

Fall Retreat 2022: Sunday Morning Service

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Preacher: Bauer Evans

[0 : 00] Hey, I've been asked by many of you to tell some Will stories, so can we do that? Do we have to record this?

Yeah, turn off the stream. And he... Love you, buddy.

Love being your dad. Love being your dad. Open your Bibles to Colossians. Chapter 2, I called an audible last night.

Matt and Sean affirmed it, that we'd move away from the mission mindfulness and just look at a message from our recent series from Colossians that will fuel our worship of Christ, both this morning and hopefully in everyday life.

And I hope it encourages you. I hope it inspires you. I hope it equips you. And I hope you leave here feeling more treasured by Jesus than when we began.

[1 : 04] I'll leave my glasses to read this. Colossians 2, 6 to 15. Could I have someone volunteer to do that? Great. Thank you. Colossians 2, 6 to 15.

Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

[2 : 18] This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Colossians 2, verses 6 to 15.

Thank you. It's God's word. Thanks be to God for his word. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for how you have already made your presence known to us through the reading of scripture, through the songs which point to and unite our hearts in Christ's beauty and sufficiency and glory.

Now we pray, Lord, by the work of your spirit, through the ministry of your word, through the weakness of my speech, Lord, draw out our faith, our affections, our minds, our attentions to him.

Lord, he is what we long for and desire. Would you satisfy that longing? In Jesus' name we pray. And everyone said? Amen. Amen.

We spent the summer of 2022 in a series we called The Core, Keeping Jesus at the Center. And it was a series based on, expositionally based on one of Paul's smaller letters, the letter to the Colossians.

[3 : 43] It's one of my favorite Pauline letters because of the punch it packs and the emphasis it brings to both the supremacy and sufficiency and beauty of Christ, but also what I've been talking about like a broken record, our connection to him through faith and what we call union or communion with Christ.

In other words, Jesus is the core. And Paul hammers that nail every line of his precious epistle.

The challenge of my life, maybe it's your life too, is to figure out how to live with a conscious awareness that Jesus is the core.

And this book has helped us focus on that. So there was an illustration I used in the beginning of the series that I encouraged our church to use in conversations with neighbors that they are building a relationship with when spiritual topics come to mind.

And you're at a place in that relationship where you can begin to invite and offer an alternative perspective, which this is a whole other series.

[5 : 13] Friendship in the Bible is one of the themes in Proverbs. That means it is an aspect of fearing the Lord and walking in wisdom, but it's an art. It's not a science. And yet, clearly, to be someone who fears God, you demonstrate in your friendships with people outside the covenant in Proverbs and people inside the covenant in the Old Testament, wisdom.

So I've used this. I've tested this. It seems to pack a punch. I'll try it with you. And you can decide whether it helps you think about not only Jesus as the core, but how do we live in a way consciously of that as we're loving our neighbors and reaching to them for Christ.

In 1879, the USS Jeanette was captained by Lieutenant George DeLong. Any of you heard of him?

I think there's a special in National Geographic about him. Lieutenant George DeLong was an Arctic explorer. We could have invited him to Wendell this morning.

There was frost on our car and said, this is sort of like the Arctic. And they set out on an expedition to sail to the North Pole, seeking to reach it by ship via the Pacific Ocean and through the Bering Straits.

[6 : 34] George DeLong. George DeLong's entire expedition goal was to reach the North Pole by ship based on one particular map. The map suggested there was a thermometric gateway that had been produced by a warm Pacific current and that this gateway would open up at a particular time of year.

And what you would find at the North Pole was not a sea of ice, but rather there was this fair weather passage that ships or ships could pass through to reach the North Pole.

Sadly, DeLong discovered, as did his crew, that the map was completely inaccurate. There was no such passage.

There was no thermometric gateway. DeLong was a recognized, celebrated, credentialed explorer.

And so this astonishing mistake in judgment is only, ironically, and compared with his credentials, all the more tragic.

