

Thanking God for Gospel Growth

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, church. Would you turn with me in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1. That's page 981 in the Pew Bible. Page 981, Colossians chapter 1.
- As we come to God's Word together, let's pray. Father, we remember during the earthly ministry of Jesus that moment when so many were turning away.
- And Lord Jesus, you turned to your disciples and said, will you turn away also? And they said to you, Lord, where else would we go? You have the words of life. So we come to you this morning, God, acknowledging that you have the words of life.
- And we ask that by your Spirit you would open our hearts and our minds to really hear and receive and be changed by your words this morning. We pray this in the name of Jesus.
- [1 : 0 8] Amen. So this morning we're looking at Colossians chapter 1, verses 1 through 8. Let me read these verses for us. 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, 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 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing.
- As it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. 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. So, just this week, did you see this?
- [2 : 1 9] Google released the results of a study in which they found that, quote, social media, email, and news apps were creating a constant sense of obligation and generating unintended personal stress on our smartphones.
- They did an entire study to basically tell us the obvious. In other words, this media giant is admitting that their own devices play a huge role in what we've all come to know as FOMO.
- The fear of missing out. Which I think is in the Oxford English Dictionary now. Defined as something like the anxiety that an exciting or interesting event might currently be happening somewhere else.
- And we're not a part of it. So, in response to this research, what Google wants to do is to promote what it's now calling JOMO.
- The joy of missing out. In other words, they want to help users have regular disconnection from their devices and from their apps. So that we can actually enjoy whatever it is we're doing.

[3 : 32] Talking with a friend. Walking across campus. Playing soccer with our kids. So that we can actually enjoy these things without worry. Without the worry that we're missing out on something important or exciting.

Well, that would be a good thing. But honestly, as I've been thinking about this for the last couple of days. I think our FOMO runs a little too deep to be solved simply by turning off our smartphones for an hour a day.

Or cutting down on the number of notifications we receive. As healthy and as good as that all would be. The fear of missing out. The fear of missing out. The idea that there's something better out there somewhere and I don't have it.

That there's an experience of fullness. Of real life and meaning that's slipping away from me. I mean, that's a bigger spiritual problem than our smartphones.

Even if our phones seem to be exacerbating the problem, right? And interestingly, it's not a new problem. In fact, the book of Colossians was written to a group of Christians who, from one way of looking at it, were undergoing deep spiritual FOMO.

[4 : 48] They had heard the message about Jesus. They had come to believe it. But now, other teachers and other thought currents were sweeping into the church that said, you need something more.

Jesus is a good start, they were saying. But there's a fullness that you can have. There's something more that you're actually missing out on. Jesus isn't really enough.

You need Jesus. And fill in the blank. The next new spiritual thing. I wonder if you've ever felt that.

Maybe this Jesus thing isn't really enough. Maybe I really need Jesus and a really meaningful career. Maybe I need Jesus and powerful, charismatic experiences.

Maybe I need Jesus and ancient church tradition and practices. Maybe I need Jesus and... Maybe someone somewhere has something that just might work a little better.

[5 : 59] And the fear of missing out takes over. And sometimes it feels like emptiness. Sometimes anxiety. And sometimes just annoying discontent that there must be more to life.

Now, the whole letter to Colossians is going to address this problem. And by the time we're done, we will have soared to the mind-blowing heights of Jesus' person and work and the reality of living in His kingdom in the present age.

But it starts first and foremost in verses 3 through 8 with thanksgiving. Of course, it was customary for letters in the ancient world to start with a brief word of thanks.

But what Paul is doing here goes way beyond what's customary. This thanksgiving section is actually sort of carefully designed and written by Paul to help us see that what we have in the gospel, what we have in the good news about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is the fullness that we've been looking for.

And the act of thanksgiving, of gratitude, is the way to start healing the emptiness, the anxiety, and the discontent that drives our fear of missing out.

[7 : 23] So, as Christians, what are we to be thankful for? And this text points us to three things. The fruit of the gospel first, the power of the gospel next, and then last, the mission of the gospel.

