**Colossians – Pre-eminence** – **wk 9 - The Megaphone**

**Background: Paul – 6-year-old Colossae – Epaphras needed counsel…**

**Theme – The preeminence of Christ in all things**

**Jesus is preeminent in all creation as creator / Pre-em in our personal life, marriage life, family life, work life – all of it.**

**This main theme is all about – what it means to be rooted in Christ**

* **The 1st half is about the roots system = what we believe**
* **The 2nd half is about the fruit system = how it affects our life**

**Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (stay rooted, keep growing)**

**Today – This is our last week in Colossians.**

**Part 2 of two neglected fundamentals…**

**Last week looked at prayer – if you missed it… listen online.**

**This week is also an area I am very passionate about – witnessing**

**Matt 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

**Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**Go reproduce yourself – one makes another – makes another.**

**Paul reminds us that we can all do this, we are all missionaries.**

**I think – the average Christian never or rarely shares their faith. And - I wonder if they can express it accurately.**

**Spiritual Myths about what the Bible calls “evangelism”**

**Diff views and approaches: (megaphone) Standing on a box shouting – walking with signs, going door to door, t-shirts, mints, bumper stickers**

**Or the dangling carrot – want to get rich, be blessed, be healed, fix your marriage, Jesus gives you what you want - just pray this prayer.**

**Some have presented it as a method – 4 steps and close the deal – how to win arguments, how to convince.**

**Some give it over to someone else – you need to talk to my friend, pastor, come to church.**

**What the Bible calls evangelism has been misrepresented**

**Curious – show of hands – how many you, if you are a Christ follower, came to know Christ through an ongoing relationship?**

**Col 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. (writing in prison for sharing faith in a culture hostile to Jesus) 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.**

**Sharing Your Faith – Witnessing**

**1. BE READY**

* **Be ready by praying**

**Col 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message…**

**As we saw last week, pray for open doors, for those around you, pray for clarity. Praying for the lost gives you eyes for the lost**

**Truth is – it could happen any day – at any moment.**

**Prayer gives us his eyes. Do you have your Father's eyes?**

* **Be ready by knowing the Gospel**

**4:3 …so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ…**

**I say this often– this is the Gospel. The Deity / Death / Resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of Sins.**

**We must confess & believe it by faith. There is no other name - or way.**

**\* Know your salvation story – be ready to share it. BC.HC.AC.**

**\* Reading and knowing your Bible builds HS confidence.**

* **Be ready with the right perspective**

**Realize the Gospel saves not you**

**Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes:**

**Remember this - *"Saving"* people is God’s work, not yours.**

**We are not their Messiah – we can’t fix them or convince them.**

**1 Corinthians 3:5-9 - (Disputing over who was a greater leader) What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. (diff roles to play) 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (God is the builder and one who grows others)**

**You can’t save anyone – you did not die on a cross and even if you did it would not mean anything – it would have not power.**

**But I did this and said this… This might help you understand – dad takes 3yr old fishing for the first time (pic) Who baited it, cast it, held it, reeled it in, de-hooked it? Who caught the fish? Dad did the work…**

**Let me challenge your thinking: God calls, draws, convicts, empowers confession, saves, & keeps. He is self-sufficient! But yet he delights in using us and lets us get in the picture.**

**He calls us fishers of men – but he is the one catching the fish.**

**Some passages from John:**

**John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. (Why?) 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.**

**That is why I often say – God will always get his own.**

**He goes on to say I will keep every one of them and raise them up. They began to grumble that Jesus would dare say this…**

**6:43 Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.**

**He goes on to say that only the Spirit of God can give you an understanding of this.**

**6:65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (Unless the father calls them and draws them…)**

**John 8:47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” (you are not the one God has called)**

**John 10:24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.”**

**They were able to look at Jesus in the eyes and say no – how? Because the Father had not given them to Jesus. Those who are his – will follow. We are not out there saving people. We are casting the next and God is does the work, saving his own.**

* **Be ready to be rejected**

**3 …for which I am in chains.**

**You have got to be ready and okay with being alone, rejected, persecuted, mocked, made fun of, looked down on, belittled, outcast. This is the part often neglected to talk about…**

