

## Colossians #12 - Ministry Is About People

- Howdy, Pastor Mark Driscoll here at the Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona. Really excited to provide for you the series of sermons based on the book of Colossians. It's an amazing book of the New Testament, where the Apostle Paul is writing from prison to a newly planted church. And we took a few months here at the Trinity Church to go verse by verse through this book of the Bible. I've had the honor of preaching and teaching, perhaps a few dozen books of the Bible in my career. And this is the first time I've ever been through Colossians. And I'm really excited that you can join me. All right, it's our last day in Colossians, we're gonna cover a lot of scripture in Colossians 4:2-16. I'm not gonna lie, I'm going on vacation. So I gotta finish up today. So we're gonna cover a huge chunk of Colossians and it's sort of the grand finale to Paul's great letter. And as you're finding your place in your Bible, we learn that, ministry is all about people. And what you're gonna meet today, is a whole number of people that are like you and like you, and like you, they are people that are in the church, they're loving, they're serving, they're praying, they're caring, they're giving, they're contributing, and as a result, Paul is going to be honoring them. And as we dive in, let me tell you the motive for choosing this book of the Bible. We tend to go through books of the Bible. That's kind of what I like to do, but what I was particularly drawn to this book for, was the fact it was written to a brand new church. You think about all the churches that we drive by, all the churches you hear about and know about, they all had a beginning. At some point, a group of people came together and said, "We're gonna do this." We belong to Jesus. We believe that people need Jesus and we're gonna do this. We're gonna give our money, we're gonna give our time, we're gonna give our prayers, we're gonna give our service, we're gonna get our hands dirty. We're gonna start where there's nothing, and we're gonna see a church come into existence. Every church that exists, a group of people, somewhere in their history, were those pioneers that sort of got it all started. We are in that season as a young church where we're just getting started. Colossians was written to a young church just getting started. So they're in a similar place that we are. And the reason I picked up this book of the Bible was, well, what would God have to say to them, He probably would have something real similar to say to us. They were a healthy church, we're a healthy church. They didn't have drama, we don't have drama. They didn't have conflict, we don't have conflict. There weren't a lot of heretics that they were fighting or false teachers to be rebuking. There were a lot of sweet people to be encouraging and instructing. Colossians is in tone a lot like the Trinity Church. Things are going good. You guys are doing a great job, we love you. We appreciate you. I'm really encouraged and excited. And as we open Colossians, it's a church like ours. And when you hear the names of people and circumstances, it's like you guys. That's why I get so excited about it. I'm your pastor, I love you. And sometimes when we pick up books of the Bible and it gives instruction and it names people, we think, "Well, we don't know those people." You will. Will be with them forever in the kingdom of God. And so he gives final instructions and then encouragement, and he starts in Colossians 4:2-6, I'll call it four legs for a stable faith. Kind of the final directives from Paul, and he's far away. He's writing a letter to a church in Colossae. He himself is in prison, so we can't visit. So he's sending them a letter. And just like you're sitting in a chair, they were sitting in church, whatever that looked like in that day. And you've got four

legs on your chair and that holds stability. These are four legs that sort of hold so that there can be strength and stability for your life and for our life together. So he says, "Continue steadfastly in prayer." This is an ongoing habitual lifestyle, "being watchful in it with thanksgiving." "At the same time," mentions pray, Again, "pray also for us." Praying for the leadership in the church and the community and the opportunities, "that God may open to us a door for the word." So that Bible teaching goes out, right? And that's what I get really excited about, bible teaching going out. "To declare the mystery of Christ," tell people about Jesus. Jesus is God, lived without sin, died for our sin, rose as our savior, has prepared a place for us, is coming again to give us a life of joy that never ends together forever, right? This mystery is something we didn't know, now Jesus lets us know what God's big plan is. "On account of which I'm in prison." He's in jail. Let me say this about Paul, no one would hire him today. This guy could never get a job as a pastor. 'Cause here's his resume. "Well, what's your wife like?" "I'm single." "Well, tell us about your kids." "I don't have any." "Do you have any experience with deacons?" "Yes, I murdered them." "Whoa, whoa, okay. Wow, okay, so what are you good at?" "I'm good at making riots. I'm really good at making riots. And sometimes I go to jail." How many of you have never seen that as the job description for the pastoral search committee at a church? We're looking for a single childless man who starts riots and spends time in prison and murders deacons. Nailed it, we got the Apostle Paul, okay? And here's the deal with the Apostle Paul. If God can use him, God can use,

- [Audience] Anybody.