In other words, Paul's going to say, what should we be thankful for? We should be thankful for what the gospel does. It's fruit. And then we should be thankful for how the gospel does it.

It's power. And then we should be thankful for where the gospel takes us, the mission. So that's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to walk through this thanksgiving section looking at each one of these things which ought to spur our gratitude and help us realize that in Christ, we're never missing out.

So first, we must thank God for the fruit of the gospel. Look again at verses three through five. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. Maybe I should just pause there and say, because of what God has done in Jesus, we can no longer think of God apart from Jesus.

Who is God? The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's an aside. Let's keep going. 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, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

[8 : 35] Of this, you've heard before in the word of truth, the gospel. So we see here the gospel, the royal announcement about Jesus is producing a threefold fruit among the Colossians. Did you catch what it is?

Faith and love and hope. This is a familiar triad in Paul's letters and across the rest of the New Testament. Sometimes it's faith and love and hope.

Sometimes it's faith, hope, and love. The order sometimes changes, but the three are often found together almost as a summary of complete, rich, deep, biblical spirituality. And first, there's faith.

But, you know, faith here isn't just sort of faith in general. Sort of, you know, the latest Nike ad. Believe in something.

Anything. And maybe it'll cost you everything. Faith isn't just a general willingness to believe anything. Actually, the Bible doesn't sort of commend that sort of superstition that we're just sort of gullible and open to anything.

[9 : 34] No. This is faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in the Bible is essentially trust. Not just knowing the facts, but resting your life in something.

If you've ever done a high ropes course, you know what it's like to be 20 or 30 feet off the ground and to be clipped into a safety rope that will catch you if you fall.

At least that's what they say it'll do if you fall, right? And then there's that moment when you reach one of the landings and to keep going on the course, you have to switch your harness rope that's sort of connected to your harness from one lead line to another.

You have to transfer your trust from one safety to another safety. And in many ways, that's what it means to have faith in Christ Jesus.

To transfer your trust. No longer is this thing my safety, my security. This thing isn't what I'm going to trust to hold the weight of my person anymore.

[10 : 42] Now, it's the living Lord Jesus. Imagine the wealthy Colossian business owner in the ancient world having spent his whole life trusting his business savvy, trusting in his instincts for profit.

Imagine himself, imagine him introducing himself at dinner parties. How his financial success is the pride of his life, the thing that gives him confidence and hope or, and maybe he doesn't come right out and say it, but you know, as he measures up the room, he realizes that he's probably the most successful person there and if not, he'll figure out how to become it.

But now imagine that same business owner hearing the message about Jesus from a colleague, perhaps, with a newfound joy, a joy that is with him regardless of the ups and downs of his business life.

And over time, our wealthy Colossian business owner realizes that the gods of commerce can't really hold his weight until eventually in prayer and in an act of decision, he transfers the trust of his heart to the one Lord who can hold his weight, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now maybe you're not trusting in your business success. For you, maybe it's something else. But you know, many of you here could tell your own story similar to this, a story of trust transfer and of the freedom and the joy that that brings to know that now you're trusting in someone that can actually hold your weight.

[12 : 33] And according to what Paul says here, coming to faith in Christ isn't something we can thank ourselves for. It's something we shouldn't take for granted.

It's something we ought to thank God for. Because this transfer of trust is more than just a sort of private religious decision. No, it's actually a movement from one kingdom in one realm to a whole new one.

A little later in this chapter, Paul will describe it as being delivered out of the domain of darkness and being transferred to the kingdom of his beloved son. When we take Christ as king, we become citizens of a whole new world.

A whole new kingdom where Jesus is Lord. It's a radical reorientation of our life. And what does that kingdom look like?

Well, as Paul's thanksgiving continues, we see that it's a kingdom of love. The second fruit of the gospel that Paul expresses thanksgiving for here is love.

[13 : 33] But again, this isn't just a sort of general fuzzy feeling of affirmation, but a concrete, practical love for all the saints, Paul says. And saints here refers to all Christians, as you see in verse two in the opening remarks when Paul greets the church.

So imagine again, our Colossian businessman newly come to faith in Christ and he gathers with his fellow Christians, those who have also transferred their trust to King Jesus and now live under his lordship and his kingdom.