[7 : 52] Their ship, of course, became stranded in the ice. Their expedition became a fight for survival. Sadly, by the end, half of the crew perished, as did DeLong.

All because they weren't following a map that was accurate. Friends, on phones and in our world and voices in our heads, there are all kinds of maps, competing maps that say this is where your life is found.

Follow this way. Here is a life worth living. Here is a path worth taking. In the church of Jesus Christ today, were I to flip on YouTube or scan a podcast or even go to a Christian bookstore, there would be a variety of maps saying this is the way, this is the path where true life is found.

In our culture, there are various and a variety of orientations that are held out saying this is the way you need to live. Here is found true freedom.

This is what the path you need to take. Here is your satisfaction. Whether we realize it or not, and I put myself into this illustration, we are all following a map.

[9 : 29] We are all making choices, small and significant, based on the map that says this is the way I want to live. In fact, whether we realize it or not, the hope of the gospel is that you can bank eternity on Christ and the map he lays out.

But I am wondering, for myself and for you, when it comes to the everyday conscious choices we make, what is the map of your life?

What is the map you are trusting in? What is the map that guided your choices to come to this retreat? And what will be the map that you bring up, so to speak, on Monday as you begin a new week?

What is it that steers the orientation of your life? What is it that steers the orientation of my life? Colossians provides a unique map.

Four chapters. And it is the way Jesus Christ has provided through which all of life makes sense.

[10 : 41] This is the way to view the world. When William, Bennett, Jacqueline, and Brittany took driving lessons at the TDA or whatever the name of the school, TDA had a reputation, that's our driving school, that if you took their school, they all but guaranteed you would pass the driver's test.

It's a pretty good deal. I don't think they went so far as to say we'll refund you the money, but they had a reputation that their students never failed the driving test.

I shared this recently with my high school students, and they were like, are you being paid for this? No, no, there's no reason I'm sharing this story with you. I don't care what driving school you take. Just don't hit me in the parking lot once you get your driver's license.

Most dangerous moment in my life is Friday afternoon at 2.35 as I'm pulling out, and high schoolers are going to their weekend. They're like running me over. But that's another story.

There's one particular part of the driver's test at the Taunton DMV where driver's testers triptically fail, and that's, I believe, the three-point turn where you reach that part, and you say, stop the car.

[12 : 01] Okay, I want you to park the car, bring it alongside the curb. And I was in the car for one of those tests, and our student driver went through this ritual, stops and adjusts the rearview mirror, puts his or her hand behind the headrest, cocks the head, you know, and holds it for like two seconds, brings the head around, now looks in the other rearview mirror, and then slowly but gradually makes the turn and executes this flawless three-point turn.

Driver, evaluator, doesn't say anything. Person finishes the test, pulls it into the parking lot, and with a big smile, she says to, this was Bennett's test, you passed.

Then she said this, did you have Mr. Hillsdale as your driver instructor? Well, yes, I did. Do you know in 15 years of working for the RV, I have never failed one of his students?

And I said, well, why not? I think you should fail more of these, these shuckalocks. Do you see how they drive on Friday afternoon out of the high school parking lot?

They all follow the same steps when it comes to the three-point turn, and they execute it flawlessly. That's a good teacher.

[13 : 32] Jesus is a good teacher. Paul's a good teacher. He's been sent by the ascended Lord as an apostle to give us more than driving skills, but a map in four short chapters that covers the entire Christian life, our entire life.

And so it heeds us to give attention to it and to make efforts to bring it into everyday life.

I'm going to give you my closing comment now, not because I'm closing, but I'm giving you the verse. I'm going to put my finger on the verse so you can hold me accountable, because this, I believe, is the, if you will, the imperative of the passage.

It's one verse, and you're going to find it in verse 12, which was read so beautifully moments ago, where Paul writes, speaking of what has happened to us when we put our trust in Christ.

