

Growing to Maturity:

The Message of Colossians— #5

"The Mystery of the Gospel"

Col. 1:24-27

--CEFC 8/2/20; 2/23/03

Topic: Gospel

Do you like mysteries?

There are different kinds of mysteries, of course.

Often we use the term to describe something that is strange or unknown.

There are mysteries of physics, for example—

like, If the universe is expanding, what is it expanding into?

That's a mystery!

And who can begin to fathom the mysteries of quantum mechanics?

And there are baseball mysteries--

with questions things like--

•Why is swinging at but not hitting a baseball

called a "strike" instead of a "miss"?

Have you ever thought about that?

•Or why do baseball managers wear uniforms just like the players?

That's a mystery.

And there are just quirky mysteries out there.

Comedian Steven Wright makes a living pointing them out,

like •Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?

•Why is the hardness of butter proportional to the softness of the bread?

•or, If Barbie is so popular, why do you have to buy her friends?

These are all mysteries.

We use the term “mystery” to describe a literary form—

I think of those Agatha Christie murder mysteries,

in which the Detective Poirot uncovers hidden clues

to solve the case and in the end to reveal the perpetrator.

In a good murder mystery, the clues are all there, tucked away in the text,

and if you just have eyes to see,

you as the reader can solve the case , too.

But that never worked for me.

When I read those books,

I can never solve the mystery.

I would never know who the murderer was

if Poirot hadn't spelled it all out in the end.

Only after it is revealed, can look back at the clues,

and say, “Oh yea, why didn't I see it all along?”

Suddenly, it all makes sense—

and every event in the book takes on a new meaning.

And there is something like that in the way the Apostle Paul uses the word “mystery”

in his New Testament letters—

though for Paul, what is hidden and then made known

is not a murderer, but a Savior.

And the mystery is revealed, not by a clever detective,

but by a gracious God—

the divine Author himself.

Paul often uses the term “mystery” to speak of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In some sense, this gospel is strange and unknowable--

Who would have thought that the Son of God

would come into the world as a baby that was laid in a manger?

Who would have ever conceived of the idea that the Savior of the world

would die as a criminal on a Roman cross?

But for Paul this mystery is not something we can never understand,

No, for Paul this word "mystery" is used of the hidden purposes of God,

which have now been made known in Jesus Christ.

In v. 26 of our passage this morning, he speaks of "**the mystery**

that has been kept hidden for ages and generations,

but is now disclosed to God's holy people"—

that is, to us who belong to Christ.

It is this mystery that Paul has been commissioned by God to proclaim—

as he says in v. 27—"God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles

the glorious riches of this mystery,

which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Or, as he describes it in Eph. 3:6—

**“This mystery is that through the gospel
the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel,
members together of one body,
and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”**

The mystery that has now been revealed is the truth Paul has just declared,
beginning in v. 15--

that “in [Jesus Christ] all things were created:
things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;
all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church;

he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,
so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

and through him to reconcile to himself all things,
whether things on earth or things in heaven,
by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (1:15-20).

Now that is a marvelous mystery, now revealed.

And the knowledge of that mystery changes the way we view everything in life.

As Paul says, “**all things have been created through him and for him.**

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Jesus Christ is what the story of human history is all about.

He holds the key the meaning of it all.

This is the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ,
and it touches on "all things."

This morning we want to explore three aspects of that mystery,
that mysterious plan of God--
that mystery that ought not to be mysterious to us any longer,
if we have understood what God has now done in Christ.

Through Paul's words, we will see that in the light of this mystery
we will have, first, a transformed view of suffering,
then, a new view of who comprises God's people, the church,
and, finally, a firmly grounded hope of future glory.

This message is part of Paul's overall purpose in this letter to the Colossian Christians--
to help them grow to maturity as believers.

So let's learn and listen, so that we can grow, too.

So how was this mystery of the gospel of Christ first revealed to Paul?

You remember his story, don't you?--

how Paul was a young aspiring Pharisee,
living in Jerusalem, zealous for the law of God.

