

From The Pulpit Of



IMMANUEL  
BAPTIST  
CHURCH

## Reaching the Riches

Colossians 2:1-7

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### Text

*[1] For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, [2] that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [4] I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. [5] For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

*[6] Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, [7] rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

### Intro:

Hook: the comedian Alex Lasarev tells us his story. It's a story about his mom, who was a single mom who worked very hard and saved all her money so that he could have a better life. In his mom's untimely death, Alex found himself with an inheritance of over \$1 million! This is enough money to fund his way through a nice college, make investments, and open up great opportunities for the future. But, at only 18 years old, he was unprepared to handle this new fortune, so he quickly began to buy luxury items, make poor investments that turned into terrible losses, and loan out money to his friends who promised they would pay him back. In just a few years he had completely squandered over \$1 million that his mom left him. Everything that his mom worked so hard for and saved everything for, gone before he could even realize it. What if you were given a fortune?

Surface tension: what if I were to tell you that you have been offered a fortune, and are in danger of throwing it away if you don't know how to use it?

Orient to text: that's what Paul is concerned about in our passage today. But this fortune is not financial riches, but it's something far greater, it's Christ himself. How was that a far greater fortune? Well what is greater, \$1 million or the God who made it? The Colossians were in danger of throwing away the riches of Christ, but if we look closely enough, we'll see ourselves in the same danger. Instead of throwing it away, Paul wants us to reach all the riches of Christ. And that's the same thing I want us all to hear today. I want us all to reach all the riches of Christ.

1-5 reach the riches by knowing

But look how much Paul struggles on their behalf in verse one (Read 1). He struggles on behalf of the Colossians and their neighbors, the Laodiceans, very much like a parent struggles and strives for the good of their children. Maybe if you have children it looks much like what you would strive for on their behalf. But what exactly is he struggling for? Put your eyes on verse two (that their hearts may be encouraged). The ultimate goal here is their encouragement, or as he would later describe their firmness in faith or them being rooted and built up and established in faith.

how hard would you struggle for someone else's encouragement? Do you ever even think about how you might encourage a brother or sister in their faith? Paul seems to find value in struggling for others encouragement, even in ways that compares to Christ's afflictions earlier on in the chapter. So why shouldn't we? When is the last time you went out of your way to talk to someone at church just with the purpose of encouraging them? I mean, that's why he says that this happens when we are knit together in love ("that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love"). This is a group effort.

But what exactly is this encouragement? This is what verses 1-5 tell us. Verses one through five tell us that we are encouraged by the riches. I mean, just look at the rest of verses 2 and 3 (Read 2b-3) According to Paul, there are great riches from God's mystery, Christ. Now, when he says mystery, he is not saying that it is presently a mystery, but he is referring to a past mystery now revealed ever since Christ. Christ is the riches, but how can you have the riches if you aren't even aware of them? That's why Paul spends himself for the purpose of making Christ known so that they can be encouraged by the riches.

But exactly what does he mean by riches? Why is Christ referred to as the riches? If you were to turn one page back, and find chapter 1:12, it would be clear why Christ is referred to as the riches (read 12-14). Through Christ we have an inheritance, namely receiving the forgiveness of sins and a redeemed relationship with God. But that's not all. To those who receive the inheritance, Christ has transferred them from the domain of darkness to his kingdom of light, which means we live under his kingdom and his goodness. Can you imagine throwing that away? Even if you don't believe in God, what if he was real? Wouldn't you hope that he is a forgiving God for any of the wrongs that you have done? Would it not be incredible if you could be in his kingdom and live with him? But the question is, have you found these riches?

But if you're already a believer, maybe you're thinking, OK cool so I already have the riches because I have already been forgiven and now I'm in his kingdom. But wait a minute, why then does Paul say that he wants them to reach all the riches? And keep in mind, he's not talking to a group of unbelievers, these are Christians. Could it be that there is more to the riches than the first moment we met Christ? Could it be that there is more encouragement and benefit and riches by knowing Christ more?

