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COLOSSIANS 1:27

What we're going to do now is we're going to look at the Bible. Before we do, I'm going to pray. The purpose of this prayer is to settle our hearts to get us focused on what God might want to do in our own hearts today. So I'm going to ask you to bow your heads with me. Let's pray and let's talk to our heavenly Father.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I just sense your presence here by the work that you've done for us. You've rescued us from our sin and our shame and you have given us victory. So we can sing loud and we can clap our hands and we can raise our hands and our voices in worship because of what you've done for us, because of the victory that you've given to us. We thank you so much for the cross of Jesus Christ that on that Friday He hung on that cross and all looked bleak to everyone around, but on Sunday He was risen from the dead. Lord, in many of our lives we feel that Friday experience. We feel like we're lost, beaten down, broken people and we just need to experience that resurrection that you want inside of our lives. So Lord, we're grateful for the power that you give for the resurrection that you've provided for us so that we can have victory in our lives, so we can enjoy the great immense peace that you want us to experience inside. Today, Lord, we ask that you would speak to people. I'm asking that you will heal broken hearts, you'll heal broken families, you'll heal broken relationships, you'll heal broken souls today. We ask in the power of Jesus' name, and everybody said, amen.

We study God's word each week and as we do we learn from it. It's amazing when you look at the Bible and you open it up and you go, "Wow, I needed that verse just now," "oh that's just something I needed for my life this week." It's powerful.

You know the Bible has sixty-six books in it written over fifteen hundred years and it starts in the book of Genesis. So in Genesis we learn the first words – *in the beginning, God*. That solves a lot of problems right here. We've got God right there in the beginning. But in the book of Genesis we're introduced to the human problem that we're all broken people. You're broken, I'm broken. There's a brokenness inside of us. It's a challenge that we experience inside of our hearts. But even in the book of Genesis we have a hint of something that's coming to rescue us from the brokenness.

Then as the history books of the Old Testament come out and the prophets come out and the writings, the poetry come out, they're all looking forward to this hint of something that's yet to come to rescue us from the brokenness we experience in our own lives. So it's not surprising when we turn the page to the New Testament that we see the four gospels. The four gospels representing Jesus Christ and helping us understand who He is, stories about Him.

I'm impressed with the life of Christ. If you're looking for a place to start reading in the Bible, I would say read one of those gospels, maybe the gospel of John, because it contains several places where Jesus met people and things happened when Jesus met people. He had compassion on people that were very different than He was. He had compassion on the religious and the non-religious. He met with and had relationships with people who were rich and people who were poor, people who seemed to have it all together and people whose lives were falling apart, people who were racially different than He was. He continued to have relationships with people and build those relationships with them and it did things to those people. We meet God and something happens. That's all described in the gospels.

Then comes the book of Acts. The book of Acts describes the power and growth of God's church and it started going all over the known world at that time, and now, of course, the church has gone everywhere. It has a tremendous impact on the lives of so many people. Just look at what the church has done in the area of healthcare and helped people in tremendous problems. Education that many churches have provided in all kinds of different places. It's fascinating to see how powerful the church is. Not just in people around the world, but even in our own lives and in our own community. Well that's the book of Acts.

Then we move into the epistles, the letters. These letters of the New Testament are letters to churches to give them instructions on how the church ought to operate and what the church ought to be and how the church ought to do its thing. We're going to look at one of those epistles today. A letter that was written to a city called Colossae. That's why the name of the book is Colossians. In the book of Colossians there's nine chapters and ninety-five verses. You could read it in about thirty minutes. But if you really want to get it down into your heart, it probably takes about thirty years to take those principles and apply them to your life and get to know what God is saying in the midst of that.

The first two chapters focus on theology, kind of who is Jesus Christ, who is God, and how powerful He is. Those first few verses in Colossians talk about how the church is growing spiritually, reaching out. Paul is commending them for that. The last two chapters are dealing with how do we apply it to our lives.

