



Sermon – November 15, 2020  
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**Verses Covered This Week**

*Colossians 1:26 – 27*

*Acts 13:46 – 49*

*Romans 8:10 - 11*

As you're grabbing your seat, let me invite you to open your Bible with me to Colossians chapter 1. We're going to spend our time in verses 26 and 27 this morning. And as we come to God's word, if you're with us for the first time, whether it's online or right here in the room, we want to say, welcome home. Every week we come to this gospel because we know that God can meet us in these moments. And that by His Spirit, we can be changed. And let's think about what's happening here as we come together in this time. On Friday night, we had a chance to gather out at the fire pit on our property with dozens of the men in our church. And we had a time of worship and time of fellowship and encouragement. But we also had a time of corporate prayer together. And I want you to know and to start preparing your hearts even now before the message begins that at the conclusion of the message during the response time, I want to invite you to come and join us at the front at these steps to pray. To respond to what we're going to see God declaring to us by turning it over to Him on our knees, together as a congregation, an expression of our dependence and submission on Him. Because what's happening in Colossians 1, if you remember last week, we saw the way that Paul unpacked for us what it looks like to suffer and serve for the sake of the gospel. And now he's going to turn his attention to the reality that we are called to make His, make God's word fully known, and that the nature of that word is that of a mystery. Let's see how he describes this mystery this morning beginning in verse 26.

*<sup>26</sup>the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup>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.*

Well this week we lost an icon. Alex Trebek passed away. He was 80 years old. He had wrestled with a two-year bout with pancreatic cancer. And in a world full of division, in a country where we're often separated by those disagreements that divide us, there was one thing that many homes could count on in the evenings right before Prime Time. Is that they could all turn on the TV and watch Alex Trebek in Jeopardy. And if you think about Jeopardy, at its core, there's nothing really particularly special about the show. It's just giving answers to questions,

or perhaps the right way to say it is questions to answers. There, it's not all that exciting. And yet, what he was able to do was bring us in as a host. To make us feel a sense of connection with the contestants. To make a sense of connection to the knowledge that was there. And at the heart of what that show was all about that he led for 37 years, six nights a week, is it's a show built around the relationship between mystery and revelation. That a mystery is given, this answer is given to you, and it's a mystery what the question is behind it, until whether it's the contestant or Trebek himself, reveals that mystery. They take what is hidden and they bring it to light. And they do that, they take mystery and bring it to revelation in the pursuit of riches. And in a much greater way this morning, we're going to notice Paul is unpacking for us is what God does for us in the gospel. That he takes that which is hidden, that which is mystery, and he makes it known. He reveals it to us by his Son so that we might experience the riches that only come in relationship with God.

Now last week Paul has talked about how he is making the word of God fully known. And this week what we're going to find is that he expresses the nature of that word. That it is a mystery. And what Paul is going to show us this morning, is how the gospel reveals the mystery that Christ is in us and Christ is for us. So notice the way he begins this text. Back in verse 26 we're going to see the way that the gospel reveals the mystery that Christ is for us. That's what he's talking about here in the beginning of this passage when he says, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. Paul uses this word mystery. In his writings it appears over 20 times in his letters. And yet fully 25% of those show up here in the book of Colossians. One quarter. It's clearly an important theme for Him when he is writing to the Colossians. And why is that? Well let's not forget the fact that during this time period, there were false teachers that had arisen in the Colossian church who were seeking to lead people astray from their faith. And part of what they were doing was questioning the sufficiency of Jesus. They were seeking to teach and to divide and to lead people astray by telling them that there was a mystery that only they could unfold for them. That there was something more than Jesus that was needed. And Paul confronts this mystery teaching that was coming from within with his own explanation of the nature of the mystery of the gospel. And we're going to see him unpack that for us this morning. See, when he talks there, he speaks about it as a mystery that is hidden. That is secret. That's overshadowed. There's a sense in which it's concealed. But notice what he says. He says, it's a mystery hidden for ages and generations. For a long time. To all people. There has been an obscurity. An inability to know. A longing to understand this mystery that's been restricted. That we live in a culture that thrives on mystery. It makes up a large part of who we are and what we enjoy to be a part of. So think about it. Your favorite spy movie is built around unveiling the mystery of who was the murderer or how they're going to save the day. Maybe you grew up watching a show like Unsolved Mysteries. Or we find example after example on the New York Times Best Seller list of books that are written that are promising to unlock the secrets behind something. The secret things you need to know for weight loss or to transform your life or to find more joy in this world. There is this desire to have mystery unfolded that is hard wired into each one of us. Why is that? It's because at the core of what God is doing in this world and salvation is he is revealing a mystery. And those longings to have mysteries revealed in other aspects of this world are just a small glimpse of that desire that we have to see that mystery revealed in the gospel.

