

Ending Chapters  
Colossians 1:24-29

- I. I like to think of life in terms of chapters.
  - a. Some people go with years.
    - i. “When I was six years old ...”
    - ii. “In 1956, ...”
  - b. Others go by eras.
    - i. “I remember when gas was \$1.50 a gallon ...”
    - ii. “I remember the ‘60’s ...” {No one remembers the 60’s, but you get the idea.}
  - c. I like to think of chapters. [I like books.]
    - i. Not so linear – a chapter about being a father.
      1. Another about being a husband.
      2. Another about 5<sup>th</sup> grade – another chapter, another story, another day!
    - ii. And they cover as much time & years as they need to cover.
  - d. So today, I’m thinking of the last seven years as a chapter.
    - i. I’d like to think I’ve learned some things over the course of this chapter.
    - ii. I’d like to think you’ve learned some things as well.
    - iii. And that we’ve learned together!
  - e. Colossians 1 has been an important chapter to me over the last 5 years or more {since shortly after I came here}.
    - i. It helps to remind me what I’m trying to be about. Even when I’m blowing it – what I’m trying to be about.
    - ii. Not so much verse 24 – that bit about suffering. Although it’s a good verse to remind yourself that it’s not about you (the pastor) – it’s about building up the church.
    - iii. More verse 25 – becoming a servant by the commission of God.
    - iv. And verse 26-27 – the mystery that has been unveiled and disclosed to us in Christ.
  - f. But where it hits me the most is verses 28 and 29.
    - i. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” – Colossians 1:28-29.
    - ii. Being a pastor is hard work – despite only having to work on Sundays.
      1. I don’t mind the work so much – God gives me the energy for that.
      2. I dwell on the wisdom part – the wisdom to present everyone I pastor as fully mature in Christ.
    - iii. I know that maturity isn’t entirely the pastor’s responsibility, but it’s one that weigh heavily on me.
      1. Through my preaching and teaching, every Sunday, I’ve tried to show you Christ.
      2. So I want to take this last opportunity to keep doing the same.

- iv. I want to share with you some “chapters” that I’ve begun to think about.
  - 1. Ones that reveal the condition of my heart, and ...
  - 2. Ones that I hope you will continue writing.

## II. Chapter 1 – Humility.

- a. Humility’s a tough one.
  - i. As soon as you let people know you have it – you’ve lost it.
  - ii. I know this – I don’t have it.
- b. Far too often my desires outpace God’s plans.
  - i. Largely because I think too much of myself.
  - ii. There’s been a lot of air expended over the last four months in an effort to pump me up.
    - 1. As we’ve moved through this transition I’ve heard it all.
    - 2. “This is the next step for you.”
    - 3. “This is a sign of how well things have gone at Christ Church.”
    - 4. NO....
      - a. This is a sign of God’s blessing.
      - b. This is a movement of the Holy Spirit.
      - c. But any suggestion that it’s because of me, or because of you, leads us down the wrong path.
- c. In Luke 19:39-40 it says, “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “ I tell you,” he replied, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”
  - i. If God can make the stones cry out then God can use anything [any one] to his glory.
  - ii. It never has to be me and it’s never about me.
- d. But sometimes I forget that; we forget that.
  - i. True humility is not thinking of yourself less.
  - ii. It is thinking of God more.
- e. I know who I am – I know who God is.
  - i. Nothing promotes humility quicker than that.
  - ii. My prayer is that humility (keeping yourselves and God in the proper place) rules that day at CUMC.
  - iii. That Rev. Rudolph rarely hears, “When Pastor John was here ...”

## III. Chapter 2 – Fear.

- a. The one chapter that I hope is the shortest.
- b. Fear has no place in the work of God and in the work of God’s church.
- c. God is love.
  - i. And love (perfect love – and can there be any love more perfect than God’s) casts out fear.
  - ii. {Prayer whenever I start to worry about the house.}
- d. Fear is sneaky.
  - i. Worry is fear.
  - ii. Doubt is fear.
  - iii. Mistrust is fear.

