

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Executive Pastor Carey Dean**  
**March 16, 2025**  
**COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory**  
**Christ in His Church**  
**Colossians 1:24-26**

Some things in life just don't mix: oil and water, toothpaste and orange juice, and for all my snowbirds... socks and sandals. But let me add one more: kids and shots. As a parent of triplets, immunization days were brutal. Once the first one saw the needle, it was game over. Suffering was experienced by all—three kids traumatized, mom and dad immobilized, and I'm convinced we sent several nurses into early retirement.

I tell you that story because it holds a key word for us this morning: suffering. We avoid it at all costs. But Paul says something shocking in Colossians 1:24, *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings."*

That sounds impossible, right? What does Paul see that we don't? Let's turn to Colossians 1:24-26 and find out.

***Colossians 1:24–26***

***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, 25 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, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.***

Paul tells us one of his motivations for rejoicing in suffering was for the sake of Christ's body, the Church. That's the first truth we need to believe this morning: The Church is Christ's body, united in and with Him.

**Core Truth 1 — The Church is Christ's Body (United in and with Him)**

**Colossians 1:24**

***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.***

Paul is clear —the Church is not an institution, but a people.

***1 Corinthians 12:12–14***

***For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. But what does that mean for us right now?***

What Paul is telling the Corinthians is still true for us today. We are not just a collection of people trying to follow God. Christ's church is one body, fully dependent on Him as its Head. That means we don't function individually, we live from His life, together. We exist in Him, with Him, through Him, and for Him.

But here's the part we often miss. If WE are His Body, WE also share in His life, His mission, and yes, His sufferings. That's why Paul rejoices. He knows that belonging to Christ's Body means participating with Christ in His work, including the cost that comes with it.

Christ's mission involved suffering. So, it is important that we embrace, not fight, the idea that Christ's mission involves suffering. Let us not forget that Christ's road to the cross was marked by persecution.

Isaiah 53 foretold that the promised Messiah would come as the Suffering Servant—stricken, afflicted, pierced, and crushed. Holiness humbly left His throne and boldly stood in a world of rebellion.

But how did He endure every step toward the cross? Hebrews 12:2 says He did so with the joy set before Him. This was not a path He was forced to take; it was the road He willingly chose for you and me.

Although Salvation was secured forever through His death, burial, and resurrection, His mission did not end, it continues today.

Paul helps us see that it is through His Body, the Church, that mission continues through us. That means because we are a part of His body, we share His voice to those where we live, His hands to those where we work, and His feet to go to wherever He sends us.

And here's where Paul's testimony gives us clarity. Paul was not only saved to belong to Christ, but he was also called to proclaim Christ fully.

## Core Truth 2 — Christ's Mission Continues Through His Body (His Church)

### ***Colossians 1:25–26***

***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, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.***

This leads us to our second core truth to believe: Christ's mission continues through His Body (His Church). Paul's calling was about fully revealing a mystery that had long been hidden—Christ in you, the hope of glory. That is what we will explore more deeply next week, so don't miss it.

But here's what we must see today. This mystery wasn't just theological, it was personal. Paul knew firsthand that no one was beyond the saving reach of Christ. Listen to his own words.

*1 Timothy 1:15*

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost.*

Paul saw himself as the chief of sinners, yet he was transformed by the power of Christ's grace. If you've ever wondered whether God's grace and mercy could extend to you, hear this clearly: You are not beyond His grace. Jesus came to save someone like Paul. Someone like me. Someone like you.

When you receive His gift of salvation by faith, just as Paul did, you will sing "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me" with a depth of gratitude you never imagined. And this is why Paul writes what He does to Colossae and to us. Christ's mission was never meant to stop with Paul; they continue through us.

This makes me think of Micah, my nephew. Baseball has been his life since he could hold a bat, and now he's playing at a Division 1 school. But more than being an athlete, he's a young man who loves Jesus deeply. That love has produced a boldness in him that makes me incredibly proud as his uncle.

Recently, he led one of his teammates to Christ, and that friend was baptized, right there in the locker room. A moment of joy. A moment of transformation. But his love for Jesus with his whole life comes with a cost.

While he loves his team, there's a loneliness that is very real. He's not always invited to events, not always included in conversations. He isn't suffering like Paul. He is not in prison and has not been beat, but he is paying a price for standing for Jesus. And make no mistake, that is suffering with Christ.

Maybe you know what that kind of loneliness feels like because of loving Jesus more. Maybe you've experienced rejection at work, in friendships, or even within your own family because of your full surrender to Jesus. If so, you're not alone; you are suffering with Christ.

But the question still lingers: Why is suffering with Christ necessary? That brings us to our final core truth.

Core Truth 3 — Christ's Mission Advances Through Suffering (with Joy)

***Colossians 1:24***

***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.***

The cross-life is the Church's life. This is where we struggle. We know suffering happens, but do we truly see it as part of God's plan? Paul did.

*2 Corinthians 4:10–12*

*(We are) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

To be the Body of Christ is to live the cross-shaped life. As followers of Jesus, we carry within us both His death and His life. When Paul says, *"in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"* (Colossians 1:24), he is not suggesting that Christ's work of salvation is incomplete. The blood of Christ fully and eternally satisfied the payment for sin.

So, what is Paul saying? That Christ is still seeking and saving the lost and He has chosen to do it through His Body, the Church. Through us. And the road we walk with Him includes suffering. Paul gives another powerful motivation in Colossians 1:24-25 that we cannot afford to miss.