And as he gathers with them in maybe a home of a fellow Christian, he realizes that, man, there are some people here who are very different from him. People of different nationalities, some of different professions, some of different social classes, some of different ethnicities, and outside of Christ, some of these people he would have never spent time with.

Some may have even been his sworn enemy. But now, what they once used to be, divided, indifferent, even antagonistic, now, they are no longer.

Now, they are sisters and brothers, one in the family of God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in this family, the family mark is love.

[14 : 59] A real concern for one another's needs, a real sacrifice to meet one another's needs. And this kind of love, this love that transcends the dividing walls of hostility between us, the dividing walls of race, and gender, and class, and on and on.

This kind of love in verse 8 is what Paul calls love in the Spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, God Himself. This is a love that can only be the fruit of God working in us, working in our hearts, working in our priorities, working in our time, working in our resources, so that we might have love for all the saints.

Not just those fellow believers who are like us, but those who are not like us too. For here, as Paul will say in chapter 3, verse 11 of this book, here, here in the church, here in the inbreaking of the kingdom of God, here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all.

And that kind of love, we know, is something we ought to be thankful for, is it not? But what is it that fuels this love?

What keeps the engine of Spirit-given love for all the saints burning and churning in our hearts, even when it's hard, because it is hard, and even when, humanly speaking, we want to quit, and sometimes we do.

[16 : 38] In verse 5, Paul says, it's because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. And notice here that the word hope isn't speaking about our subjective action, our feelings or acts of hoping.

Rather, Paul's talking about the objective reality of what's in store, the hope, the content of what God has prepared for us. And because it's laid up for you in heaven, that doesn't make it pie in the sky, by and by.

Rather, it means that our future hope cannot be shaken or stolen by earthly circumstances. It's totally secure and completely certain, and one day it will erupt into the present when God brings His saving purposes to completion.

And that certain reality of the future is what stokes the engine of love in the present. Do you see the connection between verses 4 and 5? In verse 4, there's love that you show for all the saints.

And in verse 5, we see that that love is because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Love, of course, is costly, isn't it?

[17 : 46] Love will take your time and your money and your energy. Love might even cost you your reputation. It will take time on your schedule that you might have used for your own recreation.

It will take money from your bank account that you might have used to get nicer, newer things for yourself. It will take energy from your strength that you might have used to promote yourself and your own success.

Love is costly, but the hope in store for us vastly outweighs the cost. One metaphor the Bible uses for our future hope is that of an inheritance.

Paul himself will use that metaphor in verse 12 of this very chapter of Colossians. Inheritance. Now, imagine, what if all of us in this room, when we reached retirement age, what if all of us would become inheritors of individual estates worth well over a billion dollars?

Now, for some of us, age 65 might feel like a long way off. Others of us, maybe not so far off. But imagine what it would do for your financial generosity now if you knew that in a few short decades or years, money would be no object for you.

[19 : 21] Of course, that would give you the freedom to be radically generous now, wouldn't it? You'd be so liberal in your generosity that your friends would probably think you're crazy or at least irresponsible.

That is, if they didn't know about your future inheritance. But in fact, knowing what you know, it makes perfect sense. You see, that's the dynamic. Our future assured hope fuels our present sacrificial love.

But the Bible doesn't just speak of our future hope as an inheritance of unfading wealth, but it also uses the metaphor of a feast of rich foods and well-mixed wine.

It speaks in terms of a home where we will dwell in safety or a city alive with celebration and joy. In short, the hope that God has in store for us is a new heavens and a new earth where sorrow and suffering are no more and of resurrection bodies free from sin and death brilliant with glory.

And most of all, our hope to come consists in union with God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the lover of our souls for all eternity.

[20 : 30] the magnitude of what's in store for those in Christ makes any costly sacrifice of love in the present utterly reasonable.

So this is the fruit of the gospel, faith in Christ Jesus, love for all the saints, and a hope unshakable that fuels it all.

So friends, are we giving thanks when we see this fruit growing up in the church, when faith in Christ is exercised, when love is shown, when hope is held on to?

