

Colossians 4:2-6 - Kent Stiles

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. This morning, we continue our study on the New Testament book of Colossians.

If you would, if you've got your Bibles this morning, turn with me to the book of Colossians. We're going to be, make your way over to chapter 4.

And this morning, we're going to be looking at verses 2 through 6. And this is the last section of the body of the letter here in Colossians before we get to some personal remarks from Paul that we're going to look at next week.

And I think we spent about four months going through the book of Colossians, and we found ourselves essentially peeling back the layers of an onion, so to speak, or deconstructing this book, somewhat breaking it down and pulling it apart.

And this morning, what we're coming to is a point where we're going to start to look at the culmination of that, and we're going to put it back together, so to speak. It reminds me a bit of what I've been told about the process that someone goes through if they want to be a master watch repairman for Rolex.

[1:10] Now, does anybody here, you don't have to raise your hand if you don't want to, does anybody here own a Rolex? Okay, I'm glad to see that we won't have to bring it before the church that you are a bad steward of, no.

It would not be a problem if you owned a Rolex, okay? But a Rolex, when you think of Rolex, what do you think of? I think of dollar signs, right? Fine jewelry, an investment in your future, right?

It doesn't matter how good a watch I have, as you can see, I don't have a watch on, I probably still wouldn't be on time, so there's no need to spend several thousand dollars for a Rolex. But Rolex watches, they're known for being expensive, but they're known for being a very high quality.

And so in order to work for Rolex as a certified repair person, it's required that you go through an intense training. And as part of this intense training, you go through an elite school. And it's a program for Rolex, and an individual goes through this coursework, and they learn all about, through this course, the watch and the components.

And in this school, at the end of your training, you're handed a box. And it's not a commemorative Rolex. What it is, is it's a box of a bunch of tiny parts and pieces.

[2:19] And at the very end of this course, it's required that you take these pieces, and it's part of your job to take these pieces and put it back together and to make a functioning Rolex.

And that's required if you're going to be a master watch repairman there for Rolex. So like I said, it's been four months that we've been working through Colossians. And at this point, it may be hard to recognize the whole from where we started.

So what I'd like to do first this morning is I want to, just before we start, reflect or look back at the passage, or at the book, and give a little recap as to what Paul sought for, just so we can see the whole message that he's presenting here in the book of Colossians.

If you remember back to chapter 1, when we started, verse 15 and following, Paul said that Christ is the firstborn of all creation, that he's the firstborn from the dead.

He says that in everything he might have preeminence or be preeminent. And he goes on to say, as you and as you have received Christ, so walk in him. Don't be taken away by those philosophies and empty deceit of false teachers.

[3:22] Don't be distracted by those. But set your mind on things that are above where Christ is, and walk in holiness, grow in faithfulness, be fruitful. He talks about the sufficiency of Christ.

And then he gets into a section in chapter 3, where we've looked at before, and he talks about how that applies to the fellowship within the body of Christ itself.

So we're to teach, and we're to admonish each other, and sing psalms and hymns, that we're to fellowship within the body. And then over the last couple weeks, last few weeks, we saw the focus shift to domestic relationships.

So relationships in the household, husbands, wives, parents, children, servants. And so now this morning, he's going to go one step further outside the sphere of influence, and he's going to deal with the believer's interaction with those that are outside the church.

So from within the body, to the home, and now to the nations. And that's a relevant topic for us to consider, isn't it? Our culture is becoming increasingly more secular.

[4:30] We're undergoing what many people refer to or call a moral revolution. And what is a Christian's response to be in that type of culture? What is our life to be like when we live amongst the world today?

How are we to engage with an unbelieving world? How are we called to live? And what should be the blueprint for success?

Well, that's what we're going to look at this morning in Colossians chapter 4 through 6. Let's go ahead and open up in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning. We thank you for your word, Lord. We thank you for the fact that it won't pass away, Lord.

Your word is eternal. Your word is perfect. Lord, we live in a time when it's under attack. We live in a time when truth is questioned, where there is no such thing as truth.