He saw the preaching of the first Christians as an assault on all that he held dear.

Their proclamation that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, the king of Israel,
was nothing but blasphemous.

In his mind, Jesus was a law-breaker—

and he was rightly crucified as a religious traitor,

undermining the foundation of Jewish faith.

and Paul, also called Saul,
did everything in his power to snuff out this treacherous movement.

One day, he was on his way to the city of Damascus
with a letter from the high priest empowering him
to bring back for punishment
any followers of Jesus he might find there.

But in an instant, everything was turned upside down--
everything he believed about his faith,
his convictions about the Jewish law,
his understanding of the nation of Israel,
and God's redemptive purpose and plan--
it was all transformed when God revealed to him this mystery.

A light from heaven flashed around him, and he fell to the ground,
and he heard a powerful voice say to him,
"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4).

"Who are you, Lord?" he asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

It was the mystery of the gospel--
this Jesus had been condemned and crucified by the Roman governor,
at the insistence of the Jewish ruling council--
but Paul now realized that that verdict
had been overturned by a higher court.

This Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah,
for he had been raised by God from the dead,
and was now seated in glory.

More than that--

this Jesus had now identified himself with his followers, his church,
this church that Paul had been so intent on destroying.

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?" he had said.

"In persecuting them, you are persecuting my body on earth."

This event revealed a profound mystery which Paul spent his whole life
reflecting on and proclaiming.

First, our passage this morning tells us

that **this revelation of the mystery of the gospel**
changed Paul's understanding of suffering.

That's why Paul can say in v. 24 of our passage,

"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you."

Paul was in prison when he wrote these words.

Before this, he had been shipwrecked three times,

and flogged frequently,

He had been stoned by a mob and abandoned for dead

and often been hungry and cold.

Instead of being a source of sorrow and complaint,

somehow, Paul could look at these sufferings as a source of *joy*.

"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you."

What a mystery that is!

Especially to us living in the most comfortable culture in all of human history.

Some people in our day would rather die than suffer,

and there is a movement in our society today

to allow doctors to help them do just that.

But Paul says, "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you."

And it's not just here that Paul says that--

Rom. 5:3--"we rejoice in our sufferings,

because we know that suffering produces perseverance;"

And that's not just Paul speaking--

that's a conviction heard throughout the New Testament--

beginning with Jesus himself--

"Blessed are you when people persecute you," he said,

"Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11,12).

In the book of Acts we read that after they had been flogged by the Jewish leaders

for speaking about Jesus,

"The apostles left . . . , rejoicing because they had been

counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (5:41).

James instructs us,

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (1:2,3).

In the letter to the Hebrews, we read,

"You . . . joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property,

because you knew that you yourselves
had better and lasting possessions" (Hebr. 10:34).

How is that possible?

Why is suffering now seen by these Christians,
not as something to avoid at all costs,
but as something to receive with joy?

It's because of the mystery of the gospel.

For in the mystery of the gospel,

Paul discovered that Jesus the Messiah suffered and died,
and his suffering resulted in great glory to God
and in the salvation of the world.

In the mystery of the gospel, Paul discovered that

God can use suffering, and even death,
to achieve his redemptive purposes.

Christian believers follow a crucified Messiah—

and Christians are called by their Lord
to take up their cross and follow him.

That's the mystery of the gospel.

Paul considered it a privilege to participate in God's gospel plan through suffering.

Paul may have had in mind especially the suffering that comes from persecution--

the suffering that results directly from following Christ.

But I don't think it should be restricted to that.

The lines that divide the various kinds of suffering often get very blurry.

Paul speaks of the hardship of Epapraditus as gospel suffering
when he got ill on his way to deliver a gift to Paul
from the church in Philippi (Phil. 3:30).

What about Pastor Samuel Juma, ministering right now in South Sudan and Uganda?

He is there as a minister of the gospel,
but if, while he is there, he contracts malaria (as he has on occasion),
could that be considered suffering for the cause of Christ?
I think so.

Or what if God has called you to work as a teacher at an elementary school.

