see Colossae here, as part of modern day Turkey, or Rome, places in Italy.

[24 : 35] Maybe you've seen it as it is now, but as you're there, you've thought, I wonder what it was like to be there in the days that we read of in the scripture. Well, I'm sure there's some places that would maybe be up on the top of your list of places you might want to go to Jerusalem.

It'd be fascinating maybe just to walk up, as it is, up to Jerusalem, as we read of in the Old and New Testament, as you see just what it would be like to go back to those days and walk up with a crowd making their way up to the festivals in Jerusalem.

Or to go to Corinth, a city that was busy and bustling in so many different ways, where the gospel had come, and yet there were so many challenges in it.

Or Rome, another fascinating place to see, and it would have been to see the Colosseum and all of these different things in the day that we read of in the scriptures.

You can't but wonder what it would be like. But where would Colosse come on your list of places to go? I'm sure it's maybe not up there in the top places you'd like to see, but it's interesting to think of what these places were like at the time, because it helps us to understand the way Paul is writing and the things that are going on.

[25 : 51] And that's why we want to just begin by looking at this evening, is just to think of Colosseum, what kind of place it was. Paul was obviously writing to them, but it's a place he'd never even been.

And yet the gospel had come to them and was bearing fruit in their midst. And Paul is writing to encourage them. But what kind of place was it?

Well, if you go back in the history of Colosseum, the time of Paul's writing to it was a time when that place was very much in decline. It wasn't as vibrant as it had once been.

And in many ways, it may sound strange, but you could almost compare it to Stornoway. Colosseum and Stornoway have things in common. And what are they, you might ask?

It may not be the weather, but they've certainly got other things in common. Colosseum, when it was founded, it was founded on industry. And it was a textile industry that it was founded on.

[26 : 53] It was famous for wool, and especially purple wool. And that's what it had thrived on, that business of textile. And yet, that was about three or four hundred years before Christ came.

But by the time Paul is writing to them, it's a place that has seen decline. That vibrant industry is no longer there. It's dwindled in many ways.

And people, as we would see in our own town, a textile town, if you like, a place that was vibrant, has seen a bit of decline. And you think of many young people having to go away from here to the mainland for work and different things.

Colosse went through that itself as well. Places nearby, Laodicea was a more thriving place that attracted people away, that brought work away from Colosse.

They went away to work. And all of these things were going on because trade had moved around. But as Paul is writing to them, as if he was writing to ourselves today, these aren't the things that he's interested in.

[28 : 00] What's important to him is not the economy or the politics of the place, but the very fact that God is in the midst. That God was there when the place was thriving and busy.

And that even though there's a time of decline, God is still in the midst. These people are still there. And so that's why Paul is writing to them.

And he's writing to them, even though he's not been there, he's writing to them because he's heard about their faith. Epaphras had come back, I think from Ephesus it was, and come back, shared the gospel with them.

And the gospel had borne fruit in this place. And the church was established. And the people of God were positive in so many ways. And yet there were challenges.

There were challenges. And that's the reality of the Christian life, isn't it? When we think of history, there's always been challenges. And when we think of our own day today, even our own town today, as we look around, we see vibrancy that was there once, decline that's there now.

[29 : 08] Even in the church, we see it's so different to what it once was, but yet still with the hope of God in our midst. And so Paul, as he's writing to them, he's writing to encourage, even though he's in prison, even though he doesn't know what the future holds for him, he's writing to encourage them because they have something in common together, the gospel.

The gospel is in his heart, it's in their hearts. It's in the place of Colossae as it is in Paul's prison cell as he writes. We often speak about people that can be in two different ways described.

One person can be described as a glass half empty person. Somebody else can be described as the glass half full person. And we can know ourselves where we maybe fall into that.

We know the glass half empty is things are looked at a little bit more negatively. The glass half full, it's got a more positive outlook. But Paul wasn't either of these.

