

30th Anniversary Sunday
Colossians 1:27-28

Colossians 1:27-28 (ESV) [27] "To them [the church] God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28] Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

Introduction (pray)

- A. We set aside this morning to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Living Hope Church. We are now 30 years old (the effective date is September 1, 1986).
 - 1. We are grateful for those of you, and there aren't many left, who have made the journey with us every step of the way. We are also grateful for more recent additions.
 - 2. Days like this, where we reflect on the decades, also bring to mind friends we have lost along the way (whether by moving on or by death). We feel their absence.
- B. Happily, in heaven, there will be no more sadness. For those of us who anticipate "Christ in you, the hope of glory" there is a desire to be with Jesus.
 - 1. Take in these precious words:

Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV) [1] "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.""

- C. This morning, I'd like to give glory to God by looking at Living Hope Church from the perspectives of our past, our present, and our future.
 - 1. God has been faithful, is faithful, and will be faithful.

I. Our past

- A. Living Hope Church began by adopting (or replanting) an existing church from Lebanon.
 - 1. That church was named *Covenant Fellowship Church of Lebanon Valley*.
 - 2. I thought you might enjoy hearing their purpose as they incorporated:

"We, the people of Covenant Valley Church of Lebanon Valley, are a company of people committed to developing a growing, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with his people. Springing from the ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ, our vision is the revival and restoration of authentic New Testament Christianity and the evangelization of the world with signs following in order to hasten the Lord's return."

- 3. The pastor was Dave Hess (now at Christ Community), and the church, as I've heard the story, left the Methodists and then had a split over spiritual gifts.

4. Dave reached out to PDI (SGC forerunner) via the church in Lancaster (now Crossway). The pastors in Lancaster were thinking church plant somewhere on the east coast. Beth and I visited a special meeting and my opinion was let's not do it.
- B. However, after sorting things out, it was decided that the church in Lancaster would send a team to the Hershey area to launch a new church in September, 1986.
1. The team consisted of Jerry & Cindy Martin (Sr. Pastor), Ken & Beth Mellinger, Donna Wyble (now Wenger), and Esther Weber (with the Lord).
 2. The beginning was rocky, folks were coming, folks were leaving, I recall accusations being bandied about, and times were tough. We moved from Lebanon to Hummelstown.
 3. About 18 months in Dave leaves because he didn't like the way things were handled (not blaming him one bit). His family leaves, but some of you stayed and I'm grateful.
- C. The church begins to grow and we move from Hummelstown to the YFC building. I'm approached about attending the SOM (now PC) and we would attend in 1990-1991.
1. On our return things are unexpectedly difficult. I hit against my hardest test regarding whether it was a mistake that we came (is a mistake possible with sovereignty?).
 2. As Jerry and I sought to sort out the direction of the church, Jerry suddenly resigned. The PDI leader asks me if I have faith to take the church (only option). I do.
 - Honor Jerry for his sacrificial act and integrity. Truth was our funds were getting a tad low. I recall having no idea (no reports). I do recall folks being upset.
 3. We moved from YFC to Highspire in as secret of a place as you can find in central PA. I have forgiven you for wanting to make this move.
 4. As Jerry and Cindy were sent out to pursue what they believed to be the Lord's leading on their lives I asked a number of you to give me six months (inexplicably many stayed). We were curious what would happen to Living Hope.
- D. I began by preaching through the gospel of Matthew, interrupted at the end of chapter 5, did a short series on the Holy Spirit, overcoming anger, and the church.
1. A friend calls me and says there is revival in Toronto. Want to go? Yes, but he backed out and I went with Ryan and Jared. Strange things start happening.
 2. After about three months, we went back to the basics. That season galvanized our church and I'm grateful. The church grew and we moved to the Holiday Inn.
 3. We continued to preach the gospel and grow in our fellowship when I had a sense we should raise funds for property and a building (in 2002).
 4. Many of us have given funds for land and a facility since 2003. I'd like to say thank you for excelling in the grace of giving and perseverance.
 5. We moved from the Holiday Inn to STMS where we've spent some 13 years. I'm grateful for God's faithful provision.