That's the real fruit of the gospel. Too often we're disappointed or discontent with our spiritual life or our church experience when right under our noses is the fruit of God's almighty work in our midst, supernatural faith and love and hope.

And rather than complaining, Paul says, we ought to be giving thanks. And we ought not just to give thanks for our own church but for other churches across the city.

[21 : 47] After all, Paul wasn't the one who started this church in Colossae. He had never even been there. And yet, hearing about the work, he still abounds in thanksgiving for them.

And you know, we should do the same. Wherever the gospel is being preached and bearing fruit, we ought to give thanks whether we're directly involved in the work or not. But where does this fruit come from?

This brings us to the second big area of thanksgiving that Paul points out here. We must give thanks not just for the fruit of the gospel but also, Paul goes on to say, the power of the gospel.

Look again at our passage. Pick up halfway through verse 5 and on to verse 6. Of this, you've heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

Now in the middle of this packed sentence, Paul speaks of what? Of the worldwide growth of the gospel, bearing fruit and increasing. Many commentators have heard an echo here of Genesis chapter 1.

[23 : 01] Do you remember when God tells our first human parents there to be fruitful and multiply? That's sort of the mandate in creation. Go forth, be fruitful and multiply. Now, Paul says, it's the gospel that's bearing fruit and increasing.

It's as if Paul is saying that this message about Jesus brings with it the power of new creation to bring new life in the midst of the old.

What makes the gospel so powerful? What makes it so powerful that it can bring new life out of the old? New creation out of the broken old creation that we live in?

What makes the gospel so powerful that it can actually transfer our trust, our faith from ourselves to Christ? What makes it so powerful that it can create love across our human differences?

What makes the gospel so powerful that it creates an unshakable hope? Not just for some people, but for the whole world. I mean, we hear a lot of news today, don't we?

[24 : 04] Some of it fake, most of it bad. But sometimes we hear good news, right? And yet, none of even our good news has the power to do what the good news about Jesus is able to do and has done and will continue to do the whole world over.

What makes the gospel so different than everything else? Well, it's because the gospel, as verses 5 and 6 tell us, is a word of truth and it's a word of grace.

Think about it. At the end of verse 5, it says, it's the word of the truth. The message about Jesus is a word of truth. It's something that actually happened in history.

Jesus lived and walked and taught and ate and slept in first century Palestine. People saw him and talked with him and followed him and when the authorities grew tired and threatened by him, they crucified him in history with real nails and on the third day he rose bodily from the dead and the tomb where they buried him was then really empty and he appeared to his disciples living and in the flesh and for 40 days he taught them and ate with them until the time came for him to ascend to his throne and of course at that moment he could have ascended to any earthly kingdom, the throne of any earthly kingdom he wanted.

He could have ascended to the throne in Jerusalem and he could have ascended to the throne in Rome. He certainly had the authority to do it but instead he ascended to an even better throne straight to the right hand of the Father where he not only sits to reign but to intercede for us and to send the Holy Spirit to empower us the church to go out into all nations and draw people from all nations to himself.

[25 : 57] Friends, this is what the gospel the good news about Jesus tells us happened in history. It's not a nice story or a myth that you can take or leave or modify or change or take some parts out that you don't like or put other parts in that you do.

It's a word of truth and isn't that such good news in a world of so much half-truths and fake news that God's done something real for you and for me and because it's a word of truth that means you can investigate it.

Read the accounts about Jesus for yourself in the New Testament. The first four books in the New Testament which we sometimes call the Gospels give us first-hand accounts of the life of Jesus. If you're exploring Christianity that's where I would tell you to start.

Read the Gospel of Luke. Read the Gospel according to Mark. Take the Pew Bible with you and read it. We've got plenty. We can replace them. It's okay. That would be a good place to start and I think what you'll see even if there's a lot there that challenges you I think you'll start to see that the evidence for Jesus' life doesn't read like a myth or a cleverly devised spiritual story but it starts to read like Luke says in the beginning of his Gospel as an account of the things that have actually been done and fulfilled among us.