I mean, even in terms of being transferred to his kingdom of light, could you honestly say there is no darkness, only light, in your life? Are there not ways in which darkness still needs to become light in your life? Are there not ways in which brokenness, sadness,

shame, or sin need the healing and restoration of Christ? This is what the inheritance of God's saints is! Christ himself is the light, and the restoration.

What is the greatest darkness in your life? Is it a sin habit, a doubt, a trauma, or a present stressful situation? The riches of Christ meet you in your deepest wounds and darkest corners. But the question is have you reached these riches?

Are you lost in sin? Christ is the resurrection who overcomes all darkness. Have you reached these riches?

Are you scarred by broken relationships? Christ is the one who loved you before the world began and proved that by pursuing you to death. Have you reached these riches?

Are you overwhelmed by the stress relating to finances or family? Christ is the rest that our souls truly need. Have you reached these riches?

Are you under the burden of loneliness? Christ is the only one who is truly with us everywhere we go. Have you reached these riches?

Are you endangered by health issues? Christ is the eternal life who will ultimately heal all our bodies. Have you reached these riches?

Christ is the ultimate riches, he is worth more than anything! Christ is the inheritance who promises to transfer us completely out from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of his light, but how do we reach these riches? Well just look again at verse 2 (read 2b). We reached these riches by knowing Christ.

But the problem with the Colossians is that they were not reaching the riches. Instead of reaching the riches of Christ by coming to a greater understanding of who he is and what he has done, the Colossians were deluded by a different understanding. I mean just look at verse four (read 4). They were being deluded and led astray by misleading ideas. Paul will talk about these arguments more in the next passage. In short, these philosophies they believed teach that you need something outside of Christ. If knowing Christ is reaching the riches that encourage and establish our faith, then believing ideas that we don't need Christ will work the exact opposite. That is what Paul is warning them of here.

But we have the same danger. If I had a better career, I wouldn't be so depressed. If I had more money, I wouldn't be so stressed. If I had more friends, I wouldn't be so lonely. All of these things are good things and would at least help the problem a little bit, but it's when you believe these things are the riches you need, or when you throw out Christ because you believe these things are better and you don't need Christ, that is when your gain becomes a loss. Don't throw away the riches. Reach all the riches in Christ. Pursue Christ and the knowledge of him, and how he is the solution to your problem, the answer to your question, and the ultimate help that you need.

But this isn't just head knowledge. This is heart knowledge. This is knowledge that matters to all of life. I don't think Paul would be struggling and suffering so hard over a set of facts. This is more than just information, this is transformation. That's exactly why Paul keeps going in verse 6 (read 6-7).

The incredible value of knowing Christ Jesus means we are rooted in him, built up in him, and established in him. Therefore live like it. If you were to receive a great fortune, wouldn't your life change quite a bit? Wouldn't you do things differently, go to different places, or live a different lifestyle? How much more so do you think this is true for those who reach the riches of Christ? Verses 6 and 7 tell us that those who receive the riches live by the riches.

But again, this isn't just a one time transformation. This is an ongoing transformation because we have yet to reach all the riches of Christ. Think about the growth of a tree. It starts small, but it grows taller and wider every year. It doesn't go a year without growing in a visible way. But in order to grow more above ground, does it not also need to grow more below ground. Does not the tree grow up as fast as it does grow down? You can't have one without the other. And the same is true with you. You can't be rooted in Christ without growing upwards.

So how does your life look? Do you live as though Christ is your greatest treasure? I don't care what you know, if you don't live like it then you don't have that great treasure. The sure sign that you are rooted and built up in Christ is your faithfulness to him. Why would you throw away a great treasure unless you didn't think it was all that great of a treasure? If the way you live at work, the way you treat your family, or the way you spend your money looks as though you have no idea who Jesus is, then maybe you haven't reached the treasure after all.

How sad would it be to throw away a treasure like this? But this is for you to decide today. Whether you know Jesus already or not, it's your decision. Will you reach to all the riches of Christ, or will you carelessly throw it away?