Lord, how are we as believers, how are we as disciples, how are we as your followers to live in a time where it's under attack? What do you have to say about that? Lord, we pray that this would be encouraging to each one that's here.

[5:29] We pray that it would be applicable. And we pray, Lord, that my words would move out of the way so that your message would go out clear. We ask this in your name. Amen. Okay, if you've made your way to Colossians chapter 4, again, we're going to continue.

We're going to start in chapter 2, or verse 2, and we're going to make our way through 6. Only five verses this morning. It says, Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 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.

Verse 5, Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

So this morning, Colossians 4, 2-6, we're going to see Paul address two main areas of life for the believer. Number one, we're going to see Paul address the matter of prayer by believers in their personal life, and then secondly, we see what is expected of Paul's children in their walk before people of the world.

So effectively, again here, he's going to present or provide a blueprint of how we are to live in this world day by day. So let's start with verse 2. Paul begins in verse 2 with a command in the present tense.

[6:51] He says, Continue steadfastly in prayer. So in verse 2, continual prayer. We are urged to commit to a habit of prayer. I'm always impressed by those that are committed to prayer.

Every time I speak, I could tell you, if I was up here speaking about something that I did well, I could speak to you with confidence. The only reason I can speak in confidence this morning is because of what Christ says, not because of what I do.

Okay? When I think of prayer, I think of people, as I look out here, I think of people and maybe coincidentally, it's women, but I think of people like Bev. I think of people like Debbie and Nikki.

I think of my wife. I think of people that have prayer journals or prayer books. My life is kind of like, I have like a prayer pamphlet. So I'm really not the right person to be speaking on this, but the Lord

convicts you and I hope that that message would go out.

He urges us to be in prayer continually. These words have been translated, continue steadfastly. Other places it might read, devote yourself to prayer. And Paul's message here is completely consistent with his overall message in the book of Colossians.

[7:57] And what better way to express the preeminence of Christ than to faithfully come before him in prayer, submitting to him and seeking his will. And what better way to pursue the things that are above where Christ is than to go before him, to devote yourself in prayer and to give him thanks and to seek his favor and his blessing.

You know, this is consistent with Paul's message in the early church was characterized by prayer. If you remember back in Acts chapter 1, the disciples, they gathered together and Christ had ascended to heaven and they went back to Jerusalem in Acts chapter 1 and it tells us with one accord, they were devoting themselves to prayer.

We go on to chapter 2 of Acts in verse 42, it tells us about the spirit having been poured out on the believers and we see the rapid growth of the church that what was going on at that time, the church, what was going on with it?

It says this, it says, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and to what? Prayer. So it's consistent with what we see in scripture.

The early church was committed to this way of life, a way of prayer and Paul himself earlier in this letter in chapter 1, as he opened up, he talks about how he himself had prayed for the church and he details the way that he prayed for them and so now he's coming full circle and he's coming to them and he's urging them to continually be steadfast in prayer and that's really a necessary exhortation for us as well, isn't it?

[9:30] If you think about it, how often in our lives does prayer tend to get pushed to the margins of our day, to the margins of our lives? How often in our daily affairs and our gatherings together, how often prayer can be maybe tapped on to the end of the day or the beginning of the day simply to mark the beginning or the end?

You know, it kind of reminds me sometimes of the breaking of bread. A lot of times we see the breaking of bread not as the remembrance of what Christ did for us, but it's the end of the meeting. It's simply a symbol to say, hey, we're almost done and that's how prayer can be sometimes for us. How often does prayer get neglected for more pressing concerns? You know, maybe the busyness of the day and we find ourselves saying that we have no time to pray and yet it's interesting, isn't it, that in this passage where Paul later on goes on to say that we're to make the best use of our time, which we'll look at that here shortly, what's he saying for us to do?

What is the best use of our time? To commit to prayer and that prayer is indispensable and we're to devote ourselves to it and even in these few brief words, continually be steadfast in prayer.

There's a tremendous blessing that comes from that because Paul is able to commend us or command us to be continually in prayer. What does that imply?