- Anybody. You haven't murdered a deacon and please don't. But the point is that Paul's life belongs to Jesus. And once you meet Jesus, you get a fresh clean start. And his life has a lot of complex variables and he is used of God mightily. It just goes to show, it doesn't matter who you are, or what you've done or where you've been, or even what you're in the middle of, if you're devoted to Jesus, your mess becomes your message and your test becomes your testimony. Just made that up. I feel like rapping. I don't know what's going on here. "I'm in prison that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, provides flavor and also some sense of thirst so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." Let me summarize all of this with four things. And what he's saying is for you individually, for us collectively as a church family. Start, prayerful. And he uses this language, he actually speaks quite a bit of prayer here. He says, "Continue steadfastly in prayer," and he says, "pray for us." Now, some of you are not Christians. And maybe prayer is something that you don't fully understand. Maybe some of you are Christians, but your prayer life has not been incredibly strong. Some of you are Christians, your prayer life is very strong. Let me bottom line for you, prayer is simply as I can. It's meeting with your dad. It's meeting with your dad. The key to prayer is not the focus on prayer, the key to prayer is to get to know God is Father. That's why when they came to Jesus and they asked Him how they should pray, "Start your prayer like this, Our,

- [Audience] Father.

- father," God is Father. If you have a father, who's all powerful, all knowing, all loving, all forgiving, all present, all capable, His heart is inclined toward you. He seeks only good for you. What would you talk to him about? Everything. Dad, I had a great day, let me tell you about. Dad I did not have a great day, let me tell you about it. Dad I learned something, let me share with you. Dad I'm confused, I need you to help me figure this out. Dad, I'm scared. I'm really scared dad, I need you to go with me and before me. If you have, a loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate, present, devoted dad, you don't have to focus a lot on talking with him because it'll just happen naturally. You notice that? How many of you are parents, and they're your kids, and you love them and you're there for them, and when they start to talk, they start talking to you. That's just what happens. If the parents are loving and present, eventually the kids start talking. They start talking to them. When you're born, you learn to talk. You talk to your parents. When you're a Christian, you're born again spiritually, and prayer is learning to talk to God as your father. That's all that it is. And what this means is, there's always something to talk to your father about. You're worried about somebody, pray for them. You have a need and bring it to Him. There's something you're grateful for, let Him know. There's something you're confused by, let Him know. There's something that's broken your heart, bring it to Him that He may heal your broken heart. There was a season of my life, I've struggled with whether or not to share this with you, but, it wasn't that long ago. It was couple of years ago. I was in the most difficult season of my whole life. Just found the limits of my humanity. You ever been just at the point, you're like I found the limits of my humanity? Right? Just any more work, any more stress, anything else that you gotta deal with, you're like, "I feel like I just can't handle anymore. I feel like I've reached the limits of my humanity." And so, I'm the guy when trouble, trauma, crisis comes, I live in my head, I study. I research and then I make a plan. And then I tap the red S on my chest, as my cap flaps in the wind, and then I go to work, okay? How many of you are like me? Okay? You do your research and you go to work and you do your homework. Well, there wasn't a lot I could do. It was kinda out of my hands. And I'm a guy who likes to study. So I sat down one day to read some more and study some more to figure out what to do, and I couldn't see. Now, if any of you over 40, you're like, "I know what that's like." It was a little different. How many of you are 40? You're like what? So I got a phone that my kids referred to as dad's flat screen. 'Cause I can't read a normal size phone. That's just age. This wasn't just age, this was age plus stress. I lost my eyesight. I remember I was holding, can't remember if it was a Bible or a book, I wouldn't know. 'Cause I couldn't see it. But either way, I was like, "I can not, I can't read." My eyesight is gone. I go to my eye doctor, I'm like, "I can't read." I mean, normally I can. My doctor asks, he's like, "Are you stressed?" I was like, "Yeah, for sure." He's like, "You're so stressed, you lost your eyesight." I was like, "Whoa, how long is that gonna be?" He's like, "When you're not stressed." I was, "So it's gonna be awhile." Okay, so that's what we've determined. I remember going home thinking, what am I gonna do? All I had was prayer. Let me say this about prayer, if all you have is prayer, you have all you need. If all you have is prayer, you have all you need. I remember thinking, and I can't read dead guys, I can't read commentaries. I have a huge library, I can't read for a while. I don't know how long this is gonna last. So I remember just sitting down in a chair, talking to God, Father, I'm your son. Obviously it's tough season for me. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I feel overwhelmed. I love grace in the kids, I want to do the best I can. I'm