- e. Right now we are a fearful bunch.
  - i. Me – fear of not selling the house, of Carol not finding something, of the boys adjusting, of failing.
  - ii. Church – of not adjusting, of change, of the unknown and unfamiliar.
  - iii. And there is one cure for all of those fears – one antidote for our worry, doubt, and mistrust.
  - iv. Love. Because “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.” – 1 John 4:18.
    - 1. I’m going to Leonardtown and I’m going to do my level headed best to love people.
    - 2. Your calling is the same love people.
    - 3. Fear cannot stick around in the presence of love – because love {perfect love} takes up all the room!
- f. “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” – 1 Corinthians 13:13.

#### IV. Chapter 3 – Poverty.

- a. Statistics say that 12.3% of everyone in the US lives in poverty.
  - i. They lack the money to acquire the basic necessities – food, water, clothing, shelter.
  - ii. That’s 36.5 million people.
  - iii. That’s a lot of folks and I won’t do anything to diminish the church’s responsibility to respond to that.
- b. But there’s a different kind of poverty.
  - i. Spiritual poverty.
  - ii. Not knowing Christ and the joy and fullness of life as His disciple.
- c. Spiritual poverty – the church has the cure for.
  - i. The more we’re inside – the more they are in poverty outside.
  - ii. What do we do about the spiritual poverty we see around us?
- d. The trouble with church buildings is that we spend too much time in them.
  - i. While people drive by, live across the street without Christ in their lives.
  - ii. They’re alive, but they’re the walking dead.
  - iii. They’ve never had the breath of life breathed into them.
  - iv. We can’t be content with that.
- e. One of the hopes of the leaders of our church that I’ve heard over and over again is this:
  - i. Let’s reach out to the people around us who need to know Christ.
    - 1. What a great thing for us to be saying.
    - 2. We have a reason for the deepest questions of life.
      - a. We have an answer for all the whys and “how comes” of life.
      - b. We need to share it!
  - ii. James 2:16 says, “If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?”
    - 1. I would suggest that the same is true of spiritual needs.
    - 2. If we say, “Go in peace; all is well,” but do nothing about their spiritual needs, what good is it?

- f. Here's a great goal for a church (a big, holy, audacious goal).
    - i. Eradicate spiritual poverty in our life time.
    - ii. Amen – so be it.
- V. Chapter 4 – Legacy.
- a. Toward the end of a president's term, talk always begins about his legacy – how will he be remembered.
    - i. One way to look at it –
      - 1. The building.
      - 2. New ministries and programs.
      - 3. Not so much.
  - b. A legacy of people.
    - i. Marriages saved, lives changed, addictions overcome.
    - ii. Friendships made, challenges overcome.
    - iii. Disasters averted, souls saved, walls brought down.
  - c. A legacy that looks like this to me ...
    - i. Amen – so be it.
    - ii. 3 people discerning calls to be pastors/missionaries.
    - iii. People I met in the worst possible circumstances (prison/suicidal/depressed) who have been resurrected.
  - d. What is CUMC's legacy?
    - i. Building {some people still don't know we're here!}
    - ii. What we're for/against.
    - iii. Or is it people? Lives changed?
  - e. That's a legacy to be thankful for.
- VI. Chapter 5 – Jesus.
- a. Video.
  - b. The final chapter I want to mention today – Jesus.
    - i. This should go without saying.
    - ii. But too often we get distracted and need to be reminded – it's not about us.
    - iii. Too often I get distracted and need to be reminded – it's not about me.
  - c. "I want to be the pastor that no one remembers."
    - i. I thought this was the stupidest thing I had ever heard.
    - ii. Not so much.
    - iii. I get what he was saying, "It's not about me."
  - d. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus – there's just something about that name.
- VII. From a sermon on January 6<sup>th</sup>.
- a. From me to WE.
    - i. Major in God, minor in me.
    - ii. Major in grace, minor in Law.
    - iii. Major in compassion, minor in condemnation.
    - iv. Major in relationships, minor in isolation.
    - v. Major in justice, minor in apathy.
    - vi. Major in depth, minor in distance.
  - b. To which I add.

- i. Major in humility, minor in pride.
- ii. Major in love, minor in fear.
- iii. Major in people, minor in program.
- iv. Major in Jesus, minor in me.

VIII. 1 Corinthians 1:4 – “I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.”