[10:54] If we're commanded to be continually in prayer, what does it imply? It implies that God gives us continual access to him and he continually hears our prayers and that's a tremendous privilege and a blessing that we can come to him freely and we can come to him consistently and we can bring our prayer requests before him.

We don't have to go to a priest to make our requests known to God. We don't have to go to someone else to tell the Lord thank you for what you've done. We have, as you think about in the Oval Office, there's that red phone that goes directly to Moscow.

That's kind of the way it is with us and the Lord. We can now pick up the phone. We can, in prayer, go before the King of Kings and we can make our petitions known. You know, think about the accounts in Scripture and Bible where men and women, where they've gone before earthly kings and they sought their favor and they made their request to them.

You can think about Esther. Remember when Esther went before the king and she really risked her life in doing so. She put her life on the line boldly approaching the king trying to find favor in him.

Or think about Nehemiah. Remember when Nehemiah went before Artaxerxes and he was nervous. He was hesitant. He doesn't know if he's out of line to approach the king and to ask of his request to return to Jerusalem.

[12:24] But yet he goes before him. Even Paul in Acts chapter 25 and 26, you know, Paul's coming before King Agrippa and it talks about all the pomp and circumstance that surrounds King Agrippa and Paul has to be permitted to speak.

He has to be given permission to come before the king and to speak for him. And yet before the king of kings and before the lord of lords, you and I, we've been granted full access to approach him boldly and to approach him openly and to approach him consistently and it's amazing.

It's an amazing privilege that I think we oftentimes take for granted as a believer and we don't take advantage of it, myself included. So, when do we pray? We pray continually, steadfastly.

Well, when we pray, how do we pray? How are we to pray? Look at what Paul says. He says, be watchful in it with thanksgiving. We are to pray being watchful and we are to pray being thankful. Let's look at the first part. Being watchful or on alert. You know, whenever you spend a lot of time doing the same thing again and again, there's a risk.

[13:38] You run a risk or a danger of becoming sluggish when performing it and that's often the characteristics of routine tasks that we do that we don't think about. My son, Caleb, is playing baseball for the first time this year and you think about when you play baseball, what's the most exciting part of the game when you're playing?

You love to play right field when the ball never goes out there? No? I mean, you love sitting on the bench and watching 12 kids before, and I mean, Caleb likes baseball, but if you've ever watched a seven-year-old team play baseball, there's not a lot of action, okay?

So, sitting there on the bench, that's not great, but I'll tell you what, you watch these kids in the field, they're out there for about two or three minutes, I'll tell you what, they're picking every clover that's out there, they're drawing their names in the sand and the dirt, much like Jesus did, you know, maybe they're following the word, they're not paying attention, but I'll tell you what, when they come up to bat, everything else is, they're zoned out, they are focused on batting, and you think about it, in a major league game, for example, you might have 80 at bats, an individual might have three or four of those, so when you account for the time between innings, you're probably only in the zone, so to speak, for three to four percent of the game, the rest of the time, you're really not doing anything, but what if you're not ready when that time comes, when you're a shortstop and the ball's hit to you, if you're not focused, what happens?

Boom, it's in left field, right? You've got to be prepared, you've got to be watchful, you've got to be vigilant, I was in Texas a couple of weeks ago for work, and we went down to a Frisco Rough Rider game, they're a double A affiliate for the Texas Rangers, pretty cool, I mean, not many people there, but it's kind of the way baseball was intended to be, so to speak, you could actually hear the bat hit the ball, and it was neat, so as we were there at the game, one of the people I was with, they had moved seats, and it's not real hard to get a seat up close, it's not like the Cardinal game, you can pretty much sit in the front row if you want to, literally, and you know, the net extends basically from dugout to dugout, and one of the guys I was there with, later in the game, he went down to the third base side, we were sitting on the first baseline, and he went and he sat there with his, he was there with his wife and his kids and his dad, his dad was probably in his 70s or so, and so he's sitting there, and there's a guy at the bat, a left-hander, and if you've been to a baseball, you know, generally the guys that hit the ball into the stands, there, it's the left, the left-hander hits it to right, a left field, because it comes off the bat, that direction, nonetheless, not terribly important, but he's sitting there and he's talking to his dad, so he's sitting closer to home plate, he's turned talking to his dad, and he's telling me this story the next day as far as what it was like, he says,