And if, when you ever get back into the classroom,
you get infected with covid from all the germs that may circulate in the classroom,
could that be considered suffering for the cause of Christ?
I think so.

Suffering for Christ's sake can occur

whenever you are seeking to do his will in the world./

In the mystery of the gospel, Paul discovered that

God uses suffering to achieve his good purposes.

In fact, this mystery of the gospel confirmed in Paul's mind

that God can use **all things** for good

for those who love him

and are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28)./

There is a great lesson here--

and the degree that we learn it

reflects the degree to which we have grasped the mystery of Christ.

Our suffering in this world is not in vain.

Our suffering is not a sign of our abandonment by God.

No, our suffering may be the very means

by which God is working in us and through us

to accomplish his good purpose.

And in that we can rejoice.

Charles Spurgeon said that only those who swim deep in the seas of affliction

find the most precious of pearls.

I like what the Puritan Samuel Rutherford said,

"Whenever I find myself in the cellar of affliction,

I look around for the wine."

Joy in the midst of suffering--

Don't you think that attitude would get some attention in our culture today?

Don't you think it would shine a bright light on the gospel

that makes it possible?

But it was more than just suffering that Paul speaks of here--

it was suffering that he felt was somehow ***for the benefit of*** these Colossians.

"I rejoice in my sufferings ***for you.***"

Again, Paul speaks of this elsewhere--

to the Corinthians he said, "If we are distressed,

it is for your comfort and salvation."

You seem Paul believed that the Lord would comfort him in all his troubles,
so that he could then comfort others in their troubles
with the same comfort he himself had received from God (2 Cor. 1:3,5).

There was nothing that could not be used for good in the providential purposes of God.
God can use our suffering to benefit others,
and for that, we can rejoice.

But there is something else that Paul says here--

something that he doesn't say anywhere else.

In fact, it is something that has baffled his interpreters for nearly 2,000 years.

Paul identifies his sufferings with the sufferings of Christ--

but more than that, he seems to say that what he is suffering

somehow makes up for some deficiency in Christ's sufferings.

**"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you,
and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions."**

What in the world does he mean by that?

I can't tell you for certain what he means,

but I can be certain what he *doesn't* mean.

Paul doesn't mean that Jesus' death on the cross to rescue us from our sins

and to reconcile us to God

was in any way insufficient or inadequate.

I say that, first, because the word "**afflictions**" used here¹

is never used elsewhere in connection with Jesus atoning death on the cross.

And I say that, second, because of what Paul says elsewhere--

even here in this letter.

Back in v. 13, we've already heard him say that

in Christ "**we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**"

And last week in v. 21--"**Once you were alienated from God**

and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death

to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--"

And in chapter two Paul says, "**When you were dead in your sins**

and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature,

God made you alive with Christ.

He forgave us all our sins,

having canceled the written code, with its regulations,

that was against us and that stood opposed to us;

he took it away, nailing it to the cross."

Let there be no mistake,

as it says in Hebrews,

Christ "**has appeared once for all at the end of the ages**

to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26).

Again, "**we have been made holy through**

the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. 10:10).

¹qlivyi".

Paul can add nothing to that perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins.

That's what he doesn't mean,

but what does he mean?

That's a little harder.

I think that what he says here may relate to that first revelation of the risen Christ

that Paul had on the Damascus road.

Remember, Jesus said to Paul, "**Why are you persecuting *me*?**"

Paul understood the mystery that Jesus identified himself with his people.

Their affliction, their suffering, was his.

So Paul is probably referring here to what is still lacking in the afflictions of Christ

through his church.

The church will suffer in this world--Paul knew it well.

In fact, that is one of the first things he was told after his conversion.

A man named Ananias was sent to him by the Lord

"to show him how much he must suffer for the name [of Christ]" (Act 9:16).

In the Book of Revelation, the martyrs under the altar in heaven

cry out for God's judgment on their persecutors,

but they are told **"to wait a little longer,**

until the number of their fellow servants and brothers

who were to be killed as they had been

was completed" (Rev. 6:11).