He wasn't just half full glass. He was the fullness of the glass entirely to overflowing. And that's what he was seeking to encourage the church, whatever it was to be like.

[30 : 28] To be a people who knew God is with us. Therefore, we don't have to look at things glass half empty negatively and think, well, God can't do. Or just to be just half full where we're looking more positively, but still only halfway.

But to be overflowing. To be overflowing with that hope that God is with us. And that's what we want to think about this evening. It's this fullness that Paul speaks of here.

And when we think of the word full, it can be looked at both positively and negatively as well. It can be looked at being full of the joys. We can see that, but we can also be full of sorrow.

Or we can think of it full of love in a positive sense or full of hate in a negative sense. There's this fullness in life. It's an overwhelming experience, whether it's in a positive way or a negative way.

But when the Lord Jesus is in our hearts, we have that fullness that goes beyond anything else. An abundance of good things. An abundance that the psalmist speaks of in Psalm 23, when he speaks of the table being set in the presence of an enemy.

[31 : 39] And yet even so, what does he say? And yet my cup overflows. My head, he does anoint. And my cup overflows. What springs up from the hope that we have in the gospel, it speaks of here in verse 5 of the hope of the gospel, this foundation that's laid up in heaven for us, that we have heard the word of truth, the gospel.

That's what helps us to remain full and to have that focus on the fullness of Christ that you see running throughout this first chapter as you read the preeminence of Christ.

There's so much imagery there for us as Paul writes to them. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation for by him and all things were created.

This richness here of Christ, and that's the fullness that he's speaking of in these verses as well, verse 3 to verse 8. So there's three fullnesses that we want to know.

That's a word, fullness. The fullnesses that we want to speak of, thankful, boastful, and faithful. And that's the fullness that we see in these verses, verse 3 to verse 8.

[32 : 59] So we think first of all of thankful. Being thankful. And you see that in verse 3. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

It's rich in thanksgiving. Not just this verse, but really throughout the letter there's so much thanksgiving that Paul gives for them.

Imagine, or maybe you've had this, you've had work done in your house. Perhaps it's been a major work that's been done, a whole rewiring of the house or a whole new heating system put into the house.

There's always a little anxiety that comes with it. The old is taken out and the new is put in, and you're wondering, will it work?

Will it be efficient? Will it be as good as they say it will be? And I'm sure if you've had it done, there'll be others who will come and say, oh, you should have done it this way. You should have gone with that instead.

[34 : 04] There'll be all of these different opinions coming in. When does it get to the point where you know that it's working? Only when it's up and running and put to the test.

Checking, double checking, making sure that everything's working all right. And then you get to the point where you have peace of mind because you know it's all working. Well, the church at Colossae had gone through a renovation.

It had gone from having no faith to being a people who were in darkness to being a people who were in light. A people who had heard the gospel and they were transformed by the gospel.

But remembering the kind of place it was, a place that wasn't as vibrant as it once used to be, a place that was in decline, it was also a place that hadn't totally abandoned other religions.

And so those who had been converted by the gospel who had come to faith they faced many challenges. And the biggest challenge of all was people saying, you may have that gospel but that's not enough.

[35 : 22] You need more. You need more than just that gospel of Jesus Christ. You need to bring other things in. And there's so many different opinions that are being offered to them.

And so Paul is writing with this sense of thanking God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is with them. That he is in their midst.

That through their relationship that they have in Christ, that they have the fullness of Jesus, the fullness of Christ in their hearts. And there is nothing else that they need.

There is nothing else that is going to make a difference to them. And this is what is so in giving thanks to Paul himself and that he's encouraging them in their thankfulness with a swell.

So in the midst of all the problems and Paul could have come down hard on them in the fact that they were being swayed away from the gospel, but instead he comes alongside to encourage them and to give thanks for them.

[36 : 33] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, when we pray for you. There is this bond. There is this relationship.

And that's a challenge to ourselves today as well. As we think of our own sense of thankfulness, are we glass half empty or glass half full? Or are we overflowing with thankfulness?