I can feel the wind of the ball go by my face, and the next thing, it hits his dad in the side of the neck, okay, so ambulance is down there, they take him to the hospital, his dad's okay, but literally, if he had been turned a bit more, it probably would have gotten him in the head, and the point to that story is, he's here talking to his dad, because the game is three hours long, he's watched plenty of people bat, he's visiting, and he took his eye off the ball, he wasn't watchful, and that's what it resulted in, and so Paul says that we need to be watchful, we need to be steadfast, you know, what we find is while we're doing these sort of tasks day by day, what we oftentimes have is our minds, they tend to unwind, and when we're not careful, that happens when we should be engaged in prayer, and our prayer, it can become a routine task, which we no longer think about, do you guys ever feel that?

[17:18] I feel that way sometimes, where it doesn't feel important anymore, it doesn't have any significance, you know, do you ever start talking to the Lord about something, and suddenly you realize your mind has wandered off to something that has nothing to do with anything, you think about it, how would the Lord feel about that?

When I talk to my kids, or when my kids talk to me, and I just give the proverbial, uh-huh, yeah, yep, gotcha, I have no idea what they said, but I just responded, I think my wife feels that way a lot about me, you know, she talks to me, and I'm hearing it, I think I'm hearing it, but I'm not listening to it, and that's not very respectful, is it?

Well, think about when we're talking to the Lord, how does he feel when we're not totally engaged? And that's what Paul cautions against in verse 2 when he says, be watchful, be alert. To keep on alert means to be wide awake, to be watchful.

And Paul says that one of the things we can keep on alert in our prayers is to have an attitude of thanksgiving, that's in verse 2. So concentrating on the things that we can thank God for, it sparks up the prayer life, it doesn't mean that our prayer is only about thanking God, because we're going to see Paul mention here in succeeding verses that there are things that we ought to be asking for, but it's important that we saturate our prayer lives with an appreciation for what God has already done for us, and that's too numerous to list.

You know, Jesus exhorted us along the same line in Matthew 26 and he used the same words that Paul used in this passage to remind us to keep alert in our prayers. In that chapter, we see Peter and James and John that they had all gone with Jesus up to the garden to pray just before his betrayal.

[19:01] And they were tired and they were worn out and they fell asleep when they should have been praying with Jesus. And here's what he told him in verse 41 of chapter 26. He said, Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is what? It's weak. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The weakness of the flesh, it's a great trap which endangers our effective prayer life.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes when you pray you tend to get tired? You know, if you're like me, I can sit glassy-eyed watching a sporting event on TV for hours without falling asleep.

It may even be a boring game, but I have no problem staying awake and yet if I decide to sit down and pray five minutes later, my wife might find me snoring. You know?

Same house, same couch, ACs turn to the same temperature, all the environmental items are the same. But all of a sudden, I'm dead tired.

[20:01] And why is that? It's because the flesh doesn't respond to things of the spirit. And so keep watch and pray with thanksgiving. Well, Paul moves on to something else. Next, he begins to list some of the specific prayer requests.

And the apostle Paul, he asks the believers at Colossae to be praying for him. And it's interesting because although Paul's in prison anticipating a trial, there's one thing that Paul doesn't ask him to pray for.

If I was in this situation, and I was writing my family or the believers here at Bethel a letter, I'm pretty certain I would ask you guys to pray for my release from prison. You know, I'm pretty sure that I would ask that the guards would go easy on me and that the Lord might relieve that pain.

But we don't see Paul ask that. He's in prison. He's anticipating a trial. Yet he does not pray that God will get him out of there. He doesn't even ask him to pray that God will give him the grace to endure the hardship.

Paul's not participating in a pity party. But rather, his prayer request is focused on another direction. What's it on? It's on opportunities for presentation.

[21:03] Paul wrote in verse 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. So he was in prison for one reason, preaching Jesus Christ.

