

“The Supremacy of Christ in the Mission” **Colossians 4:2-6**

Intro: Every great company or organization has a mission. Here are three mission statements from companies you may be familiar with:

“Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.”

Starbucks: “to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.”

New York Times: “to "enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high-quality news, information and entertainment.”

What is the mission of Redemption Hill Church? We exist.... If our mission is to glorify God by living out his mission, then what is his mission? God has one great intention for human history. God is on a mission to redeem worshipers from all over the world and ultimately to restore good creation the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

FCF: This is God’s mission. Are you participating in his mission of redemption? I want to invite you today to let the small little story of your life to get wrapped up in a much bigger and much greater story, the story of God’s mission in the world.

The Point: The task of advancing the mission of Christ belongs to every Christian.

Trans: So how can we advance the mission of Christ? #1...

I. Advance the mission of Christ through prayer (4:2-4)

Paul begins laying down his final encouragements with the instruction to “Continue steadfastly in prayer.” We’ll notice several aspects to what our praying should look like.

a) Pray with perseverance (2).

1. Paul gives them a general exhortation to remain faithful in prayer. He says, “Continue steadfastly in prayer...” People who know God count prayer a privilege *and* they give themselves to it. They understand that prayer, in a mysterious and real way, moves the heart of God to act on behalf of his people. In prayer, we show our utter dependence on his provision.
2. In his earthly life, Jesus devoted himself to prayer, and so did his earliest followers.
3. So we find Paul saying, “Be devoted to prayer” (Rom 12:12); “Pray at all times” (Eph. 6:18); “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:18); and here: “Continue steadfastly in prayer”...
4. Perhaps Paul gives this exhortation because as some have said: The easiest thing about prayer is quitting. But, I would propose that he gives this exhortation because of everything he has just said, about knowing Christ and living for Christ is so life-giving and important, and especially, because of what he is about to say concerning the mission advancing, is so crucially important. Consider this: perhaps we are often so weak in prayer because we fail to grasp how crucial the mission really is.

b) Pray with awareness (2).

1. When Paul says, “being watchful in it,” he probably is referring to having a constant sense of spiritual alertness.
2. We pray with an awareness of the times in which we live and a sense of the seriousness and gravity of the task. How often are we guilty of sleepy prayers even when we’re not even sleepy?

3. Our prayers should be filled with life, vitality, and here's one for you: expectancy. When we have spiritual alertness, when we are watchful in prayer, we will both be more in tune regarding how to pray *and* we will pray expecting God is going to work!

c) Pray with thanksgiving (2).

1. Again and again and again, Paul has encouraged us toward gratitude and thanksgiving. This week, of course, is an appropriate time for us to consider all the many reasons we have to give God thanks and praise.
2. Let's be faithful to thank him for all he has done for us in Christ.

Trans: Paul goes onto request that the Colossians make a particular type of petition in verses 3-4. He says, "At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak."

d) Pray for opportunities to make Christ known.

- Do you find it significant that the Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary other than Jesus, ask for the prayers of these new believers?
- We need to pray for each other, and we need to pray for each other as we engage in the mission of God. Paul's heart was that more and more and more people would hear the gospel and say "Yes" to Jesus. He wasn't going to let his imprisonment dilute his desire to see more and more people come to Christ. He even says in Romans 9, that he could wish that he were "cut off from Christ" that others might experience salvation.
- So Paul requests prayer for opportunities to declare the gospel. This assumes the mission advances through a particular means, namely a person's witness through the word of God. I have been reading through the Book of Acts, the story of the advance of the early church...
- **Acts 8-12: A Case Study in Word-Driven Mission** (context: Acts 1:8)
 - Acts 8:4 – The scattered, persecuted church "went about preaching the word."
 - Acts 8:5 – "Philip went . . . and proclaimed to them the Christ."
 - Acts 8:12 – ". . . they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ"
 - Acts 8:14 – The Samaritans "received the word of God"
 - Acts 8:25 – Peter and John went to "testify and speak the word of the Lord."
 - Acts 8:35 – Philip "told" the Ethiopian eunuch "the good news about Jesus" from the Scripture.
 - Acts 8:40 – Starting in Azotus, Philip "preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea."
 - Acts 9:20 – Paul [after his conversion] "immediately proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'"
 - Acts 9:22 – Paul "confounded Jews . . . by proving Jesus is the Christ."
 - Acts 9:28 – In Jerusalem, Paul "preached boldly in the name of the Lord."
 - Acts 10:34-43 – Peter preached a sermon to Cornelius and his family and friends.
 - Acts 10:42 – Jesus "commanded [the disciples] to preach and testify."
 - Acts 10:44 – Spirit fell when the word was preached.
 - Acts 11:1 – Gentiles received the word
 - Acts 11:14 – We see that salvation comes by a message.
 - Acts 11:19 – "speaking the word."
 - Acts 11:20 – "preaching the Lord Jesus"
 - Acts 12:24 – "But the word of God increased and multiplied."
- We must pray for opportunities to share the gospel, and we ask God to help us present the gospel clearly.