Do we look at things with that negative sense? We have those days, we have those times, but do we look around and give thanks that God is working, that God is with us?

Is that our attitude that we are always full of thanksgiving to God and what he is doing in our midst, in our congregation, in our friends, in our families, in our denomination?

Do we have that sense of thanksgiving, that sense of thankfulness? Even as we think of joining together on Wednesday evening, a time of thanksgiving for God's goodness to our denomination over these last number of years, there's been reasons for encouragement.

[37 : 46] Yes, we can look at things and think, it's not what we would want, we can look at it in a negative sense, but let's come together in thanksgiving that God is with us, that God hears his praying people and God is able to answer his praying people.

If we see what Christ has done for us, and that's what Paul goes on to describe so wonderfully here in this chapter, how he has his beloved son, as he says in verse 14, in whom we have the forgiveness of sins, if we see what we have in Christ, if we see what we have in him, there is reason for thanksgiving.

Otherwise, we just miss out on so much. I was reading a sad story about a sportsman just the other day who had made millions during a sporting career, a short career, being a footballer it was.

He had got on so well, he had earned so much money, and during those great days when he was making so much, he had helped so many people, being so generous to them, family, friends, even strangers.

He had helped out so many people. However, over the years, addiction took a hold of him. Gambling addiction, and then drinking, and all his money was gone.

[39 : 13] He hit rock bottom. He lost everything. And some people would say it's his own fault. And that's the way many people looked at him. But one of the saddest things he said was, of all the people that I helped when I had plenty, not one of them was there when I was in need.

Not one of them came back with a sense of thanksgiving to him that he had helped them in their time of need. No one. No one came. And that's a challenge to us as we think of our own thanksgiving as well.

Are we thanking the Lord for all that he has done for us? Are we thanking the Lord for his goodness and mercies new each day? Or are we choosing to ignore his goodness to us and therefore in that ignore others in their need as well?

Coming to faith is not the end of our journey and that's what Paul is so encouraging with here. He's encouraging them to grow in their faith. They have learned the gospel as we see in verse 7 there just as you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

They learned the gospel from him. And then in verse 10 to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing in him bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

[40 : 41] It's about going on. And thanksgiving is what helps us to go on. I think it was one of the old Puritans that had said the thankful heart has a continual feast.

The thankful heart is a continual feast. In other words the more we are in thanksgiving to God the more we are thankful to him the more we are feasting on his goodness to us.

So the first thing we see here is Paul is this thankfulness. The second thing we see is to be boastful. To be boastful.

And this immediately thinks surely that's a negative. Surely that's a negative to be boasting in anything. Because boasting is often seen as something that's not good to do.

And we can think of people who are boastful in so many arrogant ways. Think of these people who boast in their riches or boast in what they've done in life.

[41 : 45] They're boasting in themselves in so many ways. It can be irritating. And that's not the kind of boasting that we want. But what Paul is boasting in is about something that for the people of God in Colossae would not irritate them at all.

But really encourage them. That's what we see in verse 6. Paul is full of thanksgiving but then there's this thanksgiving because of the hope laid up in heaven in verse 5.

Of this you have heard before the word of truth the gospel which has come to you as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing.

What is he boasting in? He is boasting in the power of God. That the gospel is bearing fruit not just in them but in the whole world.

And you can imagine what it would be like for the people of Colossae. They would have been thinking about other places maybe like Laodicea or Ephesus where Epaphras had come from and hearing these great things that were happening Paul has been there but he hasn't come to us.

[43 : 06] Or these places that there's so many more people in them. So many more things going on and yet Paul is here coming to them. Maybe they are feeling discouraged to remember what you have in your midst.

You have that same gospel that is bearing fruit in the whole world and you have it here in your midst. And that is something to be boastful in.

To rejoice in. And they could have easily just focused on themselves and become so insular in so many ways and just have no thought for anybody else.