So what is the mystery that Paul is speaking of here? Hold your spot here in Colossians 1, but slide back with me to the book of Acts. I want you to see something in Acts 13. The way that

Paul and Barnabas come together in a city called Antioch gives us a glimpse of the nature of this mystery. Look at Acts 13, verses 46 through 49. So Paul and Barnabas have already preached the gospel once. There has been so much interest in it that the people have invited them to come back and to share it again. And the Jewish leaders feel so threatened by this rival gospel that is being proclaimed in their midst that they confront Paul and Barnabas and notice how they respond and unveil the nature of this mystery that Paul is speaking of in Colossians 1. Look at Acts 13:46.

<sup>46</sup>And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup>For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” <sup>48</sup>And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup>And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

So what is Paul saying here? He’s speaking of the mystery of the gospel that he is now unpacking in Colossians 1. He speaks to these Jewish leaders and says, “We came to you first with the gospel.” But now as you reject it, we are fulfilling what God had promised a long time ago. And if you look at Acts 13, Paul is quoting from an Old Testament passage. Isaiah 49:6 where before Jesus even came, the prophets are declaring a reality. That there will come a suffering servant. A future Messiah who as it tells us there will be a light for the Gentiles. That we may have salvation proclaimed even to the ends of the earth. So what the people of the Old Testament missed was that one day God was going to reveal a mystery. And that mystery is this. That Christ is for us. That God sent His only Son to die in our place. Not just for the Old Testament people of God in Israel, but for all nations. That’s why when you look at Acts 13 in verse 48 you see the way that the Gentiles react. There’s this overwhelming joy, this excitement. They can’t believe it. They’re overcome by the reality that this message is not just for the Jews, but for them. And it’s also for you and me. Paul is showing us this morning that the mystery of the gospel is Christ is for us. And notice the way he speaks at the end of verse 26 about the nature of how this mystery is revealed. He tells us, but now it is revealed to His saints. That word revealed means to make clear or make visible, to make appear.

Several months ago, we had the opportunity to host a man by the name of Dave Eubank in our building for a men’s night. Where hundreds of people from the community gathered together. Well, just a couple weeks ago, he was back in town and I hosted him with a group of college students. And Dave is known for his incredible relief work that he does around the world with Free Burma Rangers. But what I’ve learned as I’ve gotten to know him is he’s an avid mountain climber. And he was telling this group of college students about the fact that he was in the Himalayas. He’d travelled up to the base camp of Everest. Had the Sherpas help him take his belongings up along with the rest of his group. And that day, they weren’t going to be hiking Everest; they were going to hike one of the small mountains there. Only 21,000 feet. No big deal. In fact, he was so confident in the climb that he didn’t take any Sherpas with him. He was going to be the one that led the expedition. And as they set out, everything was going great. Until the cloud cover set in and a fog began to lower. And they could no longer see the direction of where they were going and they had lost confidence in the path that they were on. And in that moment of uncertainty, Eubank talked about how he called out to God. He prayed that the Lord

