

How big is your view of Jesus?

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Date: 07 October 2018

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[0 : 0 0] Well, great to see you this morning, folks. Why don't you, if you've got your Bibles there, why don't you turn to Colossians chapter 1. This is where we're going to be over the next little while. We're going to look at chapters 1 and 2 pre-Christmas.

Can you believe that Christmas is even a thought in our heads? It's amazing, isn't it? Pre-Christmas, and then we're going to look at chapters 3 and 4 after Christmas. And it's a letter that has got so much to teach us about who our God is.

And it's my prayer that as we go through it together that we'll get a bigger sense of who he is and what he's done for us and how glorious he is. And that what we just sung there would not just be kind of rhetoric, that it would be so true in our lives.

So I want to honor you with my whole life. So why don't you turn to Colossians chapter 1 and let's still our hearts and pray together. And let's ask that God would be with us now as we turn to his word. Psalm 119.

The psalmist writes, Your word, Lord, is a lamp for my feet and it's a light for my path. Father, thank you so much for your precious word. Think of what we read in Isaiah there, that it's a word that you, through which, bring life.

[1 : 0 7] And it's a word through which you accomplish your purposes. And so, Father, we ask that your word would do its work in our hearts this morning. And that you would transform us more into the people that you have called us to be.

And that your spirit would come and he would show us wondrous things in your word. Wondrous things in your law. And that he would make us more in love with your son, Jesus Christ.

In whose name we pray. Amen. So, I felt the world was just, there was just too much purpose. Too much logic.

It was too beautiful to happen by accident. There has to be somebody bigger than you. And bigger than me. Guys, can you click this on?

I don't know what's going on with that. Just click it on. These are the words of Gene Kernan, who flew to the moon on Apollo 17. And what he's describing is what the experts call the overview effect.

[2 : 0 6] I don't know if you've ever heard of the overview effect. But apparently what happens a lot when astronauts go into space. And it's the feeling of awe that you get when you encounter the bigness of something.

And how that encounter changes you. And after that encounter, you're not the same. It's called the overview effect. And I guess I just want to say right at the start, as we journey into this letter, as we step into this book of Colossians, my prayer is that each of us would leave it with the overview effect.

So, here's the question that God is going to ask us as he speaks to us through his word. And as we journey through this letter to the Colossians. And here it is. How big is your view of Jesus?

So, I was going to ask us as a community, how big is our view of Jesus? But let me put it personally to you this morning. How big is your view of Jesus? Is he a Sunday school Jesus?

Is he meek and mild? Is he unoffensive? Does he make a little appearance at Christmas and Easter? And if we're honest, we kind of prefer the Christmas Jesus. And he's got very little relevance to my life.

[3 : 13] Is that your view of Jesus this morning? Is he the lucky charm Jesus? Is he in, I'd rather have him on my side than not on my side? And if honest, he should be grateful that I've picked him for my team and not the Dalai Lama.

Is that your view of Jesus? Is he the 999 Jesus? Is he in, I'll phone him up when I've got an emergency in my life and I need some religious input. And I fully expect him to be there to answer my call when I call him.

Is he the role model Jesus? Is he up there with the other good teachers in life who have got decent things to say about life that I can kind of cherry pick and I can use to help me navigate my way through this thing that I call life, that we call life.

Friends, how big is your view of Jesus? Whoever you are here this morning, whatever's going on in your heart, let me ask you, how big is your view of Jesus? Because this letter to the Colossians is going to radically stretch the contours of our understanding because it's going to present us with the real Jesus.

And the real Jesus is so much bigger than we think he is. A Jesus who is master of history. A Jesus who is Lord over every area of our existence.

[4 : 28] A Jesus who is the sustainer of the stars and the planets. Jesus who is the giver of every breath that we take. A Jesus who is sovereign over every single government and political power.

A Jesus who is sufficient for every single area of our lives. And a Jesus who is a wonderful saviour and a lover of souls.

This is the Jesus that Paul is going to present us with in Colossians. So how big is your view of Jesus? How big is he in your mind? Because I guess the answer to that question, it really makes a difference, does it, in everyday life?