There was assumed to be some fixed amount of suffering

that was yet to be filled up by the people of God before the Messiah comes again.
And Paul rejoiced at the opportunity he had to endure as much of that as he could
in order to spare others.²

Why should the church have to endure such suffering?

It was precisely because the church continues

the ministry of Jesus himself in the world.

Jesus said, if the world hated me, it will hate you also.

And Paul understood that in order to proclaim

this message of a suffering Messiah with any credibility to the world,

his messengers must be willing to suffer also.

"Suffering," said Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer,

who was executed by the Nazis during WWII,

"Suffering is the badge of the true Christian."

Paul seemed to have endorsed that view.

When he defends his claim to be an apostle of Christ to the Corinthians,

how does he do it?

Does he point to the many churches he has planted?

or to his powerful preaching?

or to the miracles he performed?

No, he points to his sufferings for the cause of Christ.

Paul saw his sufferings as a badge of his faithfulness to Jesus.

They were a means of making Christ known in the world.

²So Wright, Bruce, Caird, O'Brien.

And that suffering came to him particularly in the role he was called to play
as the apostle to the Gentiles.

It was his preaching to non-Jews that particularly upset his Jewish countrymen. /

John Piper,³ writing on this theme, speaks of Joseph Tson,

who was, until 1981, pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Oradea, Romania.

He was exiled by the cruel government of that country

that sought to destroy the church.

Pastor Tson believed that Christ's suffering is for **propitiation**--

that is, for the forgiveness of our sins.

But our suffering, he said, is for **propagation**--

that is, it is for the spread of the good news

that our sins have been forgiven.

Tson writes: "I am an extension of Jesus Christ.

When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body.

It is not my suffering: I only had the honor to share His sufferings."

Therefore, our sufferings testify to the kind of love Christ has for the world.⁴

"What is to give light, must endure burning," Viktor Frankl said.

That's why Paul rejoices, not just *in spite of* his sufferings,

but *in* his sufferings.

³So Piper, *Desiring God*, p. 230.

⁴cf. 2Tim. 2:10--"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

It is his privilege to participate with Christ
in the presentation of the gospel to the world in this way.

A transformation in his view of suffering—

That's the first difference that his mystery of the gospel made in Paul's life.

And I don't think we have fully understood that mystery
until our attitude to suffering has been transformed, too.

Do we run from suffering?

Does suffering cause us to complain and become bitter?

Or do we see it as something that can be received as a part of God's good plan for us--
even as something we endure in fellowship with Christ
and as a means of presenting Christ to the world?

Can we see our suffering as somehow sharing in his suffering,
and that he is sharing in ours?

Has the Lord called you to suffer for his sake?

Are you willing to be consumed
so that Christ might shine?

Let's be honest--this is not something we like to hear.

And I don't know that I'm anxious to register for that course,
but this may be one of the most important lessons
that we as Christians here in West need to learn,
for we do not know what suffering for Christ we may yet need to endure. //

The second way Paul's life was transformed by this mystery now revealed
was in his understanding of the people of God.

Before Paul's encounter with the risen Jesus

Paul took great pride in his Jewish heritage--
"circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel,
of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews,"
he would describe himself (Phil. 3:5).

That was his "tribe," and he was proud of it.

Israel was God's chosen people, the apple of God's eye.

To be a member of Israel was to enjoy the blessing of God,
for to Israel belonged the covenant promises
and circumcision and the law.

This is what made Jesus so dangerous in Paul's view.

Jesus seemed to undermine the law of Moses--
he didn't keep the commandments as the Pharisees understood them.
And for that reason

the law condemned Jesus as a traitor to the traditions of Israel.

So when this One whom the law condemned

appeared in divine glory before him,

Paul suddenly realized that he had been wrong.

The law as a means of fencing off Israel from the rest of the world
was contrary to God's plan.

Paul had missed the clue given to Abraham

that not only was his own nation to be blessed,
but that through them was to come blessing to all nations.

And not only did the Lord instruct Ananias to tell Paul that he must suffer,
but also that he was to tell Paul
and he was to be **"my chosen instrument to carry my name
before the Gentiles"** (Acts 9:15).

