

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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July 20, 2025
COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory
Walk in Wisdom
Colossians 4:3-6

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Last week, we looked at verses 2-4 and focused on the call to persistent prayer. Persistent prayer is watchful, thankful, and missional.

We left off with verses 3-4 where Paul is asking them to pray for his mission. Paul was a man on a mission to know Jesus and make Jesus known. That's what his entire life was about.

That mission was so integral to his life that in Colossians 1:26 he says he was able to rejoice in his sufferings because he knew his suffering was being used by God to advance the message of Jesus throughout the world.

So, Paul's whole life was centered around the mission of Jesus – to know Him and to make Him known. That's why he asked for prayer in prison. He didn't ask for the prison doors to be opened so he could be set free, he asked for the hearts of men to be opened so he could tell them about Jesus. The mission was His priority, and it was revealed in the way he prayed.

And, that mission wasn't unique to Paul. It's the call of Jesus for every follower of Christ.

On Merritt Island, there are close to 40,000 people. In Brevard County, there are over 600,000 people. In the state of Florida, there are 23 million people. There are 340 million people in the United States and 8 billion people on planet earth. And it is the heart of God to spread the message of Jesus to every tribe and tongue and nation.

And that mission includes you. God desires for you to know Jesus and He desires to use you to make Jesus known. That was Paul's mission. And that is our mission, too.

And Paul's closing instructions are about what it looks like when Jesus lives in us, empowering a life on that mission.

And, let me go ahead and give you the big idea we will see in our text for today.

Big Idea: As we live on mission with Jesus, we are to walk in wisdom toward those who are outside of Christ.

Now, look with me at our text, and I'll show you where I get that big idea.

Colossians 4:2–6

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 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— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Verses 2-4 are primarily about prayer. But verses 3-4 transition to our mission. Paul asks for prayers that are all about the mission. Then, verses 5-6 are instruction on how we should live on gospel mission in our own lives. And Paul's main command about mission is there in verse 5. We are to walk in wisdom toward outsiders. Outsiders are those who are outside of Christ, or people who have not yet placed their faith and trust in Jesus. We are to live with wisdom towards people who are far from God but close to us. That's the main command, which is why it's our big idea.

But what does it look like to live in wisdom toward those who have not yet placed their faith and trust in Jesus? I'm glad you asked. Paul gives us at least 4 descriptions of what it means to live with wisdom on our mission to make Jesus known.

1. WISDOM ON MISSION MEANS BEING COMMITTED TO PRAYER

Colossians 4:3-4

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— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

We talked very briefly about this last week, but the first thing we learn about living with wisdom toward outsiders is that our mission begins with prayer. Someone once said, "We should talk to God about people before we talk to people about God." I don't know who said that, but I love it.

The reason our witness should begin with prayer is because only God can save a soul. Only God can open the door of someone's heart. Only God can give someone eyes to see the truth about Jesus. Only God can prepare the soil of their heart to accept the seed of the gospel. Only God can save a soul.

You might be a great friend, a great co-worker, a great classmate, and a great neighbor. But you're a terrible Savior. You can't save yourself and you most definitely can't save anyone else. Only God can save a soul. And only God can give you the power to be an effective witness for Jesus.

Do you remember what Jesus said to His disciples right before He ascended to heaven? In Matthew 28, He gave them the Great Commission. He told them to go into the world and share the gospel with the nations. But then He said something interesting.

Acts 1:4-8

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

So, get this. Jesus tells His disciples that they will be His witnesses throughout the entire world. But He specifically tells them to go to Jerusalem and basically lock themselves in the upper room where they were to wait and pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. He says, "Go and tell people about me, but not yet. Don't say a word and don't leave the city until you've been filled with the power of the Holy Spirit."

And that's exactly what they do. They go into the upper room and pray. And they wait. And they pray. And they wait. They have no idea how long it will take, but they don't even attempt to tell

people about Jesus until they're lives are saturated in prayer, and they are filled with Holy Spirit power.

And that's what it looks like to live with wisdom on mission. Wise people know they can't save anyone. Wise people know they need the power of the Holy Spirit. And we are no longer waiting for the Holy Spirit to be sent to His church. That happened at Pentecost. But we are still just as much in need of the Spirit's filling as the first disciples. So, wise people talk to God about people before they ever talk to people about God. They ask Him for open doors. They ask Him for wisdom to have the right words to make the gospel clear.