kinda at the limits of my humanity here. And this is not a good time for me. And I remember just sitting in a chair in my office talking to God, the father, because He was there with me, and He's a good dad and He cares. And He was able to help. That's prayer. That's prayer. God doesn't need prayer, you do. You do. And what God did, He healed my heart, He gave me clarity, gave me hope, reduced my anxiety, and I started to get better. And I'll tell you what, you've got a dad who loves you, you got a dad who cares for you, you got a dad who knows you, you got a dad who's always there for you. Somebody says, continue steadfastly in prayer. It's another way of saying, keep talking to dad. 'Cause if all you have is prayer, you have all you need. And sometimes we'd think that we have a lot of other things that we can say and do, but ultimately prayer is what we need, okay? So here's what I don't wanna do, I don't wanna make prayer something you have to do, I wanna make it something you get to do. I would never look at a little kid who had a parent that loved them and said, "You need to talk to them!" I would say, "You get to talk to them." You have parents who are there and they love you. Some of you didn't have a good dad, you didn't have a present dad, you didn't have a loving dad, you didn't have a wise dad, you didn't have a helpful dad, if you're a Christian, you do now. And it doesn't matter how old you are, you still need your dad. So continue steadfastly in prayer. And that's meeting with dad. That's what prayer is. It says, be prayerful, be watchful. Watchful is looking for opportunities. Think of like a duck hunter, right? They sit all day, all day waiting for one opportunity. That for the duck before them, that's what they're waiting for. Their big opportunity. That's what he's talking about, when he says to continue being watchful. What he's saying is, look and see what God is doing. Look who's in front of you. Look who is there to be loved, to be served, to be prayed for, to be cared for, 'cause it's God's people. We're on mission with Jesus and there's an opportunity for ministry. And I'll tell you what, not to be overly critical, but what gets in the way of being watchful is this. I can't see you when I'm looking at this. I can't see that you're hurting, I can't see that you're struggling, I can't see that you're confused, I can't see that you actually are here if I am only looking at this. This is not a sin, but this is a real distraction from relationship. Okay? And sometimes being watchful simply means, I will assume that God has put people in front of me. Now, let me say this. What does being watchful look like here in the Valley? When I speak of Phoenix, I mean Scottsdale and all of the surrounding areas. So we are now the fifth largest city in America, the fastest growing city in America, the fastest growing County in America. Which means more people are showing up here than anywhere else in the United States of America. They show up, they don't have family of origins, they don't tend to have friends, they don't know anybody. The Valley is 500 square miles. It is overwhelming and huge. And how lonely and weird is it when you show up and you're like, "I need milk." And the only person I can talk to is named Siri, "Fine milk." Right? And then the directions come up and you figure out where the grocery store is, 'cause the only person you know in Phoenix is named Siri. Or how many of you have been there, right? It's weird. Some of you have been here awhile, how many of you are new in the last few years, okay? Pretty, okay. So most of you are new. Phoenix didn't exist till they invented air conditioning and they put the box in the window 'cause nobody could sleep. Statistically, you can graph it, why do those people show up? 'Cause they could stop sweating. So they decided to stay. So that's the history of Phoenix. So that being the case, all these new people show up. They don't know anybody. You know what happens? You go to church, you're the new person. You go to school, you're the new kid. You move into the