would show them the way. And in that instant, and just for a moment, the clouds parted enough so that the summit that they were heading to appeared and totally changed the trajectory of the trip. It allowed them to reposition and re-center where they were heading because the destination had been revealed to them. And when Paul speaks here of the nature of this mystery being revealed. That Christ is for us. He is showing the way that in Christ, God is unveiling this reality to you and me. That by His Spirit He is making known these truths that seemed hidden in the Old Testament. So maybe you've heard a phrase talked about before that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. And the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. Or one of the ancient writers of the Christian faith, Augusta, used to talk about the nature of the Old Testament as a room that was richly furnished, yet dimly lit. There were these glimpses. These promises. These prophetic declarations that one day God would send a Messiah who wouldn't just rescue His people, Israel, but would be a light to the nations. That salvation would go to the ends of the earth and yet the people of God didn't see it in full. It was a mystery hidden. And what Paul was showing us this morning is that mystery is now revealed. And the mystery is this: that Christ is for us. That He stands in our place. When you and I would stand before God condemned in judgment for our sins, now by His Son, He is standing on our behalf. And Paul caught a glimpse of this mystery himself on that Damascus road. Do you remember it? He talked about it in Galatians 1:16 by saying that God was pleased to reveal His Son to me. So even though Paul's physical eyes were blinded by that light, his spiritual eyes were opened and that mystery was revealed to him. And for anybody that experiences the saving grace of Jesus Christ, God works in the same way. When did that lightbulb come on for you? When did those scales fall from your eyes? When did that heart of stone get ripped out of your chest and replaced with a heart of flesh? That revelation of the mystery. That can only happen, Paul is showing us, because God has revealed it to us. His Spirit is alive and at work. When we recognize that what we thought was for someone else is now actually for us. That by faith we can experience a relationship with God for the rest of eternity. And one of the common things in our culture in a pre-COVID world is you might see an instance of something like this playing out. Let's imagine there's a family, they're courtside at a sporting event. Like an Aggie basketball game. And during a timeout or a halftime, there's a special feature that's on the jumbo Tron and they train the focus of the cameras on this particular family. There's going to be some tribute to them. But what the family doesn't know is the nature of it. And what they didn't realize is that months ago, they had sent a husband and a father off to an international deployment in the military. And the military has coordinated with the host of this sporting event in order to surprise this family. And that dad, that husband, they thought might be weeks, even months, away from coming back is right there in their midst and they don't know it. And at the crescendo moment in those settings, we've all seen the viral videos of them, there's this point in time where that family realizes that this tribute, this moment, isn't for someone else, it's for them. And they turn around and they see that dad. They see that husband and there's this sense of joy, this revelation leads to excitement in a way that transforms them, that feels this reconnection of the family that they didn't expect until that moment occurred. And those experiences in this world are just a small taste, a brief glimpse, of the nature of what Paul is speaking of here. When he tells us that the mystery of the gospel is that Christ is for us, he is saying that God has made a way for you and me to be reconnected to Him. To be brought into His family so that no matter what the world brings against us, we can stand firm in our faith. And that has everything to do with the way we live our daily lives. When sin tempts us, when trials beset us, when anxieties grip us, when sorrows overwhelm us, the way that we stand firm

in the hardest seasons of life, is by clinging to this reality. That in the gospel God is showing to us that Christ is for us. That's the mystery that Paul is revealing.

But I want you to notice. He goes on to say that the mystery of the gospel is not just that Christ is for us. If you look back at verse 27 what we're going to find is that the gospel reveals the mystery that Christ is in us. So notice how he says it there in verse 27.

*<sup>27</sup>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.*

Now if you're Bible's anything like mine, you're going to notice at the end of verse 26, there's a period. Do you see it there? Well, in fact, in the original language, if you were to look back, this is all one sentence. And there's a sense in which Paul is showing us there's a connection between verse 26 and verse 27. There's no natural separation like it would appear to be there. That the reality that Christ is for us cannot be disconnected from the reality that Christ is in us. And that's what he turns his attention to here. And in several ways he highlights the amazing nature of God's revelation for us in Christ. He shows us the way that God offers a willing revelation of the mystery of the gospel. Do you see it there in verse 27? God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles. That idea that God chose to make known. He's delighted to disclose Himself to us. There is a, an enjoyment in entrusting us with the truth of this gospel mystery being made known. And as a dad raising four boys at home, when we send them off to school and they get back and I get to see them for the first time, I never know what I'm going to get out of them. Some days probably the most common setting is when you ask a child when they come home from school, "How was your day?" The answer is what? Good. Fine. Something like that. Non-descript. And then when you say, "Well, what was good about it?" "Well, I don't know." I used to do that as a child too. Let's be honest. But there are some days when you come home and you're expecting the same script to happen. How was your day? Good. What was good about it? I don't know. And instead, you are met with a torrent of explanation. There is this enthusiasm, this excitement. You're never going to believe what happened. You're never going to figure out what we got to do today. How great this opportunity was. How unique this situation was. And there is this enjoyment, this delight in disclosing what has happened. That's the picture Paul is giving us. That God is not begrudgingly making His gospel mystery known. There is a deep delight. He was willing to make this known. He chose to make known. And what does that mean for us? I mean, let's be honest. So often it can feel as if God is distant. That He's vague. That His ways are unclear. But what Paul is reminding us of here is if it's true, that God chose to make known this mystery of the gospel, then He delights in making Himself known. He desires for you to know Him. There is a longing for relationship and intimacy that He has even when you don't sense His nearness.