It's always a danger when you're feeling discouraged or glass half empty that we just focus inwardly. Let's just look after ourselves. But what Paul is doing here in thanksgiving and then coming with his boastful side as well, remember God is working in your midst.

And we live in a place, a location and even a culture where family is important, where friendship is important and very strong and is a great thing. But it can also be a barrier, a barrier to going beyond ourselves and to loving others.

[44 : 32] We can be so comfortable loving our own family, loving our own friends, loving the people that we've grown up with or gone to school with or work with.

We can be so comfortable in these things and forget others. Those who come through our doors, who we don't recognize or are different to us, or those who don't even darken our doors at all.

We think that we have nothing in common, that we have nothing to say. And yet the gospel is what they need. And Paul in many ways is reminding the church at Colossae of what they have in their midst.

The gospel that has come to you as indeed in the whole world, it is bearing fruit and growing as it also does among you.

He's saying to them, you are not alone. That I have people everywhere, all over the world, who are your brothers and sisters in Christ.

[45 : 41] We can boast in this, in the greatest, in the right sense of the word, that we rejoice with thanksgiving and boasting that this gospel is bearing fruit.

do we rejoice when we hear as we have updates, even within our own denomination, as we are given updates of what's happening in other places, as we hear of conversions, as we hear of new members in our own presbytery, our own islands, we rejoice, we boast because God is working in the right sense of boasting.

or boasting when we hear of new churches being planted or elders and deacons being made or new students coming into the seminary or whatever it is, it's boasting in the right sense of giving thanks to God that he is in our midst, that the gospel is bearing fruit.

But it's always with that caveat as Paul says to the Galatians, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's where boasting comes from, that Christ has done it.

We boast in his finished work because that is the work that is bearing fruit. There's always a danger of jealousy or a negative attitude coming through in all that we do.

[47 : 08] It's been there down through all the generations. You find it in Scripture, you find it in every generation of God's people, the danger of jealousy and rivalry and all of these things.

But what Paul encourages here is that boastful nature of rejoicing that the gospel is in everything, that we see glory for God in.

Whether it's here, whether it's in our nation, whether it's to all the ends of the earth, to all different people, we can rejoice that the gospel is bearing fruit.

We boast in Christ. So we have thankful, we have boastful, and then finally we have here faithful, being faithful.

And what we see here is faithfulness is at the heart of so much here too. We see the faithfulness of Paul, who is remembering the church at Colossae, who is giving thanks as he's praying for the church at Colossae.

[48 : 20] There is that faithfulness of him. There is the faithfulness of Epaphras, as it speaks of in verse 7. Our beloved fellow servant, he is a faithful minister of Christ.

on your behalf. And they have the people. In verse 2 it says, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.

There is a sense of faithfulness right throughout all that is taking place. And faithfulness is such a key feature for any Christian's life. Faithfulness towards God, towards his word, towards prayer, towards his people.

It is a life of faithfulness. And no matter what is going on around us, we remain faithful and sure and steadfast in the Lord.

When you look at the Old Testament, you find so many of God's people who were faithful in the midst of very challenging periods. We think of Jeremiah we were looking at this morning.

[49 : 29] So many of the people are turning away from God and yet Jeremiah was faithful, faithfully proclaiming the message that God gave. And you see it as you look in the book of Hebrews chapter 11, that great book of faith, and those who were faithful to God in the midst of all kinds of situations.

Situations that seemed absurd, situations that seemed crazy to others around. You think of Noah building an ark when there was no sign of water or rain or anything and yet he was faithful, he listened to God.

You think of Daniel and his faithfulness in the midst of great challenges when he was being told to bow down to the king instead of God with the very threat of his life and yet he was faithful to God and was blessed.

Faithfulness is so important. Epaphras, it wasn't easy for him and yet he was faithful. He was faithful with the gospel that he had heard himself and he brought it to his beloved brothers and sisters here in Colossae that they might hear of the wonder of this Christ.