But it's not just a word of truth it's also a word of grace. Paul says at the end of verse 6 that in the Gospel we've come to understand the grace of God in truth.

[27 : 34] The Gospel isn't just intellectually coherent it also brings a power to change your life. Now think for a moment as we think about this grace think for a moment about the relationship between hope and love that we looked at back in verses 4 and 5.

Now the longer you stare at that the more you realize that something is very different here. That the Gospel is saying something utterly unique. You see in nearly every other spiritual or religious system the relationship between love and hope goes like this.

If you love others well now then your hope will possibly be secure. In other words the certainty of your future hope depends on how well you love in the present.

If you're a loving person if you put others before yourself if you're generous and kind then you'll get rewarded with a good hope. Now for some of you you might be thinking well yeah I thought that's what Christianity says.

I thought that's what Christianity is all about. It's about being a good person being a loving person so you can get a hope for the future with God. But friends that's actually not Christianity.

[28 : 54] Other religions say if you love others well now then your hope will be secure. Christianity says God has made your hope secure in Christ for you.

Therefore you can love others well now. Do you see the difference? It's a complete reversal. One says if you love well God will accept you.

Christianity says God has accepted you in Christ by grace. Your future is secure. Now go love in the freedom and the confidence that that brings. And if you get that if you see how that's something radically different then you're starting to understand what Christianity means by grace.

That God saves us not on the basis of our loving performance but on the basis of Christ's loving performance. Because the reality is none of us loves well enough to secure a future hope with God.

Deep down we know we should love our neighbors as ourselves and deep down we know we don't. So what do we do? What are our options in light of those two realities?

[30 : 03] Option one we can keep on saying that we actually do love our neighbors as ourselves all the while hiding our flaws and our faults which is a terribly inauthentic way to live and ends up breeding hypocrisy.

Option two we can say that God doesn't really require us to love our neighbors as ourselves and that he'll accept us if we just do the best we can. But how do you know if you've done the best you can?

How good is good enough? And while we're at it who are we to say that God what God ought to require or not require? Maybe God really does mean it when he says we ought to love our neighbors as ourselves.

So is there a third option here? Other than sort of maximizing our own goodness at the expense of hiding all of our flaws or minimizing God's goodness at the expense of losing God altogether?

In the gospel there is a third option. You see what Jesus did in history in truth he did for you and me in grace.

[31 : 16] He lived the life that we should have lived and the death he died was the one that we deserve to die so that united to him by faith we can have his record counted to us as our own and have a secure hope for the future that's dependent on him and not me.

We've been watching a lot of tennis lately at home. The U.S. Open has been going on. Did you all know that? No? The U.S. Open is happening like an hour down the street.

So the U.S. Open has been on it seems like non-stop at the Lauer House for the past week and tennis is a very individual game even when you're playing doubles then it's sort of a doubly individual game.

You know you take the court and you have to win in the strength of your own performance. You are the one who has to stand up and beat your opponent and there's no one else who can help you. They won't even let people carry your bags out for you.

Your coach can't even flash you a little signal during the game or else you get disqualified, right? It's up to you. You've got to beat the opponent. But not every sport is like that.

[32 : 29] When a soccer game comes down to penalty kicks there's one player that takes the field for all the rest and if that player can overcome then the whole team wins.

The victory of the one is counted to the many. And friends that is what God has done for us in Christ. The victory of the one man Christ Jesus his perfect life and his sin bearing death is counted to the many who trust in him.

He's done it for those who believe in the whole world and he's done it for you. Friends if you come to understand the grace of God in truth as it says here in verse 6.

In the whole world it's bearing fruit and increasing because there's nothing else like it. And it's no property of one particular people group or one particular nation. It's for all nations.

We could sit here and tell stories of gospel growth in Asia and in Africa and in Europe and in the Middle East and in New England. But what about the garden of your own heart friends?

[33 : 43] Has the truth of the gospel sunk in and has the grace of the gospel taken root? If it hasn't keep asking questions and keep searching out the grace and truth of who Jesus is and what he's done.

The stakes are too high to ignore it. And if it has sunk in then start by giving thanks. Just like Paul does here.