It really makes a difference. It matters when disaster strikes. When you get the news from the hospital. When you get those results. And it's not the results that you were hoping would come.

It matters when plans in your life fall through, doesn't it? When that P45 comes through the door and life is all of a sudden up in the air. When you didn't get that graduate job from university that you really, really wanted.

[5 : 35] It matters when persecution comes in life. I can make a little prediction for the future. When things are going to get really, really tough to stand for this king. It really matters who we think he is.

It matters when things go well in life, doesn't it? You know that life itself, everything that we have, is a gift from this glorious Jesus. So friends, let me ask you, how big is your view of Jesus?

How big is he? It was A.W. Tozer, who was a theologian back in the day, who famously said, that which comes to our minds when we first think about God is the most important thing about us.

What do you think of when you think of Jesus? And it's my prayer that as we journey through this letter over the next weeks and months, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that we would get a Colossian-sized view of Jesus.

Who he is, what he's done, what he's doing, who we are in him, and that that would radically transform our individual and our corporate lives together as his people, as we respond to who he is, as we pledge ourselves to live for his glory alone, as we live by his word alone, and as we seek to make him known in our world.

[6 : 50] This is Colossians, okay? Are you excited as we get into this? It's thrilled my heart, this book, as I've journeyed through it over the last couple of months, but more than that, even over the last couple of years, because this is one of the most Christ-saturated books in the New Testament, in the whole Bible, in fact.

Wonderful. Now, as we get into this letter this morning, okay, let me just give you three Ps by way of background. I like to alliterate. You've probably picked that one up. Three Ps as we get into Colossians. Here's the first P.

Look, I don't even know what's going on here. Paul. Here's the first P. Paul. The man whose life has been turned upside down by Jesus Christ. The man who once in his life was a persecutor of the church.

He encounters Jesus, and now he's a preacher about Jesus. Quite incredible, isn't it? Incredible the difference that Jesus has made in Paul's life. And what Paul has been doing is he's been traveling around the east side of the Med, as we would know it, and he's been teaching people about Jesus.

And on his travels, if we go to the next slide, he spent a good chunk of time in the city of Ephesus, which is a city which is about 100 miles west of Colossae, and that we read about in Acts 19.

[8 : 00] If you want to go home in your own time and check that out. And after some time in Ephesus, a while later, Paul finds himself under house arrest in Rome.

And it's from Rome that Paul writes this letter to the church in Colossae. Now get your head around this one, okay? Amazingly, Paul has never met the people that he's writing to.

He's never met them. Which raises the question, doesn't it? Why would he bother writing a letter to them? Well, here's the second P. It's the planter. Because when Paul was preaching in Ephesus, it seems likely that a man called Epaphras, who we'll come on to see a little later this morning, he hears Paul's message about the risen Jesus, and God opens his heart, and he becomes a Christian.

But the thing about Epaphras is he's not an Ephesus boy, he's a Colossae boy. So he goes back, what seems likely he goes back to his hometown, and so good is this news that he just goes around telling people about Jesus.

I love that. Do you know what? Just tells people about Jesus. So true in life, isn't it? That nobody needs to tell us to talk about the things that really excite us.

[9 : 18] Like, nobody taught me how to love Adrianian's football club, okay? Nobody sent me on a course. Nobody taught me how to tell people about them. Nobody needs to remind me to check the score on Saturday.

No one needs to encourage me to wear the badge in public. No one needs to tell me to tell people when they win, which is why he didn't hear from me yesterday, okay?

But it's true in life, isn't it, that nobody needs to tell us to tell the things that excite us. This is Epaphras. He's gone to his hometown, and he's told them about the God who has saved him and transformed him, and how he's done that through his son, Jesus Christ.

Because this news about Jesus is simply incredible. And what seems to have happened is that the people who have heard in Colossae about Jesus through Epaphras, some of them have become Christians too.

And God has birthed this thing that I like to call Colossae Evangelical Church. There it is on the map. This little group of Christians meeting together who've had their lives transformed by Jesus Christ.