Colossians, these were new believers. Paul has never been to this church. He is sending this letter to them to encourage their faith in Christ, and he says this in verse 12, having been buried with Christ in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith.

[14 : 54] There it is. Through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. We are called to walk with Christ through faith in the fullness of who he is.

We are called to walk with Christ through faith in him and the fullness of who he is. That's Colossians.

That's the emphasis from beginning to end. It's through faith that we walk with Christ, of course. That's how someone becomes a Christian. But no, it's through faith that we walk with him in this map that he's provided, in the fullness of him.

Let's look at the passage. I'll move through it efficiently. Hopefully, this will leave you with a sense of how much you are treasured because of him, but also what a privilege it is to live our life in Christ for him.

Verses 6 through 8, To receive Christ is to be united with Christ every day. Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him.

[16 : 13] Verse 7, Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, there it is again, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

To receive Christ is to be united with Christ. There we go. I have more notes this morning than your vacuum cleaner has attachments, so give me a second to figure out what I'm going to need.

There we go. There we go. Ready to roll. Paul is teaching in this passage the grammar of the gospel.

There's a grammar to the gospel. That's what your English teacher or your mom or dad, if you were homeschooled, or I don't think I learned English grammar until high school because I didn't listen for the first nine or ten years of my public school education.

There is a logic in writing, and there is an order that it follows, and there is a grammar to make syntax and sentences stand up.

[17 : 30] Well, there's a grammar in the gospel, too, and I often confuse it, and that is that something is true and is said about us, which is rooted in grace, before we are then given a demand to then apply or walk out what is true and said about us because of that grace.

So the gospel grammar is simply this. The gospel gives you grace. Amen? God's riches at Christ's expense, as Jerry Bridges defined it for me 20 years ago in his marvelous little book, Discipline of Grace.

But often with that grace that we receive unconditionally through faith in Christ, righteousness in him, dwelt by the Spirit, adoption to his family, and inheritance that Christ is one, but we receive and enjoy with him, seated with him in spiritual places, on and on and on, there are always demands of the gospel.

We call them commands of the gospel. And we need to keep both, both distinct, but also together, because they're not separated. It's the grammar of the gospel.

And you can determine, not a trinity, but you can determine if a preacher or a pastor or a YouTuber or a podcaster or an influencer or whatever voice is out there, are they separating the grammar of the gospel, or are they keeping it together?

[18 : 53] That usually means they're either drifting from Scripture or they're centering their influencing. So the grammar of the gospel that we see here is that when we received Christ, when we put our trust in Christ in response to the simple message of the gospel news that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, perfect, holy, blameless, willingly, joyfully offers himself on the cross as our substitute, as our, if you will, Isaiah's servant, the Lamb of God taking upon himself our sins, its shame, its guilt, its condemnation, the wrath it deserved.

When Jesus did that, when he died on the cross, shedding his blood, giving his life for the forgiveness of sinners' sins, and was raised again triumphantly, which we celebrate in these songs, that he died and rose and is now seated.

When we hear that news and we are called to turn from putting our trust in ourselves, from putting our hope in what we have replaced God with and repenting of those sins and idolatries and by God's grace, repent and through a change of mind and heart, say, Lord, I believe you, I surrender to you, I commit myself to walk with you.

When we do that, and we've put our trust in Christ, Paul says we are rooted, verse 6, and built up in him.

Paul says we are established in him, in the faith. So we should be abounding in thanksgiving.

[21 : 01] There are these weeds at Crossway Church 282 called, are they called trees of heaven, honey? They're really like trees of death.

And I've been pulling them out of the ground now for, I don't know, we've been in the building 10, 11 years. They look, I first realized they're not poison ivy, I'm highly allergic, poison ivy, I'm sure you are.

So, I did have permission then to pull them. But then someone who actually knows something about nature, which I know very little, said, you know, these are called trees of heaven because they grow, like, almost like a tree if you don't pull them.