And now he's asking the believers at Colossae to pray for him that while he's in prison that God will open up special opportunities for him to present the truth of Christ.

You know, wherever Paul is, he has one consuming passion. That is to make Jesus known. And he's not praying that God will get him out of there, although that would not be an invalid prayer. Whether he wants them to pray with him that God will give him the opportunity that while he is there that Jesus Christ will be made known.

You know, Paul doesn't view his life as being wasted in prison. He sees himself as being placed in prison by God, so now he asks him to pray that God will give him an open door of opportunity right where he is.

[22:10] And how applicable should that be for us? It doesn't matter if you're a single mom at home. It doesn't matter if you're someone who's unemployed. It doesn't matter if you're a manager with 25 people underneath you.

It doesn't matter if you're a kid in the fourth grade. It doesn't matter if you're an elderly person with days to live. God wants us to pray for opportunities that doors would be opened so that Jesus Christ would be known right where you're at.

And that's what Paul was asking for here. From Ephesus, he wrote this, but I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost for a wide door for effective service has opened to me. And there are many adversaries.

Paul says there are many opportunities there to preach Jesus Christ, but there's also much opposition. He has a unique opportunity to preach Christ, so he's going to stay there.

And he's going to take advantage of the opportunity. The reason that Paul wanted the door open in verse 3 was that so we may speak forth the mystery of Christ.

[23:13] The mystery of Christ. The revelation that God has given concerning Christ in his finished work. That's the truth. The mystery is a truth that you can only know by revelation.

And a mystery in scripture is something you can't find by your own natural reasoning process, but instead it's something which can only be known by a revelation of God. And the mystery Paul is speaking about here, the salvation found by God, by his son, Jesus Christ.

Paul is asking them to pray that he would have an opportunity to present that mystery. So opportunities number one and number two, not only opportunities, but he asks for prayer for clarity in the presentation.

Notice in verse 4, notice Paul's continual prayer request here, in order that I might make it clear in a way I ought to speak. And I think this verse, I must say, it's quite interesting to me.

And here's the reason why. You have Paul to whom was revealed the mystery concerning the church of Jesus Christ and he asks the believers to pray that he would make the message clear which he was presenting.

[24:20] That just seems interesting to me. When you think about when you're, when you know something forward and backward, why would he be asking for clarity in presenting the gospel, the mystery?

You know, you may feel that anyone can make the message of the gospel clear, right? You're a sinner. Christ died on the cross as the atonement for your sins. He was raised from the dead.

If you believe, you'll be saved. Is that clear? It's accurate. The question is, is it clear? Is it clear? And there's no need to pray about that.

Is there, Paul? You know, I think if Paul realized the need for God to be working in the presentation of the message, how much more do we need to understand that in our lives today? His great concern was that the message would be presented in such a way as to be effective, I think, to those that were listening, to those that heard.

And the effective presentation of the gospel message is not simply a matter of learning a few standard phrases and then dumping them out on the face of everyone we meet. I think sometimes we present the gospel in somewhat of a robotic manner.

[25:28] We walk up to a person, we push a button, then we dump our speech and then we're off to the next person. But I don't think that's the proper approach.

We must have sensitivity to those to whom we minister. I believe that's what Paul's talking about.

You know, he obviously knew the facts of the gospel. If we look back at 1 Corinthians 15, a passage Paul wrote, we can find clarification of what the gospel is.

The problem is not that Paul was unclear on the facts of the gospel. He knew it. But what he wanted was the ability to make the gospel clear to the people with whom he came in contact.

And his concern was to communicate the truth of Jesus Christ to them and the power of the Holy Spirit in a way that they would grasp or that they would understand, a way that would resonate to them.

So he prays for a clear gospel. You know, Paul desired for the believers at Colossae to be praying with him about the clearness in his presentation of the gospel.

[26:26] And I think we too today, we need to be praying for one another about this. In regards to our small body here of believers at Bethel and those who are others that are in the church, body of Christ, we need to pray that God will give us courage and boldness and wisdom to present Jesus Christ wherever we are.