[10 : 30] And on the whole, as you read this letter, you get the sense that things are going really well. They are really going at it in their faith. But, and here's the third P, there's a problem.

And so dangerous is this problem to the very life of this church that it's prompted Epaphras to travel all the way from Colossae to find Paul in Rome to ask him for help.

Now that is a thousand mile plus trip in the first century. No easy jet direct flight. Yeah? No cross country train.

I don't know how he's got there, but he's got there in the first century. Now think about it. How much does he really love these fellow brothers and sisters in this church? To go all that way to find Paul.

And how concerned is he about their spiritual lives? About Christ Jesus being the center of this church and then pursuing him. That he's gone all the way to find Paul so that he can help them. Why has he done this?

[11 : 30] Because certain people in the vicinity of this church are promoting teachings that are distracting from and decentralizing Jesus. Now it's hard to nail it down exactly.

It's most likely a mixture of Jewish teachings and pagan cult teachings that are distracting from Jesus. But the crux of it is that while Jesus is a good start in life, that there's more to experience and there's more to know beyond him.

And the danger is if that is swallowed, then Jesus moves from being a big deal at the center of their lives to a small deal at the periphery.

And so the thrust of this letter is keep going with Jesus. Have him blow your minds. Why would you move on for him? We've got everything that we need in him. Let me just show you a few of these in the letter to show you how this works.

Maybe just put them up on the screen. If you look at 123, Paul writes, if you continue in your faith, established and firm and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel, keep going with Jesus.

[12 : 42] 2.6 Which I think is the real heart of this letter. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted, which is where we got the idea for this series from, rooted and built up in him.

Keep going with Jesus. Keep going with Jesus. Don't take your eyes off him. Fix your eyes on him. Set your hearts on him. Let a big vision of him and who he is dominate your horizons and make it your life ambition to get to know him better.

Because we have a big Jesus. One who is so much bigger than we think he is. So Paul says, keep going for him. Keep your eyes on him.

And in verses this morning, Paul wants these Colossian Christians who he knows are perhaps confused by the stuff that they're hearing. he wants them to know two things. Okay, here's the first one.

He wants them to know that they are the real deal. So writing to people, remember, he's never met. Verse 3, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

[13 : 57] So Paul is praying, isn't he? He's praying, he's thrilled when he hears about these Christians, as he hears Epaphras speak about what God has done. He's absolutely thrilled. And his heart is filled with thankfulness as he hears how God's transforming grace has been at work in their lives.

Have you ever felt that? As you've heard about how God has been at work in someone's life. You're just thrilled. Right? We had a wonderful time together last Sunday, did we not? Absolutely incredible to hear the stories of Sabina and Zoe in their own ways about how God has been at work in their lives and why they wanted to take that step of baptism, to tell the world that they follow Jesus.

It was great, wasn't it? We had a little three-year-old this week when we bathed her. She was asking if we were baptizing her. It was funny. She was clearly watching. But wasn't it brilliant to be reminded just how good our God is?

But I wonder if you felt that in your own heart and in your soul. Because see if Sabina had got up and said, guys, I just really want you to know that I've joined the gym. Okay?

And then Zoe had come up after that and said, guys, I just really want you to know that I've joined the book club and I love it. Friends, I would not have been moved to tears over that. I just wouldn't.

[15 : 12] I mean, I love reading. I love the gym. But I just would not have been moved to tears on that. But see, even the two of them stood up and said, Jesus Christ is everything in my life. I once was dead. He's made me alive.

I once was going to hell because of my sin. He's given me heaven. When they told us that, friends, my soul was filled with thankfulness. That's what Paul's saying here.

When I hear about how God has been at work in your lives, my heart is just filled with thankfulness. And do you see the evidences of God's grace that Paul hears in their lives?

Do you see them in those opening verses there? The three of them? Faith, love, and hope. Faith, love, and hope.

The distinct marks of the Christian community. Faith, their faith in Jesus Christ, their devotion to him, their love for him, their trust in him, their service of him, and their love for who?