And I smiled and said, well, I've been pulling them for 10 years. I've been pulling them, you know, longer than you've been pulling these trees of heaven. I don't know what they're called, but they don't stand a chance with me around. I've run the lawnmower over them.

I've sung as I whip them with the weed whacker. I mean, I'm a tree of heaven exterminator. She gets that smirk and says, this is where you need to listen.

[22 : 08] Oh. Apparently, without getting too much into the weeds on this illustration, the roots of these weeds, it's called a soft root.

And so, when you yank them from the top, you know what I'm talking about? They pull down and they just expand out. And so, it's like rabbits.

They multiply. You pull up the one and the roots pull down. They shoot out two shoots and they've got a pretty, pretty good survival instinct. And I said, oh, that's why we get more of them.

And so, she says, here, let me show you how to do this. So, she then pulls out of her back pocket. Not really. She had it outside. She pulls out this, like, four-foot pitchfork. And she starts pitchforking into the ground where, you know, mulch ground where these weeds of heaven are.

And, I mean, she's going down a good two feet. And lo and behold, I mean, this is like that thing in Stranger Things that grows in the basin. What's that called? What's it called?

[23 : 16] It's a plant, right? In Stranger Things. I only watch one season. Well, whatever. There's, there's like this whole root network of trees of heaven. I mean, the roots are thick. And there's the little root that I cut off at the half.

And you can almost see it moving in that moment, right? I mean, it's moving. It's got a mind of its own. It's mocking me. I said, ah, you're an idiot. You know, you lose again. And Rock takes that pitchfork and she digs it down and we grab that root that's way down there and we pull that sucker out.

And man, the trees of heaven realize they have met Galadriel. You know, she is, she is wasting them. I know I'm mixing, but if you're a Christian, right?

someone has rooted you in Christ. Someone has established you.

Yes, before you were a Christian, the invitation was clear. Come to me. Repent of your sins. Put your trust in Jesus. But when you walk through that door and you turn around and look at the door you walked through, it now says, you were rooted and established in him.

[24 : 35] And this is where it really gets crazy. Before the foundation of the world was laid. Hmm. Hmm. I came to school one day.

Someone knew I'd been giving a sermon and a fellow faculty member or staff or I don't think it was a student came up to me and they were very excited to share with me what their sermon was about. And so I, or message, they went to church and I'm going to run into this.

I'm sure this is just not working for me. Do you know if I'm amazing? But, and I said, what was it about? And they said, my pastor told me, and I'm like hanging, you know, give it to me that I'm the hero of my story.

I'm looking around. I didn't ask what church they go to, but I was, who's the hero of your story? I'm thinking, here she misspoke.

They're going to say Christ, right? You know, God, Yahweh, something, Elohim. I was such a good message. Three points, simple, and a closing song.

[25 : 48] We're the hero of our stories. And because I'm not very subtle, I basically said, did he or she preach from the Bible?

What passage of scripture was that? You know, and the person like cited a scripture, I said, hmm. I said, I think we should talk about that. I mean, I can't. Homer, bell's going to ring and, you know, and don't listen to my sermons, but I later met when I said, I am not the hero of my story.

Christ is the hero of our stories, right? And this person agreed, but that was the message that day. You're in control. You need to take control. You need to be at the core of change in your life.

You're at the core of any future hope you can have. You need to get busy. You cannot reconcile that with when we receive Christ and walk in Christ, we are rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

In other words, Christian, there are only two realities. There are people that are in Christ this morning according to the New Testament and there are people in Adam. People in Christ have been rooted and established in Him by grace through faith in the gospel.

[27 : 16] And people in Adam, as Paul says in Ephesians 2, verse 3, are children of wrath. They are dead in their sins. So the question that Paul then wants to ask them as he moves forward in the text is, so why add anything to Him?

Why add anything to Him that diminishes Him or takes away from Him or substitutes with Him? Christ plus this.

Christ is the Christian life. Let's look at the next section. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ.