- This kind of praying is what Jack Miller calls “frontline prayer.” Miller makes a helpful distinction between “maintenance prayer,” which is prayer that is totally focused on physical needs, and “frontline prayer,” which goes after God’s glory by seeking spiritual renewal in our own souls and spiritual transformation among those yet to embrace Christ in a saving way.
- **“You don’t know what prayer is for until you know that life is war!” – John Piper**
- (Unpack)
- All great mission movements begin with prayer. Let’s be a praying church and continue steadfastly in prayer.

Trans: We must not only pray that God will provide opportunities for spreading his good news. We must take advantage of those opportunities ourselves. Paul moves from requesting prayer for his own evangelistic efforts to encouraging the Colossians to engage in their own evangelistic efforts.

II. Advance the mission of Christ by displaying the gospel (4:5).

In verse 5, Paul says: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.”

Live wisely.

1. “outsiders”... Christians live in the world, a world filled with those who do not believe in Christ. Paul calls them “outsiders.” Why? Because they are outside of the life of Christ. They have chosen not to enter into the life Jesus offers.
2. I want you to think about your network of relationships. You have networks of friends based on where you live (your neighbors), where you work, what you love, who you belong to (your family). We all have spheres of influence. I enjoy relationships that you will never have *and* you enjoy relationships that I will never have.
3. In all of our relationships we need to “walk in wisdom” and live in such a way that lends credibility to our faith and creates no stumbling blocks to our message. We need to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, patience, and love. And we also need to...

Live with urgency.

1. “making the best use of the time” – The word “time” here is talking about specific opportunities that are set before us.
 2. We only have one life. There are a limited amount of days in our lives and a limited amount of hours in those days for us to engage those around us for the glory of God and the benefit of their souls.
 3. We need to be strategic and efficient. It’s okay to have a plan for engaging friends who need Christ. People are dying without Christ. People are dying and moving onto a Christless eternity in a place called hell.
 4. Story: I’ll never forget talking to one my best friends, Bo Alexander, during one of our Community Groups... snap, snap, snap, snap...
 5. This is the importance of praying for open doors, opportunities to provide a witness for Christ.
 6. App: Think about this: Our lives are made up of 1000s of opportunities to make an impact for the gospel. That ride on the Subway. Many of those are what some people call “divine appointments or divine Opportunities.” That person who sits next to you in class. That old friend you bumped into randomly.
- Let me say this: It is not enough to simply display the gospel. We must declare it.
 - Some of you have heard the quote attributed to Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel, use words when necessary.” That statement is beloved for three reasons: 1) It does communicate the reality that our lives should backup what we believe; 2) We love this because it let’s us off the hook; 3)

Satan loves this statement because he knows no one is going to be reconciled to God by seeing us live a moral life.

