

Thanksgiving In Colosse

Colossians 3:15-17

Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Col 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Food, football, and oppression. That's what Thanksgiving has come to mean to many Americans.

Back in 2007, Seattle public school officials made national news by describing the holiday as “a time of mourning” and “a bitter reminder of 500 years of betrayal.”

This new narrative describes the Pilgrims as arrogant oppressors who fled persecution only to become persecutors themselves, depriving Native Americans of their land and their lives.

But this is wrong on every account.

First of all, the Pilgrims didn't cross the ocean to flee persecution – or even England. They had been living for over a decade in Holland, Europe's most tolerant nation, and a haven for religious dissenters. Free from interference by the Church of England, they feared seduction – not persecution, worrying that their children would be corrupted by the materialistic Dutch culture.

That is why they risked their dangerous 1620 voyage to a wilderness continent: not because they were running from oppression, but because they were running toward holiness – fulfilling a fateful dream to build an ideal Christian commonwealth.

They initially planned to plant this model society on the wild, wolf infested island known to the natives as Manhattan, but the wind and the tides blew them 250 miles off course, dumping the Mayflower on the frozen coast of Massachusetts.

Somehow, the Pilgrims saw their dire situation as a demonstration of Providential power – especially after, as tradition has it, a giant wave picked up the flimsy boat of a scouting party on a stormy December night. The turbulent sea then deposited them safely – miraculously – on a little island within sight of the ideal location for their settlement. It was a deserted Indian village with cleared land, stored supplies of corn, and a reliable source of fresh water.

Contrary to what is being taught now, the supposedly cruel conquerors never actually invaded that village. Instead, they expressed a fervent desire to pay the natives for the dried corn they had found, if only they could find someone to pay. But the former inhabitants had perished during three years of plague, probably smallpox, that immediately preceded the Pilgrim's arrival.

One of the few survivors of that devastation turned up several months later to welcome the English newcomers. Against all odds, he proved to be the single human being on the continent best suited to help the struggling settlers, since he spoke English, and had already embraced Christianity.

His name was Squanto, and he had grown up in this very village before a ruthless sea captain kidnapped him as a boy

Our Praise—

The last part of verse 17 says, “**giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**”

Many in Colosse were looking to the gods of this world or the latest philosophy to find guidance and enrichment. Paul urged the church to offer their thanksgiving unto the God of heaven. He alone had redeemed them and He alone was worthy of their praise. If the world could praise idols and ideals, surely the church could praise the Lord. This would be a strong witness in a difficult society.

We have already dealt with our obligation to praise the Lord, but I wonder how effective we are in praise. During the Thanksgiving season we may do pretty good, but what about the ordinary days throughout the year. Is God not good then? Does He not meet our needs every day? Is He not worthy of our praise and adoration? Sure He is, and the world needs to hear our praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord. Many depend upon their own abilities and feel as if they have no one to thank but themselves. May we offer praise to whom praise is due!

Life was difficult for the Colossian believers, but they had reason to rejoice. Life was difficult for the Pilgrims, yet they set aside three days for thanksgiving and praise. Our lives are difficult as well, but we too have much to praise the Lord for. We have been blessed beyond measure and we are way behind on offering thanksgiving to the One who bled and died for our sin. He is worthy of our worship and thanksgiving. Do you know Christ as your Savior and Lord? If not, you really don't know how to be thankful. Why not give us a chance to help you with that and learn the real meaning of Thanksgiving! Ask us about those classes before you leave,

and sold him into slavery in Spain. After four years, he was freed by kindly monks, then made his way to England, and finally sailed across the Atlantic – only to find his friends, and family, all wiped out by disease.

Over the next few months, Squanto helped the English newcomers plant crops and negotiate a friendly trade agreement with the region’s most important chief – Massasoit. No wonder Pilgrim leader called Squanto, “a special instrument sent of God for their good.”

The celebration later known as “The First Thanksgiving” actually involved a three-day harvest festival in October, apparently inspired by the Biblical holiday of Sukkot, or The Feast Of Tabernacles. Ninety Indian warriors joined the 53 surviving Pilgrims for this occasion. Nearly half of the colonists had died during the brutal winter.

The Englishmen provided some vegetables, fish, and perhaps wild turkeys, while the natives brought 5 recently hunted deer as house gifts. The preferred sport on this occasion wasn’t football, but shooting, with settlers and Indians sharing a fierce fascination with guns.

Pilgrim chronicler Edward Winslow put it this way when he wrote:

“Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors. They four in one day, killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some 90 men, whom for three days, we entertained and feasted. And they went out and killed 5 deer, which the brought to the plantation and

bestowed on our Governor and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”

Though these hardy Pilgrims loom large in the American imagination, they never built their Plymouth settlement into a major colony. In nearby Boston, the later colony of Massachusetts Bay grew so much that it swallowed up the great-grandchildren of the Pilgrims in 1691.