You know, but along with that, I think we need to pray, we need sensitivity to the Holy Spirit in each situation so that we can present Jesus Christ effectively. I don't think any of us would say that we have any desire to run around and say, 30 people heard the gospel from me today.

Praise the Lord if 30 people heard the gospel today. But there's another question. Was I effective in presenting the gospel to those 30 people? I'm not asking if 30 people believe, but did I make it clear to them and did I reach them where they are so that the truth of the gospel was presented?

We know from scripture our job, we can't save people. That's God's job to do, but we are called to be messengers. We are the conduit by which the message goes out and we do have a job to present it clearly, to present it accurately, and to present it to those who are lost.

So we need to be praying for one another. We should be asking that the Lord would open up doors for us to present the gospel and then we should be asking him to give us wisdom to present the truth of the gospel in a way that the spirit can use to reach the hearts and the lives of those to whom we present.

[28:02] So continual prayer, watchful, thankful, asking for open doors and clarity of the gospel. Well, in the second half of the passage this morning, Paul wants to address the conduct of believers.

So in essence, we have the first part, what we do in private, our communing with the Lord. And here at the second half, we see what's done in public, that meaning how we live before the world.

And his approach here is related to making the gospel clear and it has to do with the way that we live our lives and he wants to address the walk of believers as it relates to taking advantage of opportunities to present the gospel.

If I asked you the question today, if I said to you, what do you think is more important, what you say or what you do? What do you think most people will, and how do you think most people will answer that?

I think what you do is far more important than what you say. What you do, I think, is far more important than what you say. Paul says in Colossians 4, 5, conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity for your translation may say, and I think this is a better translation, one of my favorite phrases in scripture, redeeming the time.

[29:21] Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. The word which is translated, conducted, means to walk, and so Paul is saying walk yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, meaning those outside the body of Christ.

and he proceeds in this warning, excuse me, he builds on what he has already written, that if we have the right kind of personal relationship with the Lord, if we're communing with him in prayers, if we're praying for opportunities to share the gospel, and we're being effective in that presentation, Paul now says that we are to walk before the world in an effective manner.

We're to walk in an effective manner. How are we to walk? Well, number one, he says to walk wisely. You know, sometimes I think Christians, we just barge in and we crash our way through life, but we are to walk wisely, it says, toward outsiders.

As unbelievers observe our walk before them, the way we walk should provide opportunities to open doors, ultimately for us to present the gospel, and walking before them properly will make them open to our testimony.

And to our words. But if we lose that testimony on the front end as far as our walk, we're never going to get to the point where we can present a clear gospel. We must live wisely toward

outsiders.

[30:46] In 1 Thessalonians 4, chapter 9 through 12, Paul said this, he says, Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another, for indeed, if you do practice it toward all the believers who are in all Macedonia, but we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and to work with your hands just as we commanded you so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

You know, we're to be diligent, working properly to meet the needs they have so that they will be a good testimony before outsiders. We need to be careful of our lifestyle and conduct and our conduct because unbelievers are watching.

People in the world, they can do things that believers cannot do because the testimony of believers is at stake. We don't want to give believers any excuse, unbelievers, I'm sorry, any excuse to turn off the gospel of Jesus Christ because of offense of our lives.

They may be and they likely will be, I will say they will be offended by the gospel but we don't want our lives to be part of that offense.

If they're offended, let it be because of what the truth of the scripture is, not because of the hypocrisy of how you and I live. So walking properly, seizing opportunities.

[32:19] So after telling believers to conduct themselves with wisdom toward outsiders, Paul adds in verse 5, making the most of the opportunity or redeeming the time.

And that's an expression of buying up the opportunity. Paul says that we should make the most of the time that God gives us by using it in the most effective way. You know, that phrase, redeeming the time, I think it becomes more impactful as I get older.

Right? I mean, I think about time. Think about your kids. My oldest, KJ, he's in seventh grade next year. Have I redeemed the time?

Have I bought up the time that's been given to me? Think about the youth group. I was down at Junior Church last week and I saw all these great signatures in the top right corner of the wall. and I was told that all the graduates were signing the wall and you look back at some of the names like, you know, you see people like Lydia, you see people like Teresa, you see people down now to the 12th grade, you see a lineage there, the time that has passed.