Now this is really important to us and our church because we're looking to take Jesus home. That's the name of our website, TakeJesusHome.com. Why? Because we're trying to not just come to visit church; we want to take Jesus home with us. And that's what Paul does as he's writing the epistle to the Colossians. The last two chapters are how to apply the theology to your marriage, how to apply it to your parenting, how to apply it to your family, and how to apply it to your work. How to apply it to the struggles you have in your own heart. We're broken people and we need the solutions that God offers. He provides those in His word.

I'm going to take you to one verse in the book of Colossians today. I was just led to one verse. It wasn't my original passage for today. But I was just led to this one verse and I want to share it with you because I believe that in one stroke Jesus came and He became that thing that was not only hinted at from the Old Testament, but became the foundation for the church and the foundation for our personal lives.

That's illustrated in this one verse in Colossians 1:27, which says this – *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is (and seven words are these pinnacle words that we want to look at today) which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* I want you to see that there are riches in here. There's this *riches of glory* and it's a *mystery among the Gentiles*.

There are two kinds of people in the world, according to the Bible, as they're looking at the nations. There's either Jewish people (maybe you're Jewish people today, so you would be one of the Jews) or the Gentiles (that's the rest of us). This was a mystery provided for the rest of us, for the Gentiles.

What is that mystery? He describes it in these seven words and those are the words I want to look at because those words describe what it means to be a Christian. The words that describe the hints from the Old Testament of who Jesus is and what it means for our personal lives, and what it looks like. Seven words, the bottom line there: *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Now this *Christ in you* is a revolutionary idea for many people. Most of us think about Jesus being out there somewhere or God being above the clouds somewhere far away we're trying to connect to. Sometimes we feel like there's a ceiling on our prayers. They're not getting there and God can't find us and so on. But this verse talks about something different. He's not just out there somewhere, but there's a way for Him to be inside of us. Christ in you is what He's saying.

I would suggest life is hard. We're hard-pressed from every side. So God has designed that Christ be in us in a way that is going to help us deal with the very pressures that we experience, the stress that we experience in our own lives. It doesn't say Jesus is *with* us. Although He is with us continually, it says He's *in* us. He's moving around in there. He's not just on standby so you push the Jesus button and you get a good feeling. He's in there dealing with stuff inside of our lives. He moves in, He takes over. He takes over our thoughts, He takes over our desires, He takes over our imagination. It's an amazing thing that happens when Jesus Christ is in you. That's what's being described here.

Sometimes we feel, I would suggest, overwhelmed, with all of the challenges that we experience on a regular basis and our life is shaken. When your life is shaken, your feet kind of go down to find the foundation. For the Christian, that foundation is Christ who's there who provides this strength, this foundation for us to be able to experience life in all its fullness.

I don't know about you, but I find life goes by pretty fast. You look on Facebook and you've got like twenty messages today. You're looking at all this data is coming in from your family and from your friends and people who think that you're friends and people you've never heard of who are friends. All these people are after you and they've got all this information and they're sharing it with you. It's just coming in. We're bombarded with all of that stuff. Paul is reminding the Colossians there's something that puts it all in order. There's a way for filtering all of this out so that the most important things are laid out. That's this Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now many of you know that I work with parents and my job is to help parents change their children, work on the problems that their children have because children have some pretty

challenging problems there. I also train coaches and I just finished an eight-week training program with thirty-one coaches from seven countries around the world who will also coach parents to use the heart-based strategies that we've developed. Because it's week eight, I'm getting all the testimonies from people about the good things. I thought about bringing some of those, but I decided not to. I'm just going to tell you a story about one of my clients.

I'm working with a parent to help their daughter who has sensory processing disorder. Maybe you've heard of that. Sensory processing disorder is a biological problem in the brain that prevents a person (a child in this case) from being able to filter out the stuff that's going on. So all of the things that are bombarding her senses cause confusion inside of her at nine years old.

This week she went to a birthday party. At the birthday party there was loud music and loud noises, and lots of things going on, and games being played, and people yelling, and there were bright lights going on. All of these things were so much for her that she was overloaded and she had to separate herself from the birthday party. Of course then that created some internal struggles for her because now she's mad. That's what happens to kids sometimes. Not just kids. So anyway, this child got angry and now she's mad, probably because she can't enjoy the birthday party. She's mad maybe at life, maybe at herself. I don't know. She's just frustrated with all of this, so she's then acting out in the midst of that. Parents have to deal with all of those things.