Paul came to understand this mystery—
**"This mystery is that through the gospel
the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel,
members together of one body,
and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus"** (Eph. 3:6),
and that through Jesus Christ, the covenant of God, that was exclusive to Israel,
was being extended to the whole world.

The plan of God was not that all the nations
would converge into Jerusalem to join the Jewish nation,
as Paul had once thought,
but that the people of God would now go forth from Jerusalem
into the ends of the earth
proclaiming the good news of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ,
creating a new people from all nations.

God's mysterious plan is the realization
of that vision of heaven found in the book of Revelation
in which John saw **"a great multitude that no one could count,
from every nation, tribe, people and language,**

standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb"

gathered in worship (Rev. 7:9).

This is the mystery of a world-wide people of God.

Paul's understanding of the church

was transformed by this revelation of God in Jesus Christ./

Have you grasped this mystery?

This mystery that God's blessing is not limited to us--

to our church?

or to members of Evangelical Free churches?

or to Americans?

The gospel is not white or brown or black or yellow or anything in between—

It's not Western or Asian or African.

No, God's mysterious plan is to use us to reach out to people

of all kinds, in all places.

The gospel is about a new people united in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is creating for himself a world-wide people, a bride,

"a great multitude that no one could count,

from every nation, tribe, people and language,"

and he gives us the privilege of being a part of that process.

Do you have that kind of church vision,

that kind of mission vision?

That's what the mystery of the gospel gives us.

There is a third dimension to the mystery of the gospel

that Paul mentions here--

and this is at its very core--

v. 27--"God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles

the glorious riches of this mystery,

which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Again, this flows from Paul's encounter with the risen Christ.

Jesus identifies himself with his people, the church--

they are his body.

The church is the physical manifestation of the presence of Christ in the world.

The mystery of the gospel is that, through the Spirit,

Jesus Christ actually comes to dwell within his people.

This is a mystery of glorious riches--Christ in us—the hope of glory.

Jesus Christ shares his own life with us.

Over the years, I have seen this reality in the lives of many people.

Let me tell you the story of Jukka Kolhonen.

I got to know Jukka through his wife Alethea

who was a member of our church for many years.

Born in Finland, Jukka was a vibrant and active man--

that is, until the effects of the crippling disease Multiple Sclerosis

began to take its toll.

He started having symptoms in his early thirties,
though he didn't learn of that diagnosis for some twenty years.

In his forties, he started have trouble walking,
and he began the physical therapy that he would continue for the rest of his life.

In his fifties, his mobility diminished, and he just held on to Alethea,
until he finally got a cane and then a walker.

In his last ten years or so, he was hardly out of a wheel chair.

We all saw his body begin to fade away.

But in the last six months, while his body deteriorated,
I saw something else happen to Jukka Kolhonen--
I saw his spirit, his inner man, blossom with new life and vitality.

It's hard to describe his spiritual transformation.

You would probably best use the expression "born again"
to communicate what happened to him.

He had grown up as a Lutheran churchman,
and he always remembered the hymns of his youth.

But as an adult, his church involvement was minimal.

Alethea joined the church, but Jukka didn't.

I only saw him here at a few special occasions.

But we prayed that the Lord would awaken his heart.

And in the last few years, things had begun to change.

Because of his condition,
he couldn't be involved in the church physically,
but he began to listen to biblical preaching on the radio;
he and Alethea were reading the Bible together;
I had some good discussions with him about the message of the Bible
and what happens when you die.

And when I saw him in one of his stays in the hospital,
he told me that he felt the presence of Jesus with him--
it was very encouraging to hear him talk that way.

On one visit, when Susan was with me,
she referred to Jesus living within her heart,
and this got Jukka thinking.

Then Pastor Jerry Hall, the former pastor here, visited him,
and Jukka mentioned this idea of Jesus living in a person's heart.
Pastor Hall directed him to the Scripture, like our passage this morning,
that speaks of Christ living in the believer.

