

Coastal Community Church Vision

Hope beyond our brokenness

Trust in our Risen Savior

Restoration for our city, nation, and world

Today... I choose to be changed by Jesus, I choose to seek Jesus first, and I choose to join Jesus in His resurrection work.

Ear Tug. Ask Permission

Remember way back when we were in the book of Ephesians, in chapter 6, talking about spiritual warfare? We learned how to fight against the enemy—the devil and his demons. We speak out loud, binding and muting and casting the enemy out of our presence. We reject the lies and hold onto the truth. We declare, out loud, “Jesus, the enemy has no place on me. I bind and mute anything opposed to Christ that’s on me and command you to leave and go to Jesus to be judged.” And if we need to come against fear or a specific idea or feeling we are battling... we mind and mute and cast that off of us. And then we hold onto the good. “Jesus, I need you. Bring Your peace, Your presence, Your hope, your wisdom here right now. Help me, Jesus.” It’s so simple... bad out, good in.

So how do you fight for something that is good? How do you fight for your family? For your heart? For a relationship? For unity in your

home or at work or in our church? That's what today is about. All of us are building a beautiful life and the enemy will want to come and wreck it. So today is about how we fight for it. Kurt preached an amazing sermon last week and I want to bring forward one verse from last week because it ties into what we're talking about today in Colossians 2.

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Whenever Paul uses the word 'Christ', he's saying something specific. Christ is a title...a job description. Christ is the Greek word that means: Savior. Messiah is the Hebrew synonym. So how does Jesus save us? He gladly chooses to suffer for us, in our place, as our substitute, because he loves us. Of course this is what love looks like. You need my time? I got you. I need my money? It's yours. You need my whole life? It's yours. Love is when we gladly choose to pay for them, and yes, to suffer for them. We pay for their mistakes, how they hurt us... we stay, we forgive...because we love. So when Paul writes to the church, what is he saying? He's saying this:

"As your pastor, I gladly choose to suffer for you, to love you all the way to completion. I will spend my time, my energy, my last resource, to see God's work of love completed in you. When I'm misunderstood, I will

stay. When I'm slandered, I will stay. When I am prosecuted and persecuted, I will stay. When I feel hopeless and I'm attacked by the enemy so that I will stop loving you...I won't stop. I'll keep loving you, just as Jesus loved me."

I want you to know that this is how I feel about you, how Kurt feels about you, how the staff and Elders feel about you all. We gladly choose to love you to completion. In this season of pay cuts and a budget pinch, we're not going anywhere. In this season of shaking for us, of hurt for me, we are not going anywhere. We gladly choose to love you so that God's work is accomplished in you. And thus Paul writes:

Colossians 2:1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.

Paul is contending, wrestling, fighting for the good of the church reading this letter...and their neighboring church in Laodicea.

Remember your ancient geography. I know you know this...but I'll tell you anyways. Colossae is east of Ephesus, the major port city in Turkey. Ephesus is Los Angeles, Laodicea is Anaheim and Colossae is Riverside. Or if you're from Bakersfield, Laodicea is Arvin and Colossae is Tehachapi...and if you don't know those cities then you are God's favored child. Back to the Scripture. What is Paul saying? He's contending for them. How?

2:2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding...

How? With encouragement. By loving them so they are united. By giving them understanding, complete understanding. What does even mean? Encouragement is building up a person's confidence in the truth of God's identity, work, and favor in their own life. Celebrate their victories. Tell them about how grateful you are for them. Affirm their value and worth and how they are using their God given gifts. Can I give you a guardrail that's important when it comes to encouragement, especially with your kids or grandkids? We live in a culture where an entire generation of children have been praised over and over again, no matter how much or how little they work...it's trophies for participation. It's created massive entitlement everywhere. **When you witness their game or performance or report card, instead of immediately telling them how great they are...ask them how they feel about themselves.** Why? Because you're building in them a mechanism whereby they can value their own efforts, where they can choose to improve, where they can share how they just gave up or if they fought to overcome. Encouragement isn't propping someone up. Encouragement is building a person's confidence that they are living, or can live, in their true identity

in Christ. Encouragement is celebrating God's work in them and then building their own desire to pursue everything God has for them.