For in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily and you have been filled in Him who is the head of all rule and authority.

there seemed to be what Paul calls a philosophy, a worldview, a way of thinking that was capturing the Colossians' attention.

[28 : 29] See the word in verse 6 or verse 8, captive. That's when someone who is walking with Christ, literally their attention is kidnapped, taken captive by a teaching, by a premise or a promise envisioned with an orientation that may feel like a small change but in its substance is like that tree of heaven.

It's got a deep root that's going to lure them away from Christ. I was a new believer at Bucknell struggling with understanding grace and faced with my own slow growth and sanctification.

I had enormous issues. I was a heavy drinker in high school. I was a libertine in all my relationships and here I am a new Christian. I know I've been born again but I'm really struggling to walk with Christ and I met some sincere Christians one day as I was walking in Lewisburg and they seemed like I thought I was radical.

That's why I called myself that. I'm a radical Christian. I'm not just a Christian. I'm radical. Have you met me? We're radicals. They told me in so many words that my Bible was corrupt.

That it was full of teachings and verses that aren't in the original text and they invited me to come into their service that Saturday evening.

[30 : 06] We met on Saturday evening so I said why would I go to that? Because I go to New Covenant in Lewisburg and we meet on Saturday and he says well because your Bible is false. now I'm not discerning and I'm just like it is?

Well what's wrong with it? And they began to tell me things that the Bible says that are not true and things that I need to do that their Bible their scripture says are the truth and it really I don't know why it really messed me up.

I began to become suspicious and doubt not only like my scriptures which that's deadly but that then the people that I'm walking with they aren't really true Christians and my pastor I loved Randy he was such a gentle soul and he was so faithful asked me out Randy sometime how the Lord used him and blessed him as a faithful pastor extraordinary story and it took me captive it was a momentary interaction but I was like six months in detox over that because now and this is for Google it's for the internet that's how old I am I just was like suspicious that God first and the scripture second and that there was another way there was another voice that I was missing out but Paul says that we can discover fullness of spiritual life in Christ that's what he says and then he tells them in him verse 9 so that we would we would not feel the need to look anywhere else in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily and you have been filled in him listen

I'm on my third cup of coffee I feel a little empty but spiritually speaking I am full so I want to grow into that fullness I want God to open the eyes of my heart through his word I want I want there to be prayers praying I want to pray I want to I want to know the spiritual life that I seek that is found in Christ for it is Christ who has been made head of all rule and authority and then Paul goes on to say as if to say from beginning to end from beginning to end not only in your life but my life but from beginning to end in the story of creation fall redemption and consummation it's always been about Christ so when we make it not about him we've missed the picture all together I used to think the picture was are you charismatic or not I remember telling Wayne Grudem that

Wayne I'm having trouble with those cessationists they're driving me crazy and I'm in pastor's college I should have been kicked out of school right away since I struggle without two power but there aren't two categories of Christian we're in Christ please pray for me because I love to categorize Christians and I'm always in the categories that's good favorable right they voted a certain way or they didn't they have certain cultural issues that define them or they're not they root for the Red Sox praise God you're a Yankees fan but I'm missing the picture altogether for Christians the picture is we are filled in him and then Paul goes on to say in verse 11 this is my second point

[34 : 12] I think third point my second point was to be united with Christ to be filled with Christ to be united with Christ verse 11 12 is to receive all the benefits of his death and resurrection to receive all the benefits verse 11 in him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ verse 12 having been buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised Christ from the dead you see that word circumcision Jesus was circumcised this was the law at eight days I believe for a Jewish boy and he suffered right in that act of circumcision the removal of skin and there was blood and it's a foreshadowing of the cross that he will as our