I will help this girl through her parents and will help strengthen a filter inside of her using a heart-based approach, and God will do some great things through His grace in this girl's life in eight weeks. It won't be perfect in eight weeks, but like one family said this week – "Our anger problem went from a ten down to a four. This is huge." That's what I expect to see in this girl's life.

But as I was working with her this week and I'm working on this sermon, I'm thinking we have this same problem. Don't we? Our sensory processing disorder that we experience spiritually. We have all of this stuff coming at us all the time and we don't know what to do with it. We get confused by it all, we get frustrated by it all, and sometimes we start acting out. We start being the person who's having a hard time and hindering someone else. Don't you just wish sometimes, "I wish I could just have some peace and quiet." I think that's why some people say, "I'm done with Facebook. I'm getting rid of Facebook for Lent," or whatever they want to do because of what it does to you. Not just Facebook, but anything. All of those things sometimes bombard us so much that we long for some peace and quiet.

I remember in my home as I was growing up, my mom would allow us to watch TV with my mom and dad. My dad would sometimes watch TV, but my mom never would. She would be out in the living room because she wanted some peace and quiet. I don't know what she was doing out there, now that I think about it. Maybe she was reading a book or a magazine or sewing or fixing our pants or something like that. But she's in the other room getting some peace and quiet.

I want to suggest that when you have Christ in you, there's something that goes on inside that God's able to deal with. He helps us filter out what's the most important data that's coming in. But it's not just the data that's coming in. It's the stuff outside of our heart. Right? We have

disappointment. We have anger issues. We have challenges inside. The neat thing is when Jesus Christ comes in, He balances that, He changes that.

The New Testament calls Jesus the cornerstone. He's the cornerstone that everything else relies on. So He doesn't just come into us to balance everything out in the sense of He's another piece. He is the center. That's what helps balance all these things out in a strategic way.

Now you can get temporary satisfaction in all kinds of ways. In fact money can buy some things. Money can buy amusement and entertainment. But it can't buy peace and joy. Money can buy medicine, but it can't buy health. There are things that money can buy, but these issues here are inside of your heart and Christ offers some things that are so powerful because we all have those longings for joy, longings for peace, and love that only Christ satisfies. So these words become strategic – *Christ in you, the hope of glory*.

When I think about the gospels, in John 4 Jesus decides He's not going to go around Samaria. He says, "We must go through Samaria," even though everybody else who was not a Jew would not go through Samaria because there's racial tension there. He goes through Samaria and He meets this woman in the middle of the day who wouldn't be coming in the middle of the day if she didn't have these problems. She would come with the other women in the other part of the day. She's alone at the well because she had five husbands, we find out, and the one she's living with is not her husband. She had given up on marriage.

Jesus meets with her and talks with her and says, "You came for water? I can give you living water." In other words what He's saying is I can give you living water. In other words what He's saying is I can give you something that will meet the smallest needs inside of your soul." So as we go through the gospels and we see Jesus meeting with these people, we see transformation taking place in amazing ways. Things start happening.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. The idea of Him being in us, I like the picture here. It's a picture of a heart because He's inside our heart. The heart is where all this other stuff happens. You have to understand this. That's where our emotions are. You know we say, "I love you with all my heart." Well it's not just love there. You could say, "I'm mad at you with all my heart," too, because all the emotions are in the heart. Our desires are inside of our hearts, along with our beliefs and our passions. We wrestle with things. You know at night when you're having trouble going to sleep, you're wrestling with something inside of your heart. That's why it's so powerful to say that Jesus Christ comes to live inside of our hearts. Wow. Very interesting. He comes in and He organizes those things. He gives us balance, He gives us perspective.

I'm convinced that Colossians 1:27 is an illustration of authentic spiritual transformation. Authentic spiritual transformation. I don't think we can live this life on our own, at least not without a lot of pain and wrestling that's going on. We must come to Jesus Christ and understand what He wants to do in our lives. Only Christ can satisfy us.