Can I encourage you? I was reminded this week during dinner with Dawn Ann and Bill Burch of a promise God gave me about our church. As California goes, so goes the nation. And how is God going to change California? It will be in the least of these; the weakest, not the strongest; the least likely, not the all stars. So we look at the forgotten places in the State, the places with little impact...and Grover Beach is like at the top of the list. And what church would be least likely to make a difference? Probably a weird little not so Presbyterian church. And who would be the least likely demographic to jump start a revival for the entire state? It would be a church with 2/3rds of its members over the age of 60...no billionaires...no tech moguls...just, well, normal people...and then the rest of us would be pretty rough around the edges. That's us. And on Palm Sunday and on Easter Sunday we had seasoned pastors visit our church and they were amazed at your worship, the presence of God, the love, the glory of God in this place. They said this Gene, an elder here: "This is worth fighting for. God is in this place. You have to fight for this."

How do we fight for what is good? Your faithful giving matters. The idea of tithing is that we work towards giving 10% of our income to God's Kingdom. Your faithful service matters. Our church is too big for staff or

the same 8 volunteers to do it all. We're building each other up. We need your gifts, your talents, your energy. We're building each other up. Why? Because what Jesus is building here, if we freely say yes, will literally be the spark that changes our region...and our state...and our country. I can't emphasize this enough...the elections this fall won't change our country...you will. I'm not being dramatic or living in fantasy. It's the truth. Do you feel encouraged? Built up? I hope you do because God is choosing to dwell in this place, in our church, in our hearts...and we are breaking down the gates of people's hell and bringing them into God's heavenly presence.

Colossae was in the same boat...they weren't the biggest church, the best church, the big city church...yet they fueled Paul's ministry and kept Paul going in his darkest hours so that he could have the resources to write the greatest letter in the New Testament: the book of Romans. It was a little church that made the biggest difference. So Paul continues to teach them how to fight for something good. Pay attention to the middle phrase...united in love:

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We fight for what is good by loving each other in unity...that any moment of division created by gossip would be immediately silenced

with "We don't do that here. We love each other. We don't gossip. We are united in love." We've worked hard to create an emotionally healthy culture where leaders are humble enough to listen and change. If you got a problem, tell me. Do you know what overwhelms me? Burdens me? It's not hearing about a problem...it's hearing that people have problems and won't talk to me. When we talk to each other, we get a complete understanding. That's why, in part, Paul talks about us having a complete understanding: If you have an incomplete understanding with someone, and you don't talk about it directly with that person, you'll fill in the information gaps with the worst possible scenario. That's what happens every single time I talk to someone else about someone else. "Did you hear about Pinocchio? That dude left home. Why? I don't know but I tell you what...I heard he was listening to a bug. Pinocchio must be crazy. I'm telling you, Geppetto needed to up that kids meds a long time ago. I think Geppetto must be hitting the sauce a little bit too because he just talks to his cat and goldfish. He's a little cuckoo. Seriously. But I'm praying for them, for sure. Oh..no...I'm not going to talk to him...I wouldn't want to burden him." When you talk to someone and listen to their story, you have a chance to get a complete understanding...it's another way to love them well. I have to confess...when I'm stressed, I'm a lousy listener...I immediately go to fixing. When I'm anxious, I'm a

lousy listener...I immediately fill the gaps of the story with my anxiety.

Here's the point: To fight for the good in your family, for a person, for this church, means that you are so committed to being united in love that you do not tolerate the incomplete understandings of gossip that will tear people apart. You go to the person and get the full story.