Have we redeemed the time? You know, think about Bethel. Is it hard to believe that just in a few years here, 30 years, that's hard to believe, isn't it?

[33:34] It doesn't seem like that long ago that we were over at North Kirkwood Middle School. 30 years. Are we redeeming the time? My whole life should be built around looking for opportunities to present Christ, seizing the time and using it wisely.

When I think about time and how quickly it goes, there was a practical application of that in my life on Friday. Those of you that know my niece Kelly, she works at the daycare, many of you know her from outside church, but she graduated from high school on Friday.

We're going to go to a graduation party today for those that have just graduated, for Jesse and for Jacob. So time goes quickly and I'm sitting there in that graduation, I'm thinking about, I remember when she was born and now she's going to college, how the time passes and the impact that we have on people's lives.

And I was struck by those of you that know Kelly, she is, I mean, if I can brag on her briefly, she's really amazing. I mean, not only, she's smart, she's kind, she's a beautiful person, but above all that, she has an amazing character and a passion for the Lord.

And that's what makes her so special. And so last night, she had the opportunity to give, or Friday night, the opportunity to give the valedictorian address at the graduation. And there was a phrase that she said that kind of struck a chord with me that I think fits right in here with regards to our sharing of the gospel, our presentation to those who are in need.

[35:13] And it was this, she said, I may not be able to solve all of the world's problems, but I can be part of solving a problem in one person's world.

You know, think how the Lord uses you. You may not be able to, and you will not be able to solve the problems of the world because we know where the world ultimately is heading. But the Lord can use you to solve the problems of one person's world.

And are we doing that? Are we redeeming the time? I think at the conference about what Nate Bramson said, when he's looking at somebody and when he says, when I look at somebody, I don't see, you know, Tom Broadwell.

What I see is, I see a soul that was knitted together by God. I see someone that he has loved from the foundations of the world. I see someone that he cherishes. Now, when you look at people that way, it puts it in a different light, doesn't it?

I think about a message that I tell Tom Grasas on a regular basis he gave probably five, six years ago. And at the end of his message, he played that song by Brandon Heath, Give Me the Eyes. If we could just see people the way that God sees people, how would that change the way that we interact with the unbelieving world?

[36:26] You may not be able to change the problems of the world, but you can be part of what God uses to change one person's problem in their world. We have to evaluate all of our activities.

We have to determine how they affect our testimony for Christ. Is there any particular activity that provides an opportunity to present Christ, or will it make it more difficult for me to present it?

You know, it's interesting how Paul describes the opportunities. They don't just fall into our laps. We have to buy them up. We have to redeem them. That means we must look for them, and we must use them, and we must approach our neighbors and our friends and people we work with in our jobs.

We are looking for opportunities to present Christ to them. Are we redeeming the time? And then finally this morning, Paul elaborates on how this is done in verse 6.

How do we redeem the time? How do we forge those relationships? How do we make the gospel known to people? How do we lay that foundation? In verse 6, let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt.

[37:31] So that you may know how you should respond to each person.

Pleasing speech should characterize a believer. Does that characterize you?

If somebody talked about you this morning, would they say, that's a man or a woman of pleasing speech? We need to be careful what we talk about. Our speech should be seasoned with salt. You know, salt gives flavor to food.

Salt prevents corruption. In Ephesians 4, 29, Paul said that, no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as it is good for edification according to the needs of the moment, that it may give grace to those who are here, to those that hear.

Do your words bring about grace? You know, if I'm always complaining about my job, which I oftentimes find myself doing, or if I were to complain about my boss and then turn around and try to talk to my coworkers about the graciousness and the love and the kindness of Christ, how's that going to work out?

Is that what they have seen in my actions and my words? If I've talked about things which are questionable or doubtful for a believer to be involved in, if my conversation has been absorbed with things of this life, I've undermined my effectiveness as a witness for Christ.

