

## Moving Forward – Week 4

### Title: A Christian's Job Description

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Good morning, Mercy Church! I hope you are doing well. My name is Scott Urbanek and I'm the College and Missions Pastor at Mercy Church. I'm excited that you are worshipping with us today.

One of the things that we've been discussing as a staff is that we believe that this is an important moment for the church. I think that one of the really important things that Covid-19 is reminding us of is the importance of having a clear understanding of what the church is called to and more specifically, what each individual Christian is called to. As a church, we do not want to measure our success by our seating capacity, we want to be a church that measures success by our sending capacity. We want every member to see and understand their calling to be "sent" into their homes, neighborhoods, city, and the world with the gospel. But if we're going to do that, every member needs to see that Jesus did not save you so that you can occupy a seat on Sunday mornings. No, Christ brought us out of darkness to then send us with the gospel right back into that darkness. Right now, churches are seeing whether or not they are too weekend focused. And if they are too weekend focused, they will need to adjust in order to thrive in what will be the new normal for the church. At Mercy, do we want to have great

worship experiences on Sunday's? Yes! But its not where we want to measure success.

As a college pastor, one of the biggest lies I see incoming freshman believing is that a walk with Jesus is boring and generally unexciting. And it leads them to run after the things of the world because the world often times telling them a better story than the church has. When we look at scripture we see anything but a boring story. Our place in God's story is exciting, riveting, and eternally fulfilling. You don't get the picture of weekend only Christians, you get the picture of every day Christians leveraging all of their lives for the sake of God's mission.

So, today, in Colossians 1:24-2:5, we are going to see that the Apostle Paul's gives all believers a job description. In this section, we're going to take a look at this job description and see what it means for our lives.

let's remember the context from last week. Vs. 15-20 we saw who Jesus is, vs. 21-23 we say who we are in Christ, and today in vs. 24 and following, we see what our job description is in light of what was just said. With that let me pray as we begin...

#### 1. Willing to suffer for Jesus. (vs. 24)

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's

afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

Right here, Paul, rejoices in his suffering for the sake of other people and for Christ. Paul rejoices. There is only one explanation for why someone would rejoice in their suffering for their faith. He loves Jesus. He just loves him. According to Paul, Jesus is worth suffering for. And he did suffer, shipwrecks, beatings, controversies, imprisonment, snake bites, betrayal from friends. I love that he mentioned that his suffering was for their sake. Think about what Paul's suffering did for the Colossian church. It empowered them. His sacrifice for Christ spurred them on. Church, our suffering for Jesus will encourage the brothers and sisters around you. Fruit came from Paul's suffering. His suffering leads to their faith and our suffering encourages our brothers and sisters.

He said he suffered in his flesh because he is **“filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,”**. That's a strange second half this this verse isn't it? Filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? What does that mean? Let me start by saying that this verse doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that Christ's atoning work on the cross was deficient. That would contradict everything just said in verses 15-23. No,

he's saying that what was lacking in Christ's afflictions was the future suffering of believers who will suffer for the sake of Christ. Paul is telling us that if the church is going to advance, it will only happen through suffering. Christ's afflictions were for our salvation, our afflictions will come for sharing Christ.

We shouldn't be surprised by this. If you follow Jesus, you will suffer for his name. In Christ we are in fellowship with him in his suffering. Philippians 3:10 says this as well, **“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings...)** Paul counted it an honor to suffer for Jesus. We see the truth spelled out a little more in Revelation chapter 6 where we see that Christian suffering is part of God's sovereign plan for the salvation of the world. In this text we see martyred saints asking God when he would avenge them and bring justice for their martyrdom. And he told them to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters should be complete. The path to fulfilling the great commission is suffering. Mercy Church, we would be fooling ourselves if we think that we will make a dent in the darkness of our city and the world without sacrifice and suffering. I'm not saying we need to have Martyrdom complexes, no that's foolish. But I am saying that we need bold faith. Sacrificial faith. The kind of faith that will not only lead to the gospel advancing, but the kind of faith that will spur on our brothers and sisters in the church! Remember what