He says *Christ in you* because it's a relationship idea. It's not a list of dos and don'ts. That's not what Christianity is in its truest sense, a list of dos and don'ts. There's no formula view. Some people have this formula idea. If I go to church, if I read the Bible, if I give money, then God

somehow is going to look at my life and weigh it out and I'm going to be viewed as somebody good. That's not God's view of salvation or spirituality. It's about relationship.

In fact the reality is we all have this sin that exists inside of our hearts, this problem that exists there. We need what's described in the Bible as a Savior to rescue us. And Christ is that one. *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. He wants to come into our lives and He wants to save us.

We don't read the Bible out of duty. We read the Bible because we want to get to know the author. We want to understand more about what He has for us. We don't come to church out of duty. We come to church because we want to see other people who are growing in their faith. We want to have relationship with them and we want to know God better. We give money and we volunteer our time. Not out of duty. But we do it because we want to see God work in us and through us in the course of this world. It's a relationship that we have that's so powerful that God wants.

Many of us were taught to fear God as an angry taskmaster that has to be placated or something like that. That's not the truth that Jesus came and brought to us. When He taught us He says when you pray, start the prayer, *Our Father*. That's the prayer that He taught us to pray. We come to Jesus with the *Our Father* prayer. We pray to Him as Father. Jesus goes on to say He has numbered every hair on our heads. Jesus said in the *same way he takes care of the birds of the air and then the flowers of the field, how much more will he care for us*. There's this care, this compassion, this love that He has for us. It's all about relationship. It's in this personal relationship that we're able to see our brokenness and we're able to address it in our own lives.

God wants to do something inside of our hearts. That's why it says *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. Christ wants to be inside of us, inside of our lives. He offers that to us. Isn't it amazing that all the places He could choose to live in the world, not a fancy house, not a fancy church, or fancy building; He lives inside of a person, people who are willing to accept Him into their lives.

There's another book of the Bible, Galatians, another letter that describes the similar thing that Paul is also writing. He says it this way to the Galatians: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*.

There's this same description of Christ in us and God wants to do this amazing thing inside of our lives. That's what it means – *Christ in you, the hope of glory*.

So when we talk about this Christ in you, I think that's significant in the verses. But let's look at the last four words. *The hope of glory*. The hope that the Christian has is not just a wishy-washy kind of hope like wishful thinking kind of hope. It's a confident hope that God is going to do something in the midst of this. He will satisfy the longings inside of our soul.

I think most people today don't experience hope. You know what they experience? Nervous. Most people I would say are nervous today. It could be politics nervous. It could be personal finance nervous. It could be stock market nervous. It could be health problems nervous. It could be relational problems nervous. I watch the news. I see the political challenges that we face, the terrorism challenges that we have, the healthcare challenges, the economic challenges. I do know

and believe that we should be concerned. But there's a difference between being concerned and being nervous.

You see, Christians think differently. We are concerned. We are concerned about the world, about politics, about war, about famine, about climate change. We're concerned about those things. But that doesn't mean we're nervous because we don't let those things control us. We have this hope inside of us. We are concerned. We aren't nervous because we have this hope inside.

Now you can only have the hope if you know where it comes from. It comes from Christ being in you. It's not just a wish. It's a solid rock kind of hope that we have. I know we have troubles today. I'm concerned about our neighborhoods, I'm concerned about how police officers are treated, I'm concerned about our economy. But I'm not nervous. It's not controlling me because I have a hope inside. Not an empty hope, but a hope in Jesus Christ who's doing a work inside of me. Not just in the past, but continues to do that work inside of my heart.

There's this really interesting story in the Old Testament, a story about Elisha who was a prophet. Well here's the scene of the story over here. There's this king of Aram who is trying to kill the Israelites and fight a battle with them. That's his goal. But every time he goes to a place, they've gone to somewhere else. So he goes to another place. They were there. But now they're gone. So he says to himself, "I must have some kind of a snitch inside of my cabinet here. Find out who's leaking the information."

"Where's the leak?" is what the king says.