Do you know what you most need to be an effective witness for Jesus? It isn't another class on how to share your faith or a good YouTube video on how to approach people on the street or a slick script you can memorize that will convince people to say "yes" to Jesus. What you need is the power of the Holy Spirit of Almighty God.

And, in Luke 11:13, Jesus says the power of the Holy Spirit is given to those who ask for it from the Father.

Do you want to see people saved where you live, work, learn, and play? Do you want to see this community turned upside down for Jesus? Do you want to see your "Ones" come to Christ? Then, be wise and don't be a fool. Don't hit the streets. Fall on your knees and ask God to fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to do what only He can do. Only God can save a soul and only God can fill you with power.

Charles Spurgeon: "Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the church."

Dwight L. Moody: "Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure."

Living with wisdom on mission means being committed to prayer.

2. LIVING WITH WISDOM ON MISSION MEANS MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

Colossians 4:5

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

That phrase "making the best use" translates a phrase that literally means to buy up every opportunity.

This made me think of my friend Gordon Burleson. Gordon and his wife, Lyvonne, have been members of our church since the early days of the space program. Von is our church historian. They love our church and community and have a million amazing stories to share with anyone willing to listen.

In addition to loving our church and community, Gordon loves a good deal. I've never known anyone like him. If you've ever had a yard sale, there's a good chance Gordon has been to your house. He's the guy who tried to buy your patio furniture for a quarter. He's always looking for a deal. For the last decade, I've asked Gordon the same question about a hundred times. "Gordon, have you found any good deals?" Then, I pull up a chair and wait for the story. And there's always a story.

- "I just got a big commercial ice maker for 25 bucks."
- "I found a \$200 cordless drill for two dollars."

- “I just bought a \$300 golf driver for a nickel. They were asking 25 cents, but I talked them down and got them to throw in a putter for free.”

For less than a hundred bucks, Gordon has bought enough scrap wood and nails to build a 3-bedroom house. He’s amazing. He goes out ready and when he sees a deal he never lets it pass him by.

That’s what Paul is saying here. Go out ready to share Jesus and when you see an opportunity buy it up. One of the reasons we don’t share the gospel more is because we aren’t looking for opportunities to share the gospel.

Almost every week, I say the exact same phrase at some point in my sermon. I hope you’ve noticed. No matter what the text or topic, I’m looking for the opportunity to say that phrase. Here’s the phrase: That’s why we need Jesus.

Without Jesus, we can’t do anything. No matter what the challenge or trial. No matter the hope or the ambition. We can’t do anything apart from Jesus.

The Lord gave me that phrase as I was praying about sharing the gospel with the people in our community. Specifically, I was praying about sharing Jesus with my Ones. I had one guy who hated the president at the time and only wanted to talk about how our country was going to hell in a handbasket. Another of my ones struggled with addiction. Another had issues with his family.

Other times, I would just be talking with a stranger and would ask them how their day was going or how they were doing or if there was any way I could pray for them. Often, they would tell me about some challenge or difficulty they were facing.

What I realized that no matter what the subject is, the common denominator to every one of our struggles or trials or hopes and dreams is that we ultimately need Jesus.

It’s amazing how often I’ve been able to see an open door for the gospel just by looking for the opportunity to say, “That’s why we need Jesus.” And the good news is that we don’t just need Jesus, we have Him. Because God so loved this world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him would have eternal life...abundant life...resurrection life.

Wisdom on mission means praying for the open door for the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit and buying up every opportunity we see to share the truth that we need Jesus, and we have Him when we place our trust in Him.

3. WISDOM ON MISSION MEANS WATCHING YOUR WORDS

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt...

As we talk with people who are not yet trusting in Christ, Paul says our speech should always be gracious. The original phrase is “in grace.” Let our speech always be in grace.

I think there’s an intentional double meaning here. I think Paul is certainly calling us to fill our speech with the truth of God’s grace to us in Jesus.

And I believe he is saying that our speech should REFLECT God's grace by being gracious. It shouldn't feel contradictory for people to hear the way we speak and then hear us tell them that Jesus is gracious and kind and compassionate and lives in us by the power of His Spirit.