Messiah our representative literally have his body torn from him as he bears the sins of the world and shed his blood and experience not only spiritual not only physical agony but spiritual agony as he becomes the lamb whose death satisfies the judgment of God in him it says we were circumcised in his death somehow we were included we're distinct from Christ he's unique but somehow in the mystery of our union when he died as our representative wasn't you over there somewhere and him we are somehow in the mystery of that union included in that I can't figure that out but Paul says it repeatedly in Romans talks about it again in Ephesians not only that but then it says having been buried with him in baptism he was baptized by

John the Baptist and so it signifies not only that he kept the law as our representative and fulfilled the law as our perfect representative but that he would die and in him we were buried with him too so that when he was raised by faith through the powerful working of God we were somehow raised with him too there is in Colossians and other passages this mystery that to be filled with Christ when we trust in him is to fellowship with him in a profound way in other words before we were in Adam and we shared nothing with him now we're in Christ and we somehow have shared everything with him so that our fellowship with him may be full you were delivered from the dominion and reign of sin

I was delivered not from its presence but from its power authority and rule over me set free to live for the Lord when he was and so when my conversion occurred it brings kind of full circle this spiritual reality it says as well that we are forgiven of our sins through the canceling of our record of debt and you were dead verse 13 in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our tresses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands this he set aside kneeling to the cross I love Matt what you do in your services somehow we have to benefit from your example I love that you take time to assure us that our sins are forgiven because most of the

Christians I'm pastoring and myself as well do not live in the good of that assurance they live in the good or the reality of I'm a sinner I've sinned I'm sinning constantly now there's truth in that because we're broken we're fallen but there needs to be space and places to rejoice in I'm forgiven I'm free somebody say hallelujah because I'm in Christ I'm in Christ I'm free from guilt I'm free from shame I've been delivered from my past not its influence perhaps but certainly the charges last week I'm on my high school reunion I'm the only Christian on the call they think I'm a wacko they still like me I've shared gospel with all of them some of them more than once they still think I'm a crazy man but when

[40 : 00] I have the opportunity I don't because at least they have heard the gospel to announce to them yeah I'm a sinner I've done I've done things I shouldn't have done and you know some of those things some of you participated in them some of them I did them to you and my past is but I'm forgiven there's no shame there's no guilt there's no condemnation I I think a majority of Christians do not benefit from the assurance that you guys provide in your liturgy that when you declare through faith in Christ we're forgiven we can walk differently yeah there's still growth to do there's progressive sanctification but the guilt and the debt and the shame it's gone because I'm in Christ I have a new identity I have a new identity and so do we it's glorious because the charges against me and against you were nailed and we can choose to live out of that fullness of grace and then he talks freedom through

Christ and I'll end with this that he's disarmed the rulers and authorities those spiritual realities that were stacked up against us he has broken them he has defeated them he has brought them to open shame these forces that bind people in their guilt and shame it's amazing what Jesus Christ has done for us so as we conclude at least my portion of this tree the question that's begging to be answered by you with the help of the Holy Spirit is what fills your life and what fills mine is it Christ if it is then all of the riches of his grace should be invading our life so that we with him would grow into this progressive understanding and not be taken captive by the maps and orientations and philosophies that would rob him of his centrality we've been given the map and it's almost just too audacious to believe but by

God's grace and for his glory Trinity may we together take hold of this map that leads us to Christ because it does lead us somewhere do you know where it leads us it leads us to Jesus and that's why God brought you to Trinity yeah it was fun seeing your friend get mayonnaise all over them yesterday I agree but even better oh Lord we are in you you are in us we pray open the eyes of our heart to see even more clearly not the foggy windshield of day to day life as real as those are not the not the guilt or shame of the past or present but the new creation of being hidden in you

Colossians 3 of being filled with Christ Colossians 2 of having the hope of glory Christ in us that we would see him Jesus this salvation you have provided it's not just plentiful it is blessed so we thank you for this grace Lord we abound in thanksgiving for your mercy in light of your cross and we pray Lord we would be mission mindful as we are with others this week that this awaits them help us help us Lord to display your character as well as in our words point clearly to the hope of our salvation we pray this in Jesus name and everyone said amen