**1. BE READY**

**2. BE WISE - Col 4:5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.**

**Wise – “*sophia*” – skill and knowledge – *sophistication*.**

**Be smart and intentional in how you interact with people.**

* **Have intentional relationships - Col 4:5 - "Be..."**

**We are not to live in our Christian bubble… we are often afraid the world will rub off on us – but as a result, we rarely rub off on them.**

**Paul assumes they have friends with non-believers**

**But here is the key – be intentional – purposeful with them.**

**1 Corinthians 9:22-23 – To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.**

* **Live differently - Col 4:5 - "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders…**

**It starts with our actions - we often have to earn the right to be heard. Why? So we don’t turn people away or off by our actions.**

**Towards “outsiders” - we are not to belittle, look down on, be self-righteous – but live with grace and compassion.**

* **When opportunity knocks – Answer**

**Col 4:5 ...make the most of every opportunity.**

**6 …so that you may know how to answer everyone.…**

**Being ready – means listening for grace-filled moments of hope.**

**If you have built relational equity – you can speak into their lives when they are in times of need, questions, or discouragement.**

**1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.**

**We need to be ready with a biblical answer and**

**give it with gentleness and respect – and an authentic life.**

* **Create questions, not conflict**

**Let your life create questions – don’t go looking for conflict… I dare someone to cuss around me… or to bring up abortion… or whatever**

**Live a life that demands an explanation – if you are praying and living life like Col 1,2,3 - people will start asking you - about you.**

**1. BE READY**

**2. BE WISE**

**3. BE AWARE**

**Colossians 4:6 - Let your conversation be always full of grace,** **seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.**

* **Be aware of your speech and attitude**

**Let your words reflect your walk**

**But you don’t understand where I work – Yes, I do... I’ve been there.**

**Matthew 26:69-75 – Peter during trial of Jesus was accused as being “one of them” – they told him, “Your speech gives you away.” He denied it. After the 3rd time he cusses them out (I guess your right - his disciples wouldn’t talk like that) He tried to separate himself from Christ by the use of his words.**

**Is your speech diff. here than it is at work, with friends, or at home? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. - Luke 6:45**

* **Offer grace, not judgment - Col 4:6 “…be always full of grace seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”**

**Give grace when they don’t deserve it – and show grace to those who don’t know it.**

**The Bible never says to judge those who are non-believers**

**Just the opposite – see 1 Cor 5 – that little chapters confronts**

**We are to love like Jesus and stand strong in truth and righteousness. We have a Megaphone of grace, mercy, patience, gentleness – & truth**

**\*\*\* If you are not a Christian - we are not here to judge you.**

**But once you meet Christ allow him to change you from the inside out - we will walk with you through that.**

**This is the point: People need the answer, not an argument**

**Why you are diff? Let your life point and your words speak of Jesus.**

**ONE FINAL QUESTION: How do I know if I am making a difference?**

**How do I know if I am sharing my faith?**

**Let me try to answer that by reading the final verses of this letter... Colossians 4:7 Ty-chi-cus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. (He brought the letter back) 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. (Remember he is the runaway bondsman) They will tell you everything that is happening here.**

**10 My fellow prisoner Aris-tar-chus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras (their pastor), who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hier-apolis. (their tri-city area)**

**14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. (Pass it around) 17 Tell Arch-i-ppus: (Philemon's son) "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." (Encourage him to grow – as a new believer)**

**Does anything stand out to you? All the names - 11 by sname**

**Paul names people who have been touched by his life – he strives to follow up with them and cares for them.**

**So - How does one know they are sharing their faith?**

**Simple – what are the names of the people who are following alongside you as you follow Christ – Your friends, spouse, kids, co-workers?**

**If you were to write a letter – who would you send a - “follow Jesus shout out” to? Can you name names?**

**\*But also realize sometimes you will not see the fruit of all who you touched… just as Paul never went to Colossae and knew them.**

**Be the missionary you are called to be. Be hope to those around you.**

**Acts 1:8 …you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

**Stay grounded in Christ (in what you were taught) and keep growing - living thankful praise praise-filled lives.**

**He ends his letter with this.**

**Colossians 4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. (this final part – the names - he wrote, the rest was dictated) Remember my chains (don’t forget me – I will not forget you). Grace be with you.**

* **Prayer for boldness to share our faith and witness.**