[16 : 12] Do you notice it? Verse 3, all of God's people. So they love those in their church family, but do you see how it doesn't just stop there? How they love all the Christians who they come in contact with throughout the world, their neighbors living in the different cities round about them?

Here is a love that is not determined by age, or interest, or gender, or nationality, or race, but here is a love that is the natural overflow of our oneness in Jesus Christ.

And it is a wonderful thing. And if you've ever had that experience when you meet Christians who you've never met before and instantly you have that love and connection with them. Remember when Alex and I went to Malawi, first went to church there, that wonderful feeling of being somewhere completely different, having a different skin color to many people, speaking a different language to many people, wearing different clothes, but walking into that church and being lovingly greeted by brothers and sisters in Christ who we instantly had the biggest thing in common with in our lives.

It's an incredible feeling, isn't it? This is the love that Paul is talking about here. The genuine concern, the genuine appreciation, the genuine love for brothers and sisters around the world.

It's why it's such a privilege, is it not, to pray for brothers and sisters around the world who we've never met. And our love for one another and overflow of our oneness in Christ, friends, it's one of the best apologetics that we can offer to a fractured and to a divided and a confused watching world.

[17 : 46] As they look in and they see this and they think, how on earth does that happen? Our government is spending millions of pounds every year trying to make it happen and yet here it is. Our love for one another, our love for God's people, friends, it's such a beautiful thing.

So let me ask you, just while we're there, let me ask you, are you making every effort in your life to love your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you really making every effort? What opportunities are ahead of you this week where you could demonstrate that?

Who could you text? Who could you hug? Okay, we're Scottish but we do like hugging, okay? Who can you pray for? Who can you visit? Who can you welcome? Who can you visibly show love to?

You know, I find it one of the most amazing things here when I hear people come, visitors who've never been and they say to me at the door on the way out that we just felt so welcomed here. It's wonderful to hear that. This is a faith and a love to see in the text that springs from the hope that is stored up for them in heaven.

Love that phrase, stored up. It's a word that is used to, the countries are, in our minds, is it something that is securely fixed and placed, i.e.

[18 : 59] nobody is going to take this from you. Nobody can rob you of this. This is kind of Fort Knox type security. What assurance about the future.

is it not wonderful to think as we celebrate a dear sister who's going to be with the Lord that this was true for her? That we are not a people who are marked by no hope. We are a people marked by hope.

And this truth is that yes, while we know life with God now, our best life is yet to come. And our present experience is but a foretaste of the blessings that will be ours because of Christ one day in heaven.

Friends, we are a community that should be marked by hope. Jonathan Edwards, to go to heaven fully and to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here.

These are the marks of this Christian community that helps Paul see that God has really been at work in their lives because this is a community that's been marked by faith, that is marked by faith, by love, and by hope.

[20 : 01] And so the natural question that comes to us this morning as we see this is to think about whether we are a community who are marked by faith, by love, and by hope. I wonder whether these false teachers, whether they were looking down on these believers because of the simplicity and the unimpressiveness of their lives following Jesus.

I wonder whether these Colossians are thinking to themselves, maybe we're not the real deal. Maybe there is more to know and experience beyond Jesus. Paul says, nope.

Here is the fruit that shows me that you are the real deal. And the second thing he wants them to know really quickly is that this message is a big deal. What is it?

It's a true message. Do you see it in the text? Presumably to differentiate it from the false one that they are hearing from these teachers. The message of God's outrageous grace, the great love that he has shown us in sending his son who paid our debt of sin on the cross, reconciled us to our maker, and to prove that it is the real deal and a big deal message, I want you to know, says Paul, this word, this message has not just impacted your postcode.

Do you see? It is impacting the whole world. Verse 6. In the same way the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.

[21 : 29] This letter probably written somewhere like 30 years roughly after Jesus had ascended and here it is impacting the world and it's still happening today.

I don't know about you but so often what I do is I take how I perceive things as I see them here which is relatively slow growth and I project that onto the world and I kid myself thinking that what's happening here is happening all over the world.

Friends, that is just not true. I looked it up on an Operation World website this week which gives you statistics about the worldwide church. Let me just give you three to encourage you this morning that this is true.