One of the advisors said to him, "There's no leak. There's a prophet down there in Israel and the prophet is telling the Israelites everything that's on the king's heart." "Well let's go get him," the king says. So the king goes down to Elisha's house and surrounds the house. Now that's the scene of the story over here.

Let's switch scenes to Elisha and his servant because they get up in the morning. Elisha's servant goes out to get some water, rubbing his eyes, looks up, and there's the army all around. Man, this is bad. He runs in the house and says the very same things I think you and I say. These are the exact words he says and the same words I think we say when we are under pressure. *"Oh no! What shall we do?"* That's what he says to Elisha. "Oh no! What shall we do?"

I love what Elisha says. Elisha says, *"Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are greater than those who are with them."* The servant is looking around thinking, "It's you and me, buddy. I don't know what you're talking about." So Elisha says, *"Lord, open his eyes."* The Lord opened his eyes and he saw these chariots and horses of fire all up on the mountainside, greater than the army that was there.

What do you think happened to that guy, the servant, in that moment? Do you think he was nervous still? "Oh no! What are we going to do?" Now he had a confident hope and he had an expectation of what God was about to do. Because God was about to do something powerful in the midst of this and he could hardly wait.

Now I think that's how we can face the challenges of our lives. When we have problems that we see out there, these are bad problems. I don't want to minimize them. There are terrible things going on in marriages and with parents and in jobs and all kinds of things that are out there. Those are bad things. But it's in the midst of bad things that God does miracles and we have this expectation that God is going to do something good.

I don't put my hope in a party platform or an economic plan. Don't be confused. I'm concerned, but I'm not nervous. I have hope. I can feel the pain of other people. The pain of social injustice and famine and war.

You know there are more Christians who have died for their faith, are being persecuted for their faith than there ever has been in human history combined in the last hundred years? The last hundred years is a terrible time for Christians around the world. It's terrible. There's a group of people who gather in front of our fellowship after church. You'll see them while we're all cleaning up. They'll come up here and they're praying for the persecuted church around the world. It's terrible what's happening in the lives of people. My heart goes out to them.

There are problems not just out there, but there are problems around me. They're even closer where I see troubling situations. Am I disturbed? Yes, I'm disturbed. But I'm not nervous because I believe in a God who transcends those things and a God who is in the business of doing miracles. He wants to change people's lives and amazing things happen in the lives of people. That's what God wants to do. It's what sets us apart as Christians.

So God gives us this promise in Jeremiah 29:11 – *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, a promise to give you a hope and a future.”*

I know some of you have tried nervous and it doesn't work. In fact you could give a testimony and stand up here and say, “I tried nervous and it doesn't work.” “I gained thirty-five pounds with nervous and it doesn't really work,” or “nervous makes me irritable,” or “nervous makes me angry,” or “nervous make me hard to get along with other people. I don't even like myself when I'm nervous.”

Nervous isn't the solution to life and that's why God brings us to this last word. I just want to park here for a moment because it's a *hope of glory*. Christ in you, *the hope of glory*.

Now the word *glory* has a rich history in the Bible. If we go back to the Ten Commandments that were given on the mountain (maybe you read it in the Bible, maybe you saw the movie), but there's the Ten Commandments and as they're given, the Bible says *the glory of God came down on the mountain*. That's powerful. I would suggest that this glory that we're talking about can't be defined this way. If you define glory, the definition is magnificence revealed. That's how we use it in our own language.

We were talking about the basketball game last night (I don't know if you saw it) and so “this person was in all their glory,” or “he shared the glory with the rest of his team.” We use the word ‘glory.’ It's magnificence revealed. There's something about this hope that is a confidence-

building hope because it's magnificence revealed. We're looking at what God's going to do. He's going to reveal the magnificence in the midst of the struggle that we face. That's why I'm not nervous. Because I know I have a hope inside of me and this hope of glory has me looking up.

But the interesting thing about the passage it says – *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. So we're looking out there, but when you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He's inside. Because He doesn't want us just to be flailing around on the ground.