- E. I've shared the story of land and building other times so I won't repeat it now. I turned my attention to positioning Living Hope for fruitfulness.
 - 1. I proposed Ben Kreps become the lead pastor, we added bi-vocational elders, I led the building project and gave some time to SGC.

II. Our present

- A. The pastors are very interested in your maturity in Christ. We preach Christ and teach Christ so that two things are accomplished in you.
 - 1. Then hope of glory (your eyes fixed on eternity, desiring Jesus, living for that day).
 - 2. Your maturity in Christ (through hardships, suffering, or blessings)
- B. Allow me to ask you about your maturity. Are you mature? I think it is quite fair to ask what the marks of maturity are. I'd propose this:
 - 1. You follow Jesus
 - 2. The activity of God is present in your life
 - 3. You exert influence on others

Matthew 4:19 (ESV) [19] "And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.""

- C. Pressing into some actual specifics:
 - 1. You read the Bible and pray (abide in the vine)
 - 2. You pursue fellowship (including but not limited to CGs)
 - 3. You seek to walk in love (greatest command) and humility (God gives grace)
 - 4. You are eager to give God glory in everything you do
 - 5. You have a heart to serve (greatest in the kingdom)
 - 6. You enjoy the peace you have with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ
- D. Let ask you about your life (you will never give an account of your life to the pastors here but one day you will stand before God).
 - 1. Is there any secret sin you cherish and practice?
 - 2. Is your life an example to others (can you say follow my example?)?
 - As you live the single life are you an example? Your marriage, your parenting, do you serve others as an example? To be sure none are perfect but we aim to be mature.
- E. Your pastors celebrate the grace of God we see in your lives.
 - 1. Because Jesus has made us His own we press on. We are amazed that He loves us and we lay down our lives for Him.

Philippians 3:12-16 (ESV) [12] Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. [15] Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. [16] Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

2. Let us not retreat or go back in our pursuit of godliness, holiness, and maturity. Let us hold on tightly to what we have attained.

Ex: We aren't consumers, we are disciples. We have died to ourselves.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) [20] "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

III. Our future

- A. Our future is bright. Jesus Christ is building His church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). The sky is not falling.

1. Fear not regarding our future. There will be enemies of Christians and the Church.
2. It is by many hardships we enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). The future is bright.
3. Fear not. Though you hear reports of all manner of problems, troubles, wars, rumors of wars, terrorism, presidential candidates, do not fear, do not worry.

Psalms 37:1-7 (ESV) [1] "Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! [2] For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. [3] Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. [4] Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. [5] Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. [6] He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. [7] Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!"

Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV) [4] "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

- B. Jesus is ruling and reigning and He holds all authority in His hands. In May, 2017, we will, Lord willing, go into a building. The future is bright.

1. To be salt and light, to reach out to those around us, to give God glory what we need is not casual Christians.
2. We will need disciples who have died to themselves and picked up a cross. We aren't going into a building because it is easier. It isn't easier.
3. And we will need to pay off a \$2.7M mortgage. Thank you for your support in getting us this far down the road (we said 4.5M project in 2003 dollars and we have done well).

- C. Ben will lead us into 2017 and beyond.

1. Would you pray for us as we think, pray, discuss, and consider how we will function as a church in our facility? We want to be faithful and fruitful.

2. I don't doubt that there are things of practice that will change. Our convictions and our principles are rock-solid and they are a constant. We are going to enjoy what God does in that building.

Close

- A. We are family, we are in this together, and God is at work. He is growing us up into the likeness of Jesus Christ and by God's grace we will be mature.
 1. And if we are indeed mature, it will be because we have the hope of glory in eternity and we, by faith, treasure Jesus Christ above every earthly gift.
 2. We only treasure Jesus if we love Him. We only love Him because our hearts are captured by His work on the cross. The cross is either offensive to you or cherished by you.

Ex: Moses serves us as an example. Moses cherished Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:24-27 (ESV) [24] By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, [25] choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. [26] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. [27] By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

3. Friends, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith.

Pray

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