Paul said, he was suffering **For the sake of his body, that is the church**. So, not only does Paul's sacrifice advance the gospel, it also spurs on the church. Some of the proudest moments I've had in my life is when I see my friends take a stand for Jesus when I know it will cost them. Whether it's sharing the gospel with family members, I've heard of mom's sharing the gospel with mom's on playdates, I've heard of business women & men taking a stand for truth when it might alienate them in the workplace. And when we see my friends doing this, it gives me boldness. Well, if they can do that, I can be bold in my situation as well.

## 2. Make disciples, not converts. (vs. 25-28a).

<sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,<sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom,

Paul says he is now a steward of this ministry. This means that something has been entrusted to him. What was entrusted to him was the word of God. And his task was to make the word of God fully known. Before you think

that this is only a job for the professionals like Paul, or for preachers. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5 that we are all ambassadors for Christ. We are all ministers of reconciliation. If we're all ministers then that means we have a ministry. Our ministry is the message of Christ. Therefore, if you are a Christian, you are a steward.

One of the reason's this is important is because Paul is giving us a picture of what our discipleship should look like. Paul said he was a steward. That's who we all are, we are stewards. The minute you believe the gospel, you are now a steward of that message. This is big! In verse 25 it says that the stewardship he was to take on was to **make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints**. His job wasn't just to evangelize, it was to teach the scriptures. That's the job of all our discipleship! It's not enough to get them saved, we need to teach them how to follow Jesus through God's word. Paul is simply following Christ's call to us in Matthew 28... Go make disciples of all nations baptizing them... teaching them to observe all that he's commanded. We have to teach people the scriptures. Listen, it is not enough to share the gospel! That's a great start. We have to make disciples. When you look at the word "make" that means that disciples don't just happen. They are molded and crafted.

This is why we have started discipleship groups in our Community Group ministry. It's because we want all of

you to know what discipleship looks like and how to do it with other people. Church, my hope is that we have dozens of you reach out to Pastor Joey saying, “Me, please! I want to make disciples. Pastor Joey, mobilize me to start a community group.” We want little disciple-making hubs all over our city. If we get this, church... Look out! There is nothing more dangerous than a disciple who knows and obeys the scriptures and teaches others how to do the same! We have to get there. Church let’s commit to this. Making disciples is a hill worth dying on.

What are we to teach them? We are to teach them this mystery. Now this mystery isn’t a mystery the same way we think of it. The Bible is not a Sherlock Holmes mystery. It’s a mystery in that for thousands of years, the Old Testament was pointing to a messiah that was to come. This mystery is a mystery that climaxes with Christ. For Israel, some of the plans they knew in the Old Testament were hidden until Christ. This mystery is that this Bible is one unified whole. It’s one unified story looking to and pointing toward the person and the work of Jesus. One of the many reasons I’m thankful for being at Mercy Church is that we try and give you a healthy diet of Old Testament and New Testament. I actually went and looked at it only one other time have I preached from an epistle. Church, we believe that the Bible is a unified whole, and you can’t understand the OT without Jesus. And you can’t understand Jesus fully without the OT.

So jumping back into our passage – 27 To them that God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of this glorious mystery. We need to understand the OT to grasp the full weight of what Paul is saying. In Genesis, God chose Abraham and made a promise to set Israel apart. They would be his people, and he would be their God. But Israel took this further than God intended. They became ethnocentric, thinking they were better than every other nation. They had access to God. But the beauty of the mystery of Christ is that Christ not only died for ALL nations, He chose in his plan of redemption to use people from every tribe, tongue and nation to share the good news of the gospel and to spread the church. For most of you watching this from home, you should thank God for this! You are part of the fulfillment in this. Most likely, you’re a Gentile and not ethnically Jewish. Thank God that we are saved through Christ. And when we are saved the truth at the end of 27 should bring freedom to our souls.