In other words, we shouldn't be harsh and abrasive. We shouldn't talk to people like they're stupid. Sharing Jesus is about showing grace, not winning an argument. Sharing Jesus isn't about shutting people up. It's about showing people Jesus. Be kind and compassionate. Be patient and understanding.

Be gracious with your words. And Paul says to season them with salt. What does he mean by that? There are a couple of things.

First, salt is distinct. Our words should be distinct. We shouldn't talk like the rest of this world. We should talk like Jesus. We should take our talking points from Jesus and not Fox News or CNN.

Also, salt is delicious. I'm a fan of salt. I like salt on my steak. I like salt on my watermelon. I even like to eat salty pretzels while I'm enjoying a bowl of ice cream. Salt brings out the good flavors of whatever it goes on.

And Paul says our speech should be like that. Whatever conversations we are in should taste better because of the way we talk. We should be hopeful and encouraging. We should speak the truth and do it in love. We should do our part to build people up.

I've never known anyone who was better at this than Jay Clark. Jay is with Jesus now but for years he was a pillar of our community. Jay was a principal at Fairglen Elementary. They named the overpass on US 1 in Titusville after him. This community loved Jay Clark. I loved Jay Clark.

Every time you talked with Jay, he made you better. One Sunday, Emily and I were walking to our car, and Jay was walking with us. We were expecting one of our kids at the time and Jay said, "Titus and Emily, I'm so glad you're having another baby. The two of you are the kind of people we want to propagate society."

I don't even know what that means but I felt great just to hear Jay say it. People loved to talk to Jay Clark because his words made every conversation better.

And Paul says that how wise people speak with others who don't know Jesus.

How are you going to tell someone that Jesus is your source of joy and peace and hope if your words are joyless, abrasive, and hopeless?

Think about the way you talk to people where you live, work, learn, and play. Are your conversations like theirs? Do you join in on complaining or grumbling? Do you build people up or tear people down?

Wisdom on mission means watching your words, filling them with grace and seasoning them with salt.

4. WISDOM ON MISSION MEANS BEING ATTENTIVE TO INDIVIDUALS

Colossians 4:6

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

Notice that phrase “each person.” While the truth of the gospel is true for every person, Paul is saying there isn’t a one-size-fits-all response to questions and concerns of the people in our lives. People are individuals. They have a unique story. They have specific fears and personal problems. And living with wisdom on mission means we treat each person with respect and dignity by getting to know them and actually listening to what they have to say.

Just think about the life of Jesus. His conversation with Nicodemus was totally different from His conversation with the woman at the well. He listened. He asked questions. He knew their stories. He spoke with them and not just to them.

Jay Clark always said that people won’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Church, we won’t show the love of Christ to our community until we show the love of Jesus to the individuals who live there. Jesus didn’t just die for the sins of the world; He died for you. He didn’t just extend the offer of salvation to everyone; He extended His grace to you.

And living with wisdom on mission means we are attentive to individuals. We hear their stories. We learn their needs. We show them Christ’s love. And He opens the door to their hearts so He can fill our mouths with His gospel.

That’s why we need Jesus. We don’t live on mission for Jesus; we live on mission with Jesus. In Matthew 28, when Jesus gave us the Great Commission, He made us this promise: Behold, I am with you to the end of the age. We don’t just need Jesus; we have Him as we place our faith and trust in Him.

Telling people about Jesus isn’t something we do for Jesus; it’s something Jesus does through us as we trust in Him. He fills us with His Spirit. He gives us His wisdom. He changes our hearts in a way that is reflected in how we speak.

And that brings us to the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is the reminder of the work of Jesus. Not just His work at the cross but His work within us. We take the bread and the juice into us. It’s a picture of the gospel. Christ works within us.

That’s one of the reasons why we don’t just observe baptism as our statement of faith. Baptism happens once in the life of a believer. It’s the initial declaration that we are trusting in the life, death, and resurrection. That’s a one-time event for believers.

But the Lord’s Supper is something we observe over and over again. It’s the reminder that we are trusting in Christ and He is at work in us. The power of His death and resurrection are at work in us, restoring us to God and empowering us for mission.