In Sudan, one of the hardest places to be a Christian, the church has increased tenfold over the last 40 years. Tenfold. In 1949 in China it's estimated that there were 1.2 million Christians and today even under such severe persecution it's estimated that there are over 100 million Christians and even that figure is probably too low because we don't know much about the underground church.

And here's my favourite okay, in 1989 on Mongolia if you know where that is on the map of Mongolia do you know how many Christians there were? 1989 four. Yeah?

[22 : 46] Four Christians today over 20,000 and you hear reports of people who have spent time with them and who have come back and they will tell you that these Christians in Mongolia are some of the most humble and some of the most evangelistically hungry Christians that you're likely to ever meet.

And if you think about where Mongolia is on the map with Russia to the north and China to the south you can praise God how he is strategically at work all over the world. It's a thrill of hearts how God is at work.

In the same way the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world. And it's not just a global thing you see just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

So the gospel has been impacting and is impacted and is impacting this little city of Colossae. And think about how it started through this man called Epaphras.

This is how God works through the ordinary unspectacular lives of faithful and daring people who are willing to speak about Jesus. Should make a difference doesn't it?

[23 : 55] Those conversations we have in the office about Jesus are not insignificant. The conversations we have with our family the way that we pray for them and love them that is not insignificant. Here is God moving in the ordinary means.

Love it. What does it say? These believers learned it from Epaphras. That word learned in the original is suggestive of more than he just spoke words to them. Epaphras taught them and he helped them see how the gospel should impact every area of their lives and he showed them how this message should change them as he lived his life alongside them.

Is that not a wonderful example of what it means to be a disciple who makes disciples of Jesus Christ? Sharing word and heart with people passing on gospel and life modeling to others what it looks like to worship Jesus with our whole lives.

you know Alex and I often ask ourselves that question in relation to the girls we think to ourselves what are they learning from us? What are they hearing from us?

What are they seeing in us? Because that's the truth of it isn't it? As we grow up in this world as they grow up in this world either that we'll be discipling them or the world will be discipling them.

[25 : 12] And the best thing that we can give them is not a good school it's not to settle them into a good neighborhood but rather it's to do everything that we can to live out in front of them a living and an active and a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ to admit our failures to say sorry when we got it wrong to demonstrate that we live by grace and seeking to introduce them to this good God who has saved us that is the best thing that we can give people here's what I want to challenge us with today friends who are you modeling this to?

Who is learning the Christian life from you? who is watching you? Who could you get alongside? Who could you ask to get alongside you? We pray for opportunities to share Jesus with others see these Colossian Christians they learned it from Epaphras and Paul wants them to know that he is a dear fellow servant and a faithful minister here is a man full of faith of love and of hope and Paul is writing here to say listen you can trust this guy and you can trust his message and Epaphras he is working he is this is one of my heroes of the New Testament this man Epaphras cannot wait to meet him in glory Epaphras is working so hard for them because he loves them so much he's serving them he's making himself nothing for the sake of these Christians because he knows that the gospel is a big deal the song that we sometimes sing here Jesus is Lord whose voice sustains the stars and planets yet in his wisdom laid aside his crown

Jesus the man who washed our feet who bore our suffering became a curse to bring salvation's plan friends as we close this morning let me ask you how big is your view of Jesus have it in your mind as we journey through this series together is he the Sunday school Jesus is he the lucky charm Jesus is he a role model Jesus is he a 999 Jesus or will we make it our prayer that God through his word would help us see that we have a big Jesus you know Charlie Duke was an astronaut who flew on board Apollo 16 and after his time in space after a little while he became a Christian and somebody asked him about the overview effect and he said now that I'm a believer in my mind I can see that sight and proclaim as the psalmist did that the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky proclaims the work of his hands

Psalms 19 friends how big is your view of Jesus because Colossians presents us with a big Jesus and he's a Jesus who is so much bigger than we think he is why don't we pray maybe just as we before we move on this morning let's just pause and let's just take time to consider what we've heard and sung and read this morning and ask that God would be at work in our hearts thanks for we've made it to