As we look back at our passage of Scripture this morning and begin to break it down, I want you to see the parallels of principles between the two. See, though mostly forgotten today, the sense of purpose of the original Pilgrims left a long standing imprint on the national character. Just as the church as Colosse in Paul’s letter was called to do. Just as we are called to do. The Pilgrims maintained unshakeable confidence that God alone protected them – not necessarily to grant special privileges, but to impose special responsibilities. They saw themselves as instruments, not authors, of a mysterious master plan.

This morning we have read a few verses of the letter that the Apostle Paul had written to the church in Colosse. As far as we know, Paul never personally visited Colosse, but he was concerned with their spiritual well-being. The church in Colosse faced many of the same difficulties that other believers at that time faced, many of the same difficulties that the Pilgrims we just learned about faced, and many of the same difficulties that we face today.

Colosse was located in the Lycus Valley of modern day Turkey, situated on the Lycus River. Within the Lycus Valley were also Hierapolis and Laodicea, the chief city of the area, about six miles from each other. Colosse was twelve miles

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The church in Colosse lived in an environment of scrutiny. The motives and philosophies of men were carefully watched. The church had a wonderful opportunity to be an effective witness for the Lord. They could remain committed to honoring the Lord by their words and their deeds.

We too have the potential to make a difference in our culture. We must not conform to the dictates of this world. We must stand firm on the truth of God’s Word and compassionately share that truth with the world. Those around us need to experience a consistent witness on our part. We will never win them if we fail to consistently and faithfully represent Christ! Then there is:

Our Purpose—

Staying with our same verse. Paul admonished them to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. They were to honor Christ and represent Him in every aspect of life. This was not reserved for Sunday services at church, but every day and in every way. The world needed to see the evidence of a changed life. They needed to see the difference in saving faith in Christ and the hopeless doctrines of the world.

We must ensure that our lives reflect the Lord in all we do, whether it is at church or in public. May we always live in such a way that we glorify our Lord and testify of His goodness to the world.

1Co 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Paul wraps up his thought here by looking at:

I have always said if anyone had reason to rejoice or a song to sing, it ought to be the church. We too have been delivered from the deception of this world. We have been brought out of darkness into the glorious light. I am not living in a "hope so" situation. I am confident of my salvation, as well as the assurance of eternal life. There ought to be a song of praise on the hearts of God's people. We are safe and secure in Christ the Lord. There is much that I do not know, but I know that my Redeemer lives and that He is coming again for His own. It has always been this way though. If we go back to one of the oldest books in the Bible, we will find that Job said this:

Job 19:25 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

If Job knew this way back then, and could proclaim this in the midst of his trials and suffering. What more could we ask for regarding confidence and hope in this life?

The final point I would like to touch on this morning concerns:

The Consistency of the Believer –

Col 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

As they lived in a society so easily swayed and prone to change, Paul encouraged the believers to be steadfast in their faith and consistent in their walk. Notice regarding our consistency, we see:

Our Potential—

Our text says:

from Laodicea and was considered the least of the three within the fertile valley.

Standing in the shadow of the more populous areas was only part of the struggle the Colossians faced. The city was permeated with those who taught heresy and denied the deity of the Lord. Keep in mind that this was the age of philosophy and deep thought. The Gospel seemed too simple for the great thinkers to embrace, and many rejected that God would have actually come in flesh to die for sinful men. The main route from Ephesus ran through Colosse, but in Paul's day Colosse was viewed as a city of little importance. This is backdrop in which Paul sought to encourage and challenge the believers at Colosse. The world seemed to have forgotten them, overlooked for the larger cities, and they were surrounded by those who were determined to undermine their faith and stamp out the Gospel. In light of all that, Paul reveals much that they have to rejoice in and be thankful for. The world may not have received them, but they were blessed beyond measure.

I want to consider the **advantages** of the believer revealed in the text as we think on: **Thanksgiving in Colosse.** There are many similarities to our struggles today, but we too are blessed beyond measure and have much to be thankful for.

The first thing I would like you to see is:

The Comfort of the Believer

Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

This comfort is threefold. Notice:

Our Peace—

Paul speaks of the **peace** the believer has through God and our relationship with Christ. This is very encouraging. Peace literally has the idea of "*being bound, joined, and woven together.*"

I need to point out that Paul spoke of the peace of God. This is different than peace with God. When we were saved, we experienced peace with God. As we live and walk in fellowship with Christ, we enjoy the peace of God.

Isn't that amazing when you really consider it? As our relationship with the Lord grows, we literally become woven together with Him. I know that we are adopted into the family the moment we are saved, but our relationship with the Lord can grow until it seems as if we are one with Him!

Joh 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Eph 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

Looking back to verse 15 of our text. Notice also that we are to **let the peace of God rule in our hearts**. This means we are to completely surrender unto that peace. This word rule has the idea of "*acting as an umpire, to control, govern, and guide.*" When God's peace controls our lives, we can truly enjoy peace that passes all understanding.