And thus Paul wants us to give the church he's fighting for a complete understanding about the actual story the Author of Life is writing for you, the identity you carry, and the purpose God has for you. Thus Paul says:

...in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

What's the story you're in? It's the mystery of God...Christ. What the heck does this mean? Remember what I said at the beginning? Christ is what? Christ is a Savior...a Savior who gladly choose to save you by suffering for you. So what's the mystery? The mystery is that God isn't afraid of your failures. God isn't repulsed by your wounds. God doesn't disqualify you because of the abuse you've endured. God doesn't shun you because of your grief. God doesn't demand you get it all together before He saves you. God saves you when you have nothing, when you're a wreck, when you're spent, when you are utterly lost...and God saves you by suffering with you, for you, until you are fully alive. Do



you have any idea what this means? It means there is always hope beyond our brokenness. It means that we're more loved than we could ever dare to hope. It means that when you fill in the unknown parts of your heart and your future with catastrophe...God actually fills them in with hope and love and life.

In Japan, broken objects are not thrown away. Broken objects are repaired with gold and they become more valuable broken..and repaired...than they ever were whole and complete. All the treasures God has for you, all the wisdom and knowledge God has for you, is found when you are courageous enough to let God and another person into the broken edges of your life. I say this to you and I have to confess to you that I don't want to do this.

Sometimes I just want break the people who have broken me. I don't want to suffer for anyone anymore. I want them shattered and suffering. But then what? Instead of repairing the world, I'm just creating more brokenness. Instead of offering grace and mercy, I'm just making another wound. All I wanted to do last week was to fight back, to lash out, to offer that perfectly timed slicing comment. Debbie pointed out to me: No good comes when you use hurt to fight the hurt you have suffered. Ever. Hurting another is not how you fight for what is good.

How did Christ Jesus fight for my good when I was hurting him with my rebellion and indifference? Jesus didn't hurt me into salvation...He didn't crush me into faith. He forgave me. He loved me. His kindness brought me to repentance. You fight for good, even when people are hurting you, not by making them pay...but by forgiving them and praying for them. So what, then, do you do with your broken heart? You have to talk about it. You have to let God in...let another person in. God will repair your heart and it will be more beautiful than before. The work of healing and grief is the work of rescuing your own soul that's been buried underneath all that pain. You will feel it all. You will cry the tears. You feel totally alone and hopeless. And underneath that isn't death... underneath all that is Jesus, present with you, suffering with you, resurrecting you.

Of course you don't have to do any of this. This is hard. Paul says: Colossians 2:4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Like...you could have no faith. No faith is just you handling it all by yourself. I have a doctorate in no faith. You could be not disciplined...as in, choosing disobedience when its hard and discipline when its convenient. Have I mentioned I have a second doctorate in not

discipline? You could lash out when your emotions are high (like I did) because the 'fine sounding argument' is this...you deserve to get revenge. You're entitled to your pound of flesh. They had it coming. It's ok to punch back...just punch back so hard they can't get up. You're the victim...how dare they let this happen to you...you deserve all the pity and they deserve all the punishment. These 'fine sounding arguments' are so delicious aren't they? Paul believed them for years. That's why he crushed Christians. That's why he destroyed heretics and brutalized them at every chance...until Jesus knocked Paul off his high horse and opened his eyes. Paul wasn't just hurting heretics who had it coming...Paul was hurting God himself. Jesus says to Paul...**Why are you persecuting me?**

**I played the lotto** this week and had fantasies of a life with no more pain, all comfort, no problems every again...sounds like heaven right? I wouldn't ever go back to suffering if I had 97 million dollars, right? I would insulate myself, completely. But God doesn't do that. God leaves heaven, even now, to suffer alongside you, to fight for your good...to encourage you, to build up, to walk beside you, to celebrate your wins and cry with you as you fall apart. That's what love is. Jesus fights for your good, right now. So fight for their good, right now...and fight for them the way Jesus fought for you. Your prayers are working. Your obedience matters. Your generosity makes all the difference. Your story is amazing...so be encouraged my friends! **Pray/Table Talk/Bene**