

ULC Sermon Study Resource

Greater Than: Suffering

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Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: After what date does listening to Christmas music become socially acceptable? When do *you* start listening to Christmas music, and do you chide people for listening to Christmas music too early?

Reading: Colossians 1:24-29, 2:1-5

Outline:

- I. Rejoice in suffering (Colossians 1:24)
 - a. Philippians 1:29 “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake”
 - b. Paul doesn’t rejoice *because* he’s suffering. He rejoices *in* his suffering.
 - c. Our suffering doesn’t make up for any deficiency in Christ’s suffering on the cross, but helps advance the gospel and move us closer to the day of God’s healing rule and reign.
Q: How do we see Paul rejoicing in his sufferings in the story of Scripture?
- II. Fulfill our ministry (Colossians 1:25-29)
 - a. Ministry is being a servant in God’s house. As servants in God’s house we exist to make known the riches of the glory of the mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
 - b. We fulfill our ministry when we serve each other, suffer well, and proclaim Christ.
Q: How do we see Jesus, Paul, and others in the story of Scripture working as servants in God’s house?
- III. Look to the glorious mystery (Colossians 2:1-3)
 - a. Christ is God’s mystery and He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge.
 - b. “If you’re underwhelmed by Christ, you’ll be overwhelmed by everything else. If you’re overwhelmed by Christ, you’ll be underwhelmed by everything else.”

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) What would it mean for us to view our suffering as advancing the gospel?
- 2) How do the lies of the so-called “prosperity gospel” fall short, and why can’t we believe in Jesus without counting the cost? (cf. Luke 14:25-33)
- 3) In what ways do you syncretize (mix) the teachings of Christ with the ideologies of our day to make faith more palatable/acceptable? How does this diminish the full glory of the gospel?
- 4) How do you measure how you’re fulfilling your ministry? How can this passage inform that?
- 5) What happens when we look to something other than the glorious mystery of Christ? How can we fix our eyes on Him?

Suggestions for further study:

- Habakkuk 3:17-19 **Q: How does Habakkuk rejoice in his sufferings?**
- Romans 5:1-11 **Q: What is the result of rejoicing in suffering?**
- Ephesians 3:1-13 **Q: How do we see the mystery of Christ being revealed here?**

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, we thank you that you’ve called us to be your own, that in your glory and in your wisdom and in your knowledge you chose to come to us and to come for us. Lord, because of this truth, teach us to not abandon our faith or our hope when it gets hard, but to look to you and trust in you to fulfill our ministry. We pray this in your name, Amen.