***Colossians 1:24-25***

***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, 25 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,***

Paul's suffering was never self-serving, it was for others. And what makes that even more profound is that he had never even met many of the people he was suffering for. Paul had never met and would never meet the Colossian believers in person.

But because Paul loved Christ, he also loved Christ's Body, the Church. And since Colossae was part of the Body of Christ, Paul did not have to meet them to love them. This helps us understand why Paul could rejoice in suffering.

Paul didn't merely endure hardship; he rejoiced in it because he saw beyond the pain to its eternal purpose. That others would come to know Christ.

Paul's words forced me to ask myself a hard question. Am I truly sharing in Christ's affliction, or am I simply suffering? So, I laid my suffering before the Lord, one burden at a time, asking, "Is this truly for You, Jesus, or is this about me?"

And then the Holy Spirit brought to my heart the question that gave me clarity. Am I grieving with Christ, or am I grieving against Him? The moment that question surfaced, my struggles separated like oil and water. Some of them, I realized, weren't about Christ at all. They were about me and my desire for control, my longing for convenience, my wounded self-interest.

And in those moments, I wasn't grieving with Christ, I was grieving against Him. My heart had been filled with blame, argument, and demand rather than surrender. So, I repented. I asked Him to help me grieve with Him, to see my suffering through His eyes, not mine, so that none of it would be wasted.

And something changed in my praying. Joy appeared. Hope came into view. Faith became words on my lips. Suffering is inevitable, but participating in Christ's affliction is a choice. Suffering with Christ is different. It carries a Christ-centered perspective, a selfless motivation, and a real joy.

Suffering apart from is overwhelming, disorienting, and even hopeless. It can leave us grasping for answers, grasping for relief, just grasping. But suffering with Christ is different. It does not ignore the pain, nor does it minimize the weight of sorrow. Yet, somehow, it holds both grief and joy, both struggle and hope.

Paul said, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings." But let's be honest, most of us do not start there. Maybe, for you, suffering has only felt like a weight you want to escape, not a path that leads to joy. If so, you are not alone. In fact, many of us begin here:

#### PRAYER #1 – STRUGGLING WITH UNBELIEF AND SEEKING ESCAPE

Lord, I don't understand this. I hear that suffering has a purpose, that it's somehow part of Your plan, but all I feel is pain, confusion, and exhaustion. If You are good, then why am I still hurting? If You love me, then why haven't You taken this away? I don't want to rejoice in suffering, I just want relief. I know Paul said he rejoiced, but I don't see how. I don't feel joy. I don't feel peace. I feel abandoned. Forgotten. Overwhelmed. God, I don't want to suffer. I don't want to carry this burden. I just want You to fix it, to make life easier, to take the pain away. But if You won't, then I don't know how to trust You in this. Help me believe, even when I don't. Amen.

If this prayer resonates with you, hear this, you are being honest. And Jesus is not afraid of your honesty. But here's the invitation. You don't have to stay here.

Suffering doesn't have to be meaningless. This place of struggle is where Christ is waiting to meet you. Paul didn't rejoice because the suffering itself was good. He rejoiced because suffering with Christ is never wasted. So how do we move from grieving against Christ to grieving with Him?

#### Four Steps to Move Toward Rejoicing in Suffering

1. Lay your suffering before Christ.  
Don't hold it. Don't ignore it. Don't try to fix it on your own. Bring it honestly to Jesus and surrender it to Him.  
*1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.*
2. Ask Christ, "Am I grieving with You or against You?"

Are my prayers shaped by trust or resistance? Christ does not shame us for grieving. Godly grief is a godly response. He invites us to grieve with Him. As a believer, we are to love what Jesus loves and hate what Jesus hates (sin). Sinful reactions hate what Jesus loves and loves what Jesus hates.

*Psalm 34:18 – The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*

3. Agree with Christ, “This pain will not be wasted.”

Suffering in Christ is never meaningless. He is working even when we cannot see it.

*Romans 8:28 – We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*

4. Trust Jesus and embrace His joy.

This doesn't mean forcing yourself to feel happy in pain. It means choosing to believe that Christ is enough.

*James 1:2-4 – Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness... that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

## PRAYER #2 – EMBRACING CHRIST'S SUFFERING WITH JOY AND PURPOSE

Lord, You are enough. Even as I walk through this trial, I know that I am not alone. You have never abandoned me, and You never will. I don't pretend the pain isn't real. It is. The weight of sorrow, loss, and hardship presses against me, but I lay it before You—not in anger, not in demand, but in surrender. Jesus, You suffered first. You walked this road before me. You carried the cross, bore the rejection, felt the pain, and You did it with joy—because You saw beyond the suffering. So, Lord, let me see beyond this moment. Let me see Your glory, Your mission, and Your purpose in my life. If this suffering means others might know You, if this burden draws me deeper into Your presence, then I will not waste it. Help me to grieve with You, not against You. Let joy rise, even in sorrow. Let faith speak louder than fear. Let my life—through suffering and through joy—make You known. For You are worthy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Where is your heart today? If you find yourself in the first prayer, be honest with Christ. He welcomes your honesty. He promises to meet you wherever you are. But if today is the day you are ready to lay your suffering before Him, He will meet you there too.

Rejoicing in suffering is possible only in Christ. If you don't know Him, today is your day. Without Him, your suffering has no chance of joy or hope.

But as we learn to suffer with Christ and not apart from Him, we will find what Paul found: Suffering with Christ is never wasted. Suffering with Christ is where joy begins. So, let us be a people who, like Paul, can say: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings...for the sake of His Body, the Church.”