So the description in Isaiah 40:31 goes this way: *But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength* (and don't you need this verse) *and they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary* (so many people are weary today), *they shall walk and not faint*. What a beautiful scripture.

The beauty of this is we can have this inside of us in this verse where it says *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. He offers that to us. He wants to give us this ability to transcend the struggles that we face. It's an amazing thing. It's a powerful thing.

It's not about looking good on the outside. It's about God wants to do something on the inside of us that allows us to deal with all of the outside stuff. But not just there. We need to deal with the inside stuff too, right? Because a lot of times it's the inside stuff inside of our own hearts that's messing with us and creating problems.

That's why this whole pinnacle of the Bible comes together in a verse like this one, Colossians 1:27, which is this. This is what makes a Christian a Christian: If the Christian has *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. So we think differently, we act differently.

Now when a person becomes a Christian, then they acknowledge that they are a sinner, they are broken. That's not hard today. I would say most of us look at our lives and we see the brokenness inside of us, the problems that we've caused with other people, the challenges that we face. But the real test is are we going to say, "I need a savior," or are we trying to be our own savior? "Oh I'm going to pull myself up from my bootstraps here. I'm going to take this over. I'm going to solve this problem," as humanists would say. Or are we going to say, "I need a Savior. I want Jesus Christ to be in my heart. I want Him to be that Christ in me, the hope of glory that He wants to be." God wants to do something new and He wants to do something fresh, and He starts with this idea, this commitment that we make. Christ in us.

Now I have two questions for you today. Question number one: Is Christ in you? He's not just there automatically. He's in you if you've trusted Him as your Lord and Savior. So you need to come before Him and say, "God, I know I'm a broken person. I know I've got sin in my life. I know I've got problem. I know I'm making problems for other people. I've got problems and I want a Savior, so I'm asking you to come into my heart. I want to accept you into my life. I want to have you as that hope of glory inside of me. Lord, I want to make that commitment." So it's a commitment that we make that allows our heart to open up and say, "Okay, I'm ready for something new. I want God to change me, I want Him to make me new," and He comes in and

He does that. He gives us that foundation, that cornerstone, that hope of glory. Question number one: Is Christ in you?

Question number two: If He is in you, are you making the most of that? Are you allowing Him to have the fullness of your life? He's not just content to come into your kitchen. He wants to go into the living room and then the bedroom and the closet and into your computer and all these different things. He wants in you. Are you allowing Him to have the most of that inside of your life? Those are the two questions I challenge you with today. I think those are the questions we're left with as we look at this passage.

In just a moment I'm going to pray. Maybe as I pray God will speak to you in your heart. You'll know that right now He'll speak to you, and as He does you want to respond to Him in regards to that. So I'd like you to bow your head and close your eyes with me. Let's pray and just ask God speak to us as a result of what we've read in His word today.

This first part of my prayer is for those who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and would like to have Christ in you. So you might pray along with me in your heart, saying these words.

[PRAYER] God, thank you for being a Father to me. Lord, I realize I have brokenness inside of my heart. That sin is hindering my ability to function in life. I know that sin needs to be removed in order to have a relationship with you, and you've provided the way through Jesus Christ. So Lord, right now I want to ask you to come into my heart. I want that hope of glory. I want that salvation that you provide. So I ask you to come into my heart now today.

This next part of my prayer is for all of us, especially those who've already invited Christ into their lives.

[PRAYER] Lord, we come before you and we thank you for your grace. We thank you for the riches of this glory that we can experience. Lord, we don't take advantage of it enough. So I just pray that you'd give us the courage to trust you in the challenging areas in our hearts and lives. Lord, we want to dedicate ourselves to you anew, we want to dedicate ourselves to you afresh. We ask that you would do a deeper work in us than we've ever been able to do before because we want to open up parts of our heart that we've hesitated to give to you in the past. Lord, we give you who we are. We ask you to do amazing things in us. We want your magnificence to be revealed in us. We want to see it, we want to rejoice in who you are. We're grateful for what you've done for us – Jesus Christ dying on that cross, being raised from the dead. Father, we come before you and dedicate ourselves to you now. In Jesus' name, amen.