Pastor Hall spoke of opening your heart to him,
of receiving him personally as your Savior and Lord--
and through faith, coming to know that you have eternal life.

Pastor Hall then asked Jukka if he would like to place his faith in Jesus in that way,
and he said Yes.

And in a moment of prayer he opened his heart to Christ.

What a change I saw--

Jukka wanted to tell everybody about what had happened to him--

By the mysterious work of the Spirit of God,

Jesus was living in his heart.

Suddenly he had an excitement in being a Christian--

he wanted desperately to worship with God's people.

He had an assurance that he would live with Christ forever.

What a joy it was for several of us from the church

to share in the Lord's Supper with Jukka by his bed

just a couple of weeks before he died.

Jukka had a hope, a glorious hope—the hope of glory with Christ.

Paul spoke of it in Rom. 8: 10--"**But if Christ is in you,**

your body is dead because of sin,

yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you,

he who raised Christ from the dead

will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit,

who lives in you."

In those last days, I saw Jukka's condition as a picture of every Christian--

he was a new man, a new creation of the Spirit

living in an old, mortal body of flesh;

he was caught between two ages.

But he was set free from that body of flesh,
and he will receive a new body, a heavenly body, a glorious body--
a body that will be fit for that new age--
the age of the Spirit--
that new heaven and new earth
where there is no Multiple Sclerosis—
no more suffering, or pain, or grief, or tears. /

That's what the Apostle Paul is talking about
when he speaks of the glorious riches of this mystery,
which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

This is the greatest mystery of all--
that by the Spirit, Christ can come to live within us--
to give us a new life,
to transform us from the inside--
to make us into the people he created us to be—
giving us a down payment now for that glory to come.
Christ in us is our hope of glory!

This is the mystery that has now been revealed.
It was revealed when Jesus Christ rose as the firstborn from the dead.

This is the mystery—
the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ—
that transforms our view of all of life.

Have you understood it?

Have you realized what this means?

Have you received it--

better, have you received *him*--that is, Christ?

For this mystery comes to us in the form of a person.

I say to you this morning—

wherever you may be—

turn to him in faith--

and know his gracious, loving, and powerful presence in your life--

Christ in you—that's our hope of glory.

Prayer—

Benediction:

Rom. 16:25 Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel,
the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ,
in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,
but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings
by the command of the eternal God,
so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience of faith —
to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Growing to Maturity:

The Message of Colossians" #5

Aug. 2, 2020

"The Mystery of the Gospel"

Col. 1:24-27

One thing that strikes you very clearly when you read the gospels is how difficult it was for everyone to understand what God was doing. Who was this Jesus, and how did he fit into the divine plan? The knowledge of the "secrets of the kingdom of God" was given only to those within an inner circle, and even they couldn't grasp what it all meant. Only after the resurrection did it all begin to make sense to Jesus' followers.

This morning we look at Paul's understanding of this "mystery" of the gospel, and consider three areas in which it makes a big difference.

I. The Mystery of Joy in Suffering

"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you" (v. 24)

II. The Mystery of a World-wide People

"God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles

the glorious riches of this mystery" (v. 27)

III. The Mystery of a Glorious Hope

“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (v. 27)

Sermon Response:

"The Mystery of the Gospel"

Col. 1:24-27

- How does Paul use the term "mystery"? Why is this important? What important aspects of that mystery does he mention in this passage?
- Read other passages that speak of joy in the midst of suffering--Rom. 5:3; Matt. 5:11,12; Acts 5:41; Heb. 10:34. What do they have in common? Why should someone rejoice in suffering pain or hardship? How did you last respond to a painful circumstance in your life?
- In v. 24 Paul speaks of "filling up" what was "lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions." can't it mean that there was something deficient in the atoning work of Christ? What could Paul be speaking of here?
- Why is the inclusion of the Gentile such an important part of the mystery of the gospel in Paul's mind? What difference does that make for us?
- Read v. 27. How is "Christ in you" your "hope of glory"? How does that hope make a difference in your behavior? in your use of money? in your patience in affliction?