III. Advance the mission of Christ by declaring the gospel (4:6).

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

The idea of actually telling someone else about Jesus freaks some of us out, big time! We let fear control us like a little puppet. We fear how people will respond, fear we'll lose credibility, fear our reputation will take a hit, fear we'll say something stupid, fear we won't have all the right answers. I understand that. I get that. Far too often, I live that, but can I just give us an encouragement here. That's not from the Lord. That's not the fruit of the Spirit. “For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7)

1. Do you want other people to embrace Jesus? Then what are you willing to do about it?
2. There should never be a day that those without Christ are not on our mind and in our prayers.
3. “The Christian without a missionary heart is an anomaly.” – Marshall & Payne
4. Every person here who calls him or herself a Christian needs to understand that this mission is for you. This is not the pastor's job. This is not the leadership team's job. This is not the job of super-Christians. This is in the job description that Jesus has written for all of his followers!
5. So how do we go about it?

Speak with grace.

1. As we dialogue with people...Ask questions. Hear their stories. Figure out where they are coming from. Listen well, and...
2. Speak with grace. Speak in a way that is pleasant, considerate, and winsome. Don't be a jerk. If someone fires back in conversation, respond with grace. Share Jesus with joy. As Paul says in Ephesians 5:15, “Speak truth in love...”
3. Paul says that we should speak in a salty kind of way. Salt [both preserves] & provokes/gives flavor. It provokes in the sense that it provides flavor. Our witness should never be dull. It should be spoken with conviction and some flavor. It should, in the same way salt works, provoke thirst.
4. Our testimony to Christ, our experience of what he brings to the table, the grace that he dishes out, the love that pours out, the peace that he provides, the superabundance of life that he gives, will hopefully make people pause and want what we have.

Speak with sensitivity

1. And finally, notice that Paul says, “so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”
2. 1 Cor 9:19-23
3. We understand each person's need, and we live out the gospel and share the gospel appropriately.
4. There are times that we need to be bold, and there are other times where we need to be more patient and measured in our witness.
5. What is successful witnessing? Sharing Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit leaving the results to God. We cannot save anyone. We can be faithful instruments in his hands. We cannot make anyone believe the truth, but we can make God's truth known.

Upcoming Opportunities for mission at RHC

1. **Bring Sunday (December 4):** Inviting *and* Bringing people to corporate Worship is a great way to get our feet wet in mission. It's not that hard. Take an *invite card and say, “Hey, I would love for you to come with me to church this Sunday.” “Hey, I don't know if you'd ever be interested, but I wanted to invite you to our church. We meet at Springstep on Sunday mornings, right beside

City Hall in Medford Square. We're starting a new focus for the Christmas season and it's a great time of year to check out a church service."

2. **Christmas Party (December 9):** Each year we will host several events like our Christmas Party that we call Connecting Events. Connecting Events serve as fun, non-threatening venues to connect with others in Redemption Hill, and especially to bring friends who may not yet believe in Jesus or belong to a solid, gospel-centered church to connect with us.
3. **Christmas Dinner for Medford Families:** As a church, we want to reach out to others through service. We'll give away
4. **Great Commission Offering:** 1st Three Weeks of December, we will be collecting an "above and beyond" offering that will go to national and international missions.
5. **You!** Inviting and bringing friends, you! displaying the love of Christ, You! taking a friend out for lunch or coffee, You! providing a listening ear for someone you know who is struggling and sharing how Jesus provides resources for our deepest challenges and suffering, You! giving generously of your time and talents, You! telling your story and passing on resources from our resource table to those new to Christianity, you! sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is stopping you from engaging in these ways? What is stopping you from engaging in *all* of these ways? If we get serious about this as a church, what is stopping Redemption Hill from blowing up? What's stopping us from packing out Springstep on December 4th and December 9th for Bring Sunday and our Christmas Party? What's stopping us from seeing 20-30-40 new believers embrace Jesus over the next year? What's stopping us from doubling or tripling our attendance a year from now? Can you see that? I'm telling you, I can see that.

How will we get there?

Pray. Display. Declare.

What if God advanced the mission according to our prayers? What if God advanced the mission according to our witness? Where would that leave us?

Btw, he does!

I heard someone say this recently: Reaching All: Impossible. Reaching None. Inexcusable. Reaching Some. Imperative.