But notice the way that this goes on. Because Paul also speaks about how God offers not just a willing revelation, but a wonderful revelation of the mystery of Christ. Do you see how he says it? He says, how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery. Now we see that word Gentile is there. It's the only time it's used in the book of Colossians. And more literally, it means the nations. Paul is speaking about those beyond the chosen people of God in the Jewish people of Israel. He's speaking there, not just in the abstract, but about most of the Colossians themselves. And he speaks there of how great is the riches. There is this sense of

magnitude. This sense of significance to what God is doing in the riches of the glory of this mystery. Paul couldn't make these riches sound any greater. They're not just your normal everyday run of the mill riches. They are unfathomable. The depth knows no bounds. The significance cannot be overshadowed. There is a richness to the riches that cannot be rivaled by anything else this world has to offer.

Well back about 25 years ago in the nation of the United Kingdom, a law was passed to give guidelines for what could be officially declared as treasure in the United Kingdom. And in order for something to qualify and to meet the minimum standards for being a treasure, it had to reach certain levels in terms of both its maturity and its purity. So in maturity, as in this treasure had to be at least 300 years old. And in terms of purity, it had to consist of a minimum of 10% of gold and silver. And anything short of those standards are not classified as true treasure in the eyes of the United Kingdom government. When Paul speaks here about the riches of the glory of this mystery, he is speaking of a richness, a treasure that is far greater than anything standard that this world can offer. It is perfect in maturity. Perfect in purity. It is the only thing that can stand up to the standards of God. And that richness of the glory of this mystery has been poured out for you and for me. Because the nature of these riches are not in the gifts that God gives us but instead in God Himself. God gives us of Himself. In the way that Paul speaks there he talks about how those riches have been poured out among the Gentiles. And if we're being honest this morning, one of the reasons that mysteries are so captivating to our hearts is because mysteries often come with the allure of treasure. That if we can uncover the mystery, then we can enjoy the riches of the treasure that it is offering. And the truth is, that's one of the ways that Satan often tempts our hearts. He seeks for us to unveil mysteries through experiencing forbidden fruit that offers counterfeit treasure that can never satisfy. That's why the pull of gossip is often so deep for us. Because that sense of feeling in the know and connected and being able to make sense of things that others can't understand without the information that you have satisfies this longing, this desire for us, this treasure we're seeking for significance. Or when we find ourselves pulled to the flow of a rectangle as we look at images that we shouldn't. That longing for satisfaction of mystery that can come by looking at illicit images promises a payoff that it can't deliver. A satisfaction that it can never live up to. And at the core of those desires of temptation is the longing to experience riches through forbidden fruit. But what Paul is showing us this morning, is that lasting riches, the greatest riches, the most satisfying riches are only found in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. And the way that we fight against the pull of forbidden fruit to satisfy our desires in other ways is by replacing them with the expulsive power of a greater affection in our longing for Jesus Christ. He says it is a wonderful revelation.

But notice the way that this text finishes. At the end of verse 27 we also see the way that Paul speaks of how God offers us a whole revelation of the mystery of Christ. When he tells us that the mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Paul gives us a whole picture of our gospel reality in Christ. That the promise that God has made long ago, the mystery that people have been waiting to have unveiled, is not some abstract plan, it is a person and His name is Jesus. He tells us that the mystery is that Christ is in you. Again, over and over in Colossians we see this emphasis on the centrality of Christ. That He is at the center of who we are if we know Him. And what this is showing us is that if Christ is in us, He is with us, He is for us, He is in us, He is working through us. It's like Paul declares elsewhere in Galatians 2:20.

<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me.

And I want you to get a sense for the nature of what God is doing when He puts Christ in us by holding your spot here and sliding back with me to the book of Romans chapter 8. And check out the way that Paul speaks of what God is doing for us in Christ. The significance of what it means that Christ is in you. Look at Romans 8:10 with me. We're going to see this reality in verses 10 and 11. Notice what Paul says here. Watch this.

<sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>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 who dwells in you.

