**Colossians 1:24-2:5**

I. Consider God’s mystery: Christ in you (v. 26-27)

 A. No one expected this story

 1. Everyone expected the Messiah to live in Jerusalem as a conquering King

2. Instead the Messiah died on a cross in Jerusalem and now he lives in the hearts of people from all nations through his Spirit

B. Consider the relationship Jesus wants to have with us

1. Gal 2:20: I no longer live but Christ lives in me

 2. Colossians 1: 29: his energy is at work within me

 3. What if we lived with that daily awareness!

 C. He is “the hope of glory”

The fact that Christ dwells in us now is our guarantee of future eternal glory when he returns

II. Paul’s role in this great mystery

 A. To present everyone complete in Christ (v. 28)

1. He wants to help people grow into full maturity in their relationship with Jesus (see the themes of maturity in v. 2 and v. 4), so that when they stand before Jesus they are fully mature in him.

2. This is his goal for every person (v. 28). Maturity is not the goal for a few select all-star Christians

 B. Consider Paul’s mindset

1. In every encounter he has with people his goal is to do whatever he can to prepare them for the day when they will stand before Jesus

2. He is willing to teach, admonish, encourage, warn, etc. to help them grow closer to Jesus.

III. How he goes about his role

A. Notice the effort he puts into this (v. 29 and v. 1)

1. The words in v. 29 describe the struggle and work of athletes in competition

2. He struggles for people he’s never met (v. 1): probably through prayer and through writing letters and through defending the gospel wherever he goes.

B. Notice the suffering he experiences because of this (v. 24)

1. He is currently in prison

2. Consider his catalogue of suffering in 2Corinthians 11:24-29

3. He describes his sufferings as “filling up what is lacking in Christ’s suffering.” This probably means that his suffering gives people a tangible concrete embodiment of Christ’s suffering, so that when he shares the gospel, they are not just getting intellectual content, but they are seeing the good news of a suffering messiah lived out in front of them in Paul’s life.

 4. But he “rejoices” in his suffering.

IV. How are we inspired, encouraged, and challenged by Paul’s example?

A. What is your wake?

Do people leave times with you having been encouraged in their relationship with Jesus? Does time with you “spur them on towards love and good deeds?” (Hb 10:24)

B. What is God asking you to give or risk for the sake of making Jesus known?

1. Giving your time and energy to prayer for others

2. Committing to leading a small group or some other ministry

3. Being willing to risk your reputation with others to bring the gospel to them

 4. Being willing to let your life be interrupted to meet the needs of others

C. What are you missing out on by not jumping into this cause of making Jesus known?

**Discussion Questions**

1. Consider the gospel mystery Paul marvels at in v. 27: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” What does it mean practically to acknowledge and honor that reality in our own lives? In each other’s lives?

2. Consider Paul’s goal of doing whatever he can to help people grow in their relationship with Jesus so that he can present them mature in Christ (v. 28). Talk about someone whose presence always encourages you towards Jesus. What is it about them that helps you grow towards Jesus? What is it they do specifically?

3. In v. 24 Paul describes his suffering as “filling up what is lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions.” Consider the explanation given on Sunday and this quote from John Piper: “God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the afflictions of his people. God really means for the body of Christ, the church, to experience some of the suffering he experienced so that when we offer the Christ of the cross to people, they see the Christ of the cross in us. We are to make the afflictions of Christ real for people by the afflictions we experience in offering him to them, and living the life of love he lived. His sufferings are completed in our sufferings because in ours the world sees his.” How do you respond to that idea? Have you ever experienced that in your own life or in someone else’s life?

4. Take some time to answer the question at the end of Sunday’s message: What is God asking you to give or risk for the sake of making Jesus known?