Thank God for the power of the gospel. And if you're starting to see it for the first time let someone else know how thankful you are. Let your gratitude be public. And if you've transferred your trust to Christ and become a Christian then talk to one of us pastors or talk to a friend about getting baptized.

That is the first step in giving public thanks for your new relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you've been a follower of Jesus for a while what does ongoing thanksgiving look like for you?

Paul ends by giving thanks not just for the fruit and the power of the gospel but finally for the mission of the gospel. And this is verses 7 and 8 our last point. He continues, he says, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant he's a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the spirit.

[35 : 00] Paul here wants the Colossians to know that they've received the genuine gospel from a genuine gospel messenger. Now it's probably the case that Epaphras was from Colossae.

It was probably his hometown and he probably met Paul in the city of Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey. Ephesus was sort of a center city in that region. And at Ephesus Epaphras would have heard the message of grace and truth in Jesus from Paul.

And as it took root in his heart Epaphras would have then taken it home to Colossae with him. And there among his own people in his own city he would have taught them all that he learned about the grace of God and truth in Christ. And as his fellow Colossians understood that grace and truth then the fruit began to grow the faith and the love and the hope.

And it grew so much that Epaphras could later return to Paul and report to him all that he had seen God do as they heard the word of truth and come to understand it.

And especially their love in the Spirit. Trinity we like to say that we're gathered transformed and sent forth by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[36 : 10] And that's exactly what we see in this passage isn't it? In verse 6 we see the gospel gathering us it's this global message of grace and truth. And in verses 4 and 5 we see that it transforms us in faith and love and hope and finally in 7 and 8 it sends us out just like it sent out Epaphras.

And know where Epaphras went. He went home. Often we think that the mission of the gospel means traveling to some far away land where we don't know anyone and have to eat strange foods.

But more often friends the mission of the gospel is to take the truth and grace of Christ to our families and our friends and our co-workers. Indeed the gospel mission does extend to the ends of the earth.

The gospel is for the whole world but the ends of the earth are sometimes right in your own backyard or down your dormitory hall or across the street or in the cubicle next to yours.

And note too that Epaphras wasn't an apostle. He wasn't a superstar of the early church. He wasn't a Paul or an Apollos or a Peter. He was just an ordinary guy who encountered the extraordinary grace of Christ and he was faithful to serve Christ and take the gospel to his hometown.

[37 : 31] And his name got etched into the New Testament and we're still talking about him 2,000 years later. And God says elsewhere in the New Testament that all of us who persevere will have our names etched in the temple of God in heaven.

Brothers and sisters, the global movement of the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing right now. And God is calling us, calling you to join in the mission.

So thank God for the Epaphrases in your life, those faithful ministers and pastors who first taught you the gospel even if they aren't famous and then take up your place in the mission too.

And for some of you the global movement of the gospel will take you to the other side of the world. Some of you right here have been to the other side of the world and come back and some of you can't wait to get there and that is incredible and awesome and you should go.

But for some of you the global movement of the gospel will take you to the glories of the mission field right at home. And either way in this mission of the gospel there can be no fear of missing out.

[38 : 46] What are you possibly missing out on? For here the power of God's grace and truth in Christ is breaking into the world and the new creation fruit of faith and hope and love is bursting forth in the midst of the old.

What could be more thrilling than that? So brothers and sisters live your life in the gratitude of the gospel. Give thanks for God is at work in power and the fruit is coming forth and you have a role to play.

Let's pray. God we want to do that this morning. We want to give you thanks for how we have seen the message of your grace in Christ produce good fruit in our midst.

God thank you for faith for those in this room who have come to place their trust in Christ. God thank you for the love that is shared between us and thank you for the hope that we have.

God help us to abound in thanksgiving the more we see you at work. Give us eyes to see it God and give us hearts that overflow with it. Lord would we be a people full of gratitude because of what you've done for us and we pray that we as a church would be a beacon of hope and joy in the midst of our city.

[40 : 17] Would people wonder what it is that makes us different and come to know with thanksgiving the grace of Christ as well. We pray this in his name Father. Amen.

Amen.