He was faithful and all our faithfulness is built on the fact of Jesus' faithfulness to us and what he has done for us.

[50 : 57] we can be faithful because he was faithful for us. He did all for us. And so as Paul is writing to this church at Colossae to be thankful, to be boastful, to be faithful, it's all for Christ.

It's all for him that he might get glory and that the gospel would go on bearing fruit. And that's what it is for us too, to remember what we have in Christ and that we would be thankful for all of that, that we would be boastful, that we would be encouraged that God is in our midst and that we would be faithful in serving him and in all that we do for him.

There was a story told about a man who was a clerk in a small hotel in a town in America. And this night, a stormy night, heavy rain outside, an elderly couple arrived at the hotel.

They came in through the door and they came up to the clerk at the reception and asked if they could have a room. And the clerk at the desk said, I'm sorry, but we're full.

And I know for a fact that all the towns, all the hotels in the town are full as well. Then he said, but I can't send you back out into the rain.

[52 : 29] How about would you stay in my room? He had his own room in the hotel. You can stay in my room and I'll stay out at the desk through the night.

The couple hesitated, but the clerk insisted that they would stay in his room. The next morning, when the couple were leaving, the man came and paid his bill.

He had stayed a night in the hotel, therefore he was wanting to pay for the room. And the man said to him as he was departing, you're the kind of man who should be managing the best hotel in the United States has to offer.

Someday I'll build you one. And the clerk at the desk just laughed it off, thought nothing else of it. Until a couple of years later, a letter arrived from this elderly man.

outlining and remembering that he had been so faithful to them as a couple and letting them stay in his room that night, inviting him to come to New York, that he had something to say to him.

[53 : 35] And so the man, the clerk, the ticket was there, he took it and he went to New York, he was met by this elderly man who took him to this brand new building, a brand new hotel, and said, that's mine.

And I want you to manage it. He hadn't forgotten the kindness of that man when he needed him and he invited him to be the hotel manager.

And so he did. Well, remember who it is we are to be faithful to. Even in the least of these things as the scripture describes it, the least of these things you have been faithful to me and there is great reward.

When we are faithful to Christ, even in the least of these things, we remember who we're serving, we remember what he's doing, that he is building not a hotel, but a kingdom, his kingdom, and that people are being called into his kingdom, to be part of his kingdom.

Through the least of the things that we do for him, we are to be faithful. And when we are faithful, he blesses. That's the encouragement that Paul is giving to the church, to the people at Colossae.

[55 : 08] They may be small, they may feel discouraged, they may have their challenges, they may not know where things are going, but he is reminding God is with them.

And with God, we are to be thankful, thankful for all of his people, for all that he is doing. We are to be boastful, boasting in the right sense, that the gospel is bearing fruit all over the world, that we are part of that, and to be faithful, to be faithful in all that we do for him, even the littlest of things, seeking his blessing in all.

So may we be a people who are thankful, giving praise to him, who are boastful that God is with us, and who are faithful in all that we do.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, help us to be encouraged by your word, help us to be a people who don't just see our glasses half full, but that see it overflowing, for you are the fullness of all, you are the richest of all things, and we thank you that you, when you are with us, Lord, help us to know your glory and your power.

And so, Lord, we ask that you would bless all that we seek to do in your name, help us to be thankful, help us to boast in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and help us to be faithful in all that you ask us to do for it.

[56 : 46] And so, we pray, Lord, that you will guide us and help us, and that we would give all glory to you, that your kingdom would come in power, as we ask it all in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. we're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 26, and let's sing Psalm's version, page 31, Psalm 26.

We'll sing from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm, the tune is Balerma. I'll tell of all your awesome deeds, proclaiming loud your praise, your glory fills, your dwelling place, I love, I love your house always.

from verse 7 to the end of the psalm, we stand to sing. Amen. sing.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[59 : 05] Amen. Amen.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with the benediction. now may grace mercy and peace from god father son and holy spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore amen