It says, Christ is in you, the hope of Glory. Israel used to have to meet God in the temple, but now he lives in us! And because he lives in us it is the sign of our future hope in Christ. Romans 5:1-2: 5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. No matter what you’re going through right now, we can have the

confidence that if Christ dwells in you, one day you will enter into this future hope. Take heart in this mystery. Christ died for you so that you can enter into this glory with him.

So, we have seen in our job description that we need to be willing to suffer, then we see that we should make disciples, not converts. And now Paul gives us the third part of our job description.

### 3) Disciple people into maturity. (1:28b-2:1-5)

This is important because in American Churches the gospel and the gospel's implications on our lives seems to be taught less and less. The longer I'm in college ministry, the more I see the aftermath of Christless Christianity. Unfortunately, I see freshman suffering from Church burnout. By that, it's all about appearances, earning God's favor, completely scared of how God views them. Any by the time they get to college they are done with Church and done with God! Ministry that is not focused on Christ leads to spiritual death. Why? Because when people sin, and we all do, we need know how the gospel speaks to our sin. We need to know how to "gospel ourselves" and how to speak the gospel over people who are walking in sin. We need to see that the gospel is not just the front door to the Christian house. It's the whole house! The gospel doesn't just let us through the door of Christianity, it invites us into endless rooms to explore

and marvel at Christ's love for us. Church, you don't need books that give you 5 steps to a happy life. You and your disciples need to again and again and again about hear about Christ's love for you. We need to frequently hear that in Christ he has taken away our guilt, our shame, and our fear! Guilt was laid on him, shame was laid on him, fear was laid on him so that we didn't have to live in it any longer. We need to be done with outward conformity thinking that we're tricking God and those around us. NO, we need people willing to bleed in front of others showing the hope you found in Christ. That's what we need from our disciple making church. This is what is going to lead people into maturity.

Christ-centered ministry will lead people into maturity. Paul shows us what this looks like in verse 28, <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Here we see that Paul explains this to us to the end in mind. The end goal of discipleship is presentation. That we may present everyone mature in Christ! Church, what if we all took that kind of ownership. It is our job, as stewards of this mystery, is to prepare people for death. One day we will all get there. We will all meet Jesus. And our goal is to present people mature to their savior.

Let's get into how we do that... We see Paul tells us that we are to proclaim. We are to be herald's of truth. But in discipleship this plays out through warning & teaching. Another word for warn might be to admonish. We are to admonish & warn each other of potential snares that could trap us and when we see our disciples or friends believing lies which will lead them to desire their sin over God. We warn them, "Hey, you are walking towards destruction." In a spirit of Grace, we have to call people out. We need a lot more holy confrontation in the church. As a friend and a disciple maker, you need to refuse to allow someone to walk toward sin unwarned. We warn them and then the next step in discipleship is that we teach. **We make the Word of God fully known to them (vs. 25).** We are communicating Christian truth for the purpose of it leading to all wisdom. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. It's applied knowledge. It's knowledge that is obeyed. How can they use knowledge rightly if they are not taught how. I remember when I was in middle school, I tried to drive my dad's car. In that moment, I had little knowledge and no wisdom. He hadn't taught me or showed me how to drive so of course, I nearly crashed everywhere I went. Church discipleship is making the word of God known, warning people against sin, and showing them in the scriptures how Christ is better!

I also remember when the idea of Christ-centered teaching felt too simplistic for me. Have you ever felt

this? When I was in college, I didn't have many people outside of my peers that spoke into my life. So, because of that I church hopped. And you know what the number 1 thing I looked for in a church. It was whether or not the pastor went super deep in his preaching. And then it happened, I found a preacher who went deep. He spent weeks going through Genesis 6 and the Nephilim, these huge giant man-angels. Now listen, there's nothing wrong with teaching about it, it's in scripture and therefore is it is profitable. The problem wasn't my desire for deep theology. My problem was that I wanted knowledge apart from Christ. The problem was that I was turning into a little pharasee who wanted all the knowledge and wisdom that no one else had, and I wanted it apart from Christ. Wisdom is never found apart from Christ.