The next thing I want you to see is:

Our Position—

faith with a world that needs to hear. We need not be timid or doubtful, but determined to proclaim the Gospel with all the confidence our faith affords.

Deu 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Deu 6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deu 6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

Deu 6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

We've seen 2 links in the Colossian confidence chain. I would like you to see the third link:

C. The Worship—

Look back at verse 16. The last part of that verse say, "**singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**"

This was a culture that was easily swayed. Their allegiance was not to one God, but many gods. All it took was a smooth talker, with cunning words to influence their thinking. The church at Colosse could rejoice because they had been delivered from such ungodly influence. They had put their faith and trust in the risen Lord, the true and living God. They could sing and worship the Lord, knowing assuredly that He was seated at the right hand of God and Lord of their lives! Surely a people who had received so much would have a desire to worship.

The Bible is full of truths. But are they your truths? Have you wrestled with them. Have you hid them in your heart? Are they apart of you or just great words on a page?

Ps.119:105— **Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.**

The Word gives you direction and purpose. It keeps you from grasping at straws. It gives you a know so rather than a hope so faith.

Paul says that another reason for the Collosians confidence in the faith was:

The Witness—

Because the Word of Christ had changed them inwardly, verse 16 shows us an outward result. It says that they should be, **“teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”**

Many in that day sought an intellectual challenge. They were always open to new ideas and different interpretations. They were like many in our day, in that truth was believed to be relative. Paul encouraged the believers that they need not worry about the truth of God's Word. They could stand upon it with full assurance. In fact they were admonished to share the Word with others, and to encourage them through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In essence they were to share their faith in full assurance with a world that desperately needed to hear truth.

We need to embrace that challenge as well today. We live in a culture that is seeking truth. There is so much being shared today, and much of it is conflicting. Many are hungry for genuine truth, something they can believe in and build upon. We have the glorious privilege of sharing the truths of our

Look again to verse 15. It says, **“to the which also ye are called in one body.”**

This must have been especially comforting to the Colossians. They were surrounded by those who scoffed at their faith. They lived in a city that was viewed as inferior to the other surrounding cities. It may have appeared to many that they were outcasts, living beneath the norm of society. But Paul encouraged them to lift up their heads and rejoice because they were part of the body of Christ, the living Lord!

We too may feel out of the loop at times. We may be looked down upon and criticized for our faith. The world simply doesn't understand why we live and behave as we do. We can rejoice for our position in Christ. We may never receive much recognition or respect in this life, but the saved belong to the Lord. We are among the redeemed, headed toward an eternal rest with Christ our Lord.

1Co 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

1Co 12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

1Co 12:20 But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And if we look at Colossians chapter 1 verse 18, it tells us:

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

The saved, my friends, are somebody in Christ Jesus!

We have looked at our peace and our position, look now at:

C. Our Perception –

Verse 15 says, “**and be ye thankful.**”

The world would never know or understand, but the Colossian believers had much to be thankful for. They enjoyed the peace of God, something the world could not claim. They were part of the body of Christ, enjoying all the benefits associated with the Father. Life may have been hard, but they had been blessed. Their physical existence may not have been all they desired, but they were safe and secure in the Lord. They just needed a reminder of all they had received.

It is so easy to focus on the problems of life and find ourselves discouraged. It is easy to question if we will ever make it. We must learn to keep our eyes on Jesus, walking by faith and not by sight. Life is difficult at best, but we have so much to be thankful for. I have been lifted out of sin and placed upon the Rock. I have the blessed privilege of walking and talking with my Lord each day. I am assured of an eternal home in heaven. This is all far more than I deserve, but how could I consider all I have in the Lord and not offer thanksgiving!

Eph 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Look now to verse 16 of our text and consider:

The Confidence of the Believer -

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another

in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Not only were the believers in Colosse comforted, but they had great reason for confidence in the faith. Paul speaks of the reasons for their confidence. Consider:

The Word—

They were surrounded by the accepted philosophies and teachings of the day, but Paul reminded them of what they had received of the Lord. They were not dependent upon the ideas or opinions of mortal men; they had received the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. In fact, they were admonished to “**let the word of Christ dwell richly within them in all wisdom.**”

This speaks of far more than a mere familiarity with the Word. It was to abide with them, literally taking up its abode in their hearts! With the word of Christ within their hearts, there would be no room for the doctrines and heresies of the false teachers and agnostics.

What a challenge for us today. We live in a world that has a wealth of knowledge at its finger tips. We are surrounded by news sources and the latest philosophies of our modern day. We have been entrusted with something far greater than the wisdom of men. We have been given the inspired Word of God. We can live for the Lord, serve Him, and look earnestly toward our future with full assurance and confidence. The opinions of men may change, but the truth of God's Word will stand for eternity!

Ps.119:11—Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.