So what is Paul saying here? He's helping us to understand what it means that Christ is in you. And what it means is that at salvation, God comes and takes up residence in our hearts. That Christ Himself dwells in us. And how does that happen? God sends His Spirit and in fact, verse 11 of Romans 8 tells us it is the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead. That same wonder working power that made dead bones live is now at work in us. Christ is in us. He is at work within us. In a way where he has taken up residence in our heart. And if we were to look through the entire story of Scripture, we're going to find this reality unfolding. That God longs to dwell with His people. That's true from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden when it tells us that Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden in the cool of the day. But what happens when sin enters the world? It fractures us from God. It separates us from Him. And now as a result of that reality, we don't experience that connection, that indwelling, that relationship. We see glimpses of it, right? I mean, remember, back in the time of the wilderness when Israel is going through the wilderness on the way to the promised land, the tabernacle travels with them as the place of the presence of God. And once they enter into the promised land and they make residence there, they build the temple where the manifest presence of God dwells. But all of those realities were just a sign, a symbol, a pattern leading to the fact that one day God would send His own Son. And that God would dwell amongst us. And that the temple of God would now appear, not made by human hands, but sent by our heavenly Father, poured down from heaven for you and for me. So that now as Paul is showing us, if you know Jesus, Jesus knows you. He has taken up residence in your heart. Christ is in you as he tells us here in Colossians 1:27.

And what's the significance of that? Don't miss the way that this verse ends. He tells us it is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now we've seen throughout Colossians 1, Paul keeps bringing up this word hope. If you look back at verse 5 you see it. Or just a few verses before this in verse 23, there's this repeated emphasis on hope. This expectation now of a future reality. What we taste in part in this moment one day we will see fully. And part of what that looks like is the reality that Christ has taken up residence in our heart by the power of the Spirit points ahead to a future reality that Christ is our hope of glory. He is the means. He is the certainty. He is our confidence for how we will stand before God one day in glory. And what that means for us is if that reality is true, it should change the way that we live in the present.

There's a teenager up in Canada named Carson Swazey. He's autistic. In fact, his autism is so significant and he can't write, he can't read, he can't even speak. But he can listen and he can learn. And one of the things that has been a difficulty on all of us, but especially for someone like him has been this COVID season. The isolation, the difficulty in understanding, and he was having a particularly tough time until a transformation started to occur. His parents noticed that when they started having him do something, it began to create an affected change in him. See, in their small Canadian town, their house was about 15 minutes from the center of the town. And what they would do each morning is to send him out with his caretaker to walk 15 minutes there and 15 minutes back in order to visit the local post office. And he began to really enjoy these journeys. Because he was anticipating what was going to be there; when he would get that mail, when he would get a letter to him. When he would get something significant for his family, it made that trip significant to him. And as a result of that, they noticed a change in his disposition. In fact, he even transformed bodily. He lost 75 pounds during this season. There were all sorts of things happening that were good for him which is why his mom had been so troubled over the last few weeks. She had noticed that there were fewer and fewer items in the mail box when he would head to the post office. And as a result of that, he began increasingly to resist the desire to go on those journeys. It wasn't worth it. What was there, there was nothing there so why bother going through the hassle? And so on a whim, she typed up a Facebook post and put it out to the world telling his story and inviting people to send in mail to him not knowing what was about to happen next. Carson's story ended up making international news and now hundreds, in fact, even thousands have promised to send him mail. And it's even begun already to begin pouring in. And she says that his interest, his commitment, has revived to going on these journeys because he recognizes the reality that all of us know to be true deep down. The destination shapes the journey. If we see where we're going and we understand if it's worth it, we will do whatever it takes to get there. And when Paul speaks to us this morning about this reality that Christ in you is the hope of glory, he is reminding us of our eternal destination. Now I don't know what this season holds for you. I don't know the hardship that you're bearing. I don't know the difficulties that you're wrestling with. But here's what I do know. That in Christ, God has made to us a promise and the call of the gospel to each one of us this morning is that you may not be able to change what's behind you. You may not be able to know what's before you. But in the midst of all of it, we can know that Christ is in you and Christ is for you. That's the mystery of the gospel.

Let's pray together.

Father, Your Spirit has made You known to us. He has unveiled the mystery. What was hidden from us has now been made clear. And Lord I'm calling out to You this morning on behalf of the people in this room and watching online is that You would make even more of Yourself known. That we would sense a glimpse of the glorious reality of this mystery that's been revealed. That we would be overwhelmed by the fact that You are for us, God. That no matter what this world brings, no matter what stands against us, nothing can separate us from the love of You in Christ. We're asking now in this moment, Lord, as we prepare our hearts to respond in corporate prayer, that You will meet Your people here. That our cries to You in desperation will be met by answers that can only be explained by Your goodness. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.