And as I church hopped in college looking for deep truth, it also showed my was my complete lack of understanding. I thought that maturity came through moving past the gospel, because I learned that already, and toward the really deep things like the Nephilim. And in chapter 2:3, we see that Paul says that moving past Jesus is a huge mistake. It says **"...which is Christ,<sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."** Many of you are like what I was. You think that now that you have accepted the gospel and understand it you should move on. No! Maturity is found through focusing on and drinking richly from the never ending well of Christ. It's drinking from this mystery. If

that is you, if you are thinking that we need to move past Jesus and the gospel to the deep stuff, what that is showing is that you actually need to run back toward the gospel. You're forgetting its power. One of my former college students said something to me years ago that I'll never forget. He said that the gospel is the first thing you learn when you become a Christian. It's also the first thing you forget when you're a Christian. If we forget Jesus and the gospel we will run after all sorts of things that will harm us.

Wanting to move past the gospel also shows that you might not be making disciples. I've never met a disciple maker who struggles to go deep in God's word. Why? Because new Christians ask all sorts of deep questions. Like, what's predestination? Why did God send a flood to kill everything on earth? What does the Bible say about gay marriage? Is God okay with me being transgender? I'm married and I just became a Christian, but my husband hates God. What do I do? How do I stop looking at porn. Why does God send people to hell? If God is all powerful, then why did he let Satan and a third of his angels to rebel? People will ask you so many questions that you have no idea how to answer. So, if you want deep theology, go make a disciple. You will have to live in your Bible and dive deep into this mystery to help them and it will be so good for your soul.

And as we move into Chapter 2, gives us two evidences of Maturity: 1) Being knit together in love; 2) full assurance and understanding of God's mystery

2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup> I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Paul's struggle for this church in Laodicea and for us today is to encourage us to join our hearts together in love and that we would be fully assured in our understanding of Christ. As a church and as disciple-makers we need to understand that a lack of unity in the church and a lack of assurance in Christ are going to be great threats to the church. It will be long and hard work to disciple people into maturity. Like Colossae, we face our own false teachings. Teachings that cause discord among brothers and sisters. Teachings that delude our disciples with plausible arguments. And there are tons of plausible arguments that satan is deploying out there today. That world plausible is a helpful one because it's

true. Satan knows that he wouldn't trick anyone away from following Christ if it wasn't at least plausible. NO, he's going to sneak lies in with truth. And we have to fight to help our disciples not fall prey to any of them. And it will long and hard work. It will be a lifetime worth of work! And we're going to need his strength.

Which leads us to the last part of our job description:

#### 4) Depend on Jesus in your ministry (v.29).

For this, we have to go back to verse 29, For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Paul said that ministry is toilsome. That we would struggle! Of course it's hard. Why? Because we're dealing with people. We are all sinners and we are all in process. We all make mistakes and sin against God. Our disciples will sin against God, they will sin against other people, and they will sin against you. It's because of this that we can only do this through the Lord's strength! We can't do this on our own. If we try to do this on our own, we will think that everything is up to us and we will die under that weight! Will we struggle, yes! But we will struggle as Christ supplies us His energy that he powerfully works in us. We can't do this on our own. We can't do ministry and make disciples without the power of God!

Church, we need to be willing to suffer. The gospel will not move forward and disciples will not be matured without sacrifice. We need to make disciples, not converts. We need to disciple them into maturity. And we need Jesus to supply us with the strength to do it. Paul's job description for us will cost us everything. And thank God that it does, because he's the only thing worth having anyways. Let's pray.