[38:54] So we need to be careful that we do not destroy our opportunities in subtle ways. We can nullify our effectiveness in presenting the gospel by walking improperly before unbelievers.

And our effectiveness in making Christ known is not just simply to walk up to someone and to hit them alongside the head with the gospel. And while it's true that unbelievers need to hear the facts of the gospel if they're to be saved, but the continuing impact of my life as a witness must also be considered.

They should see a difference in the things I talk about and the way that I walk in Christ. They should recognize that I don't grumble. They should recognize that I don't complain or I don't run people down.

They should know that you do not gossip about someone else. A believer's speech is to be gracious, wholesome, seasoned with salt. And not only should we be gracious, but we should be consistent.

Paul finishes in verse 6 to tell the people that graciousness does what graciousness does. He says, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

[40:06] You know, that enables us to give the right answer at the right time. the believer. We should be developing a biblical pattern of speech.

Our speech should be consistent with the word of God and the character of Christ. It should be natural for us to talk about the things of the word. You know, that doesn't mean that we can't talk to the guys about the cardinal game and what's going on with sports.

It doesn't mean that ladies, you know, if you enjoy book club that you can't get together with ladies and discuss, you know, books. It doesn't mean that you can't share your favorite recipes. You know, if you like to be on a motorcycle and you like to do trips, it doesn't mean that you can't engage with those that are unbelievers and share your love of motorcycles.

The kids are up here today, so for them, it doesn't mean that you can't engage with your friends with, you know, with video games if they're wholesome. It doesn't mean that you can't be involved in things like Girl Scouts. It doesn't mean that you can't interact in that way.

But we must talk only about, there are some things believers can't talk about because they're corrupt and they would be inappropriate. You know, I think what I see in the world, talking badly about your spouse, what fruit does that bring about?

[41:26] Talking about how much of a burden your children are, how does that make an unbeliever feel? Or other parents for that matter. Complaining about our boss, how does that make us look to an unbelieving world?

It makes us look the same as them. Joining in on making fun of kids at school, how does that separate us? It doesn't. It just lumps us together with the world.

Bad-mouthing our parents. Your friends see that. They see it's no different than their own house. There's nothing different about this family. They treat each other the same way we do.

When we gossip about others, how does that go for your relationship with unbelievers? Are they more receptive to the word when they hear us talking about others? As we talk and we walk biblically, we are opening the door and having the wisdom to respond to each person.

And such an approach becomes part of the natural flow of our lives as we submit ourselves to the spirit. And he'll enable us to make Jesus Christ known. I'm going to ask the musicians to come up here as we close.

[42:35] I'm going to ask you this question. You think about having the gospel. You think about what the gospel does. And my question is what are we doing with it?

What am I doing with it? You know, if I had a great friend who had a child and they had a disease and it was a rare disease and they were going to die from this disease.

and I had some ailment and the reason I have this, I have a cure for the ailment and the reason why I have a cure for this ailment while the reason I had this medicine is that I too had this same disease that this young child has.

And I too was sentenced to death and that was coming. And I have this and this ailment, this, or this, I'm sorry, this cure, this medicine, it's not expensive.

In fact, it cost me nothing. I didn't have to work for it. It was given to me. And I have this cure and I have this child over here who simply all they need to do is take this drug and they will be healed.

[43:39] What ought my response be? To put it away? To hide it? I don't need it. I've already got it. The gospel has been given to me and that's what it is. Do we give that cure to a world that is sentenced to death?

Are we sharing that with others? You see, we as believers, we've been entrusted with an amazing message. It's a life-changing, life-saving, eternal message.

And it's a message of hope. It's a message of grace. It's a message of mercy. It's a message of salvation. Fervent prayer.

Steadfast with thanksgiving. Praying for opportunities. Praying that we may share or present a clear gospel. Wise with those that surround us.

Again, redeeming the time. Being gracious. Being consistent. Always ready to give an answer for the hope that is with me.

[44:49] Music is a hospital The Lim Sproul is a hospital associated with forensic evidence Looney and Australian notice welcome to the more the Hyp ■■■ or Unternehmen for association and careers to get here.

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