**Colossians 1:1-8**

I. Introduction

A. What story do you find yourself in?

1. “To be human is to be embarked on a kind of unconscious journey toward a destination of your dreams. You can’t not be headed somewhere. We live leaning forward, bent on arriving at the place we long for.” —James K.A. Smith

2. The way we imagine the story and the destination largely shapes how we live our lives.

3. Examples

 a. The Story of the American Dream, Consumer version

 b. The Story of Relativism

 B. Today Paul locates us within God’s story

II. The Passage

A. God’s story (v. 6)

1. Paul’s language of “bearing fruit and growing” echoes the original creation story where God’s image bearers were to bear fruit and grow and fill the earth (Gen 1:27-28)

2. The story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption

a. In the creation, we were to spread God’s glory throughout the earth

b. In the fall, humans experienced alienation, and instead they spread sin and brokenness throughout the earth

c. In redemption, God reconciles his creation to himself in Christ (see Colossians 1:19-23).

3. Now this gospel message of God’s reconciling work is “bearing fruit and growing” throughout the earth.

4. Consider the agricultural metaphor of bearing fruit and growing. The gospel message is like a mustard seed, or like a vine, that is fruitful, productive, and growing.

B. How the people in the passage fit within God’s story

1. Paul became an apostle “by the will of God” (v. 1)

a. He had no plans to become an apostle but Christ met him on the Damascus road

b. His life was completely transformed from a life of law and pride to a life of grace and surrender

c. The gospel bore fruit and grew in his life

2. Epaphras (v. 7)

a. He may have heard the gospel through Paul and then shared it with the people of his home town, Colossae.

b. The gospel bore fruit and grew in his life

3. The Colossians

 a. They received the gospel from Epaphras

b. The gospel produced faith, love and hope in their lives (v. 3-5)

C. How we fit within God’s story

1. The gospel spread to Rome and Europe and eventually Americ

2. The gospel bears fruit IN our lives

a. Examples: freeing us from addictions, bringing healing from childhood wounds, creating vulnerability, joy, humility, discipline, the fruit of the Spirit, etc.

b. The most important events in our lives are not events (it’s not the circumstances that are important but rather how God works in our lives in and through the circumstances)

3. The gospel bears fruit THROUGH our lives to others

a. Examples: Asking a new neighbor from a completely different cultural background to go for a walk, Meeting at City Hall once a month with a small group of Xns to pray for the needs of the city, Leading a weekly bible study for a high school football team, Making prayer cards for each of your kids and praying for God’s work in their lives, Having coffee with a co-worker and asking him about what values drive his life. Gently suggesting that the things he’s counting on to bring happiness are circumstantial & out of control, etc.

b. We need to be outward focused and realize we are part of something bigger than ourselves

**Discussion Questions**

1. Consider the idea of story and how our sense of the story we are in affects the way we live our lives. Two cultural stories were mentioned on Sunday: Materialism and Relativism. What did you think about the comments made, and what other cultural stories would you add to the list?

2. Consider the story of Scripture as it was articulated on Sunday (point II. A above). What was new in that for you or what did you come to understand or appreciate in a deeper way?

3. As you consider the gospel “bearing fruit and growing” WITHIN your life, what do you sense God is up to in your heart and mind these days?

4. As you consider the gospel “bearing fruit and growing” THROUGH and AROUND you, where is God calling you to participate in his work in the world? Who are the people God is putting on your heart to serve or reach out to?