neighborhood, and everybody drives their car into their garage and shuts the garage door. Nobody is being watchful. Here's how you get to know your neighbors, you take your garbage out, you're waiting. You're waiting for them to take their garbage out. You're like, I am lonely. I will wait for them to take their... because they've set up their house like a fortified compound, right? There's no porch out front with a swing, how are you doing? No, no, no. There's a dog and a clicker, right? And in, they go to the garage, the door shuts. So if you wanna meet your neighbors, you've gotta just sort of wait. All right? Wait for them to take their garbage out. "Oh, I see, oh now I'll take my garbage out. How are you doing?" "Great, how are you?" "Great, okay, we're done. Thank you, that was nice. Emotional, relational connection. See you next time we have trash." It's a lonely life, amen? You go to the grocery store you're looking around, you're like, "Well, no, I don't know anyone." No one knows me. It's very lonely. It's very lonely. And being watchful is saying, "Okay, you're new to the neighborhood, hey welcome. Can I help you unload your truck?" Some of you're like, I don't know how to do ministry. If you can lift the box, you are a blessing. Amen? Somebody new at school, hey, you're new, welcome. New at church, welcome. It's being watchful for new people, new opportunities to love, to serve, to bless. That's all that it is. Grace and I, when we first moved into our neighborhood, nobody, well, one couple said hi and everybody else just hit the clicker. So my wife being super social made cookies. She's like, "We're gonna go meet the neighbors." "All right, it's Arizona, they all got guns. I hope we make it." I was so... You don't want to just knock on doors here, right? "You're on my property, I know the law." You're like, well, okay, I'll preach own funeral. This is where it's. So we're bringing cookies and we're taking them to the neighbors. And the neighbors, honestly, many of them were very weirded out. The one most weird, that was, it was kind of dusk nighttime, bang, bang, bang; guy opens the door and leaves the screen door shut. He's in his pajamas, there's a bulge here. I literally think it's a firearm. He's like, "What do you want?" I was like, "We have cookies." And he's looking at me like, "This is the weirdest crow scare that's ever come to the door." All right? And I said, "No, no, no. We're new to the neighborhood. We moved down the way we brought cookies." He's like, "What do you want?" "We wanna give you cookies, it shouldn't be this hard." "Well, it shouldn't be this hard to give you." My wife bake, look at me, she makes good cookies, right? Eat the cookies." So finally we had to convince this guy, that we're not here to abduct him, we're not here to, we're not delivering bail bonds, we're not selling anything, nothing. We're just here to give him cookies. So he opens the door and I said, "No, we're just new down the street. We just wanted to say hi, introduce ourselves." And once he got kind of over his fear of someone being at his house, 'cause true or false, the only time you ever get to go in your neighbor's house is when they put it up for sale. True or lie? This is the time of year the homes go for sale and all the neighbors are like, "Let's go to Tom and Sue's open house." Why? "They never let us come over. We have no idea what their house looks like." So that's what we do here. The only time you get to go to your neighbor's house is when they're selling it and they want your money, then they'll let you maybe come in and look around. So that's what we do. We go visit their homes when they're for sale. So anyways, so we go into this guy's house and he's sitting there talking with us. And he asked for his wife to come. He's like, "Hey, the neighbors are here." It was like a unicorn showed up. Like we've heard about this, we didn't know it was real. You could talk to people down the street, crazy. So she comes out. We had the weirdest conversation with two elderly people who had finished a pitcher of margaritas

and were in their pajamas. Right? But we gave him cookies. You just take what you can get and start where you are, right? That's being watchful. I'll just move on. I could say some other stuff, it'd be funny. But that I wouldn't get to go on vacation. 'Cause I'd have to meet with all of you and apologize. So point number three is to be thankful. So to be prayerful, to be watchful, to be thankful. And what he says, "Continue with thanksgiving." So where's Paul at this point? Prison. How many of you would not be sending out, I'm so encouraged cards from jail. I would not, right? I would not. He's in jail, he's gonna say at the end of chapter four, "Remember my chains." Which means he's chained up. And what's he doing? He is writing a letter to encourage other people and to teach them how to be thankful, right? That's different. That's different. He sees that this life is gonna come to an end, that a reward in the kingdom is coming. He's got a lot to be thankful about. I've told you before, life is like train tracks. There's always good and bad, awesome and awful; concurrently, simultaneously. And what can happen is, sometimes the bad is so domineering, so overbearing, so frightening. Where we are, "Oh, that's a problem, that's a crisis. That's gonna be an issue, that's trouble, that's trauma." And what happens is, we live in fear and anxiety. And the fact is, oftentimes what we're afraid of, doesn't even happen. How many of you have had that? You're like, "Ah, it didn't happen. Oh, I was a lot of shaken for no reason right there. I was freaking out for no reason." Or it does come and it's not as bad as you thought. And what he says is, don't forget that other track; God's presence, God's provision, God's goodness, God's grace, right? Don't overlook that. Now, the optimist only looks at the good, the pessimist only looks at the bad. The Christian is supposed to look at both, but honestly, needs to emphasize the good. And to say, "God you are present, you are good, you have shown up, you are doing things that gives me hope for the things that remain undone." And what it does, it allows us to have an attitude of gratitude and some thankfulness. And what that does, that puts hope in the soul. Some will say, you need food, water, air, and shelter to live; I would add, you also need hope. You need hope. And hope comes from seeing God's provision in your life and being thankful for the things that He has done. And that gives you hope for the things that remain to be done. It's thanksgiving. And then he closes with being relational. And I'll just read it again to you, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders," people you don't know, new people, people that you don't have a relationship with yet. People who may not know Jesus yet. "Making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious." When you talk to people, bring the love of God with you, bring the kindness of God with you, bring the hope of God with you. "Seasoned with salt," salt makes it flavorful. This means be interesting when you talk to people. "So that you may know how to answer each person." What he's talking about here is, being a relational person. This is the four legs of the chair that sort of stabilizes and allows you to sort of sit and be the people of God. Prayerful, being with the father; watchful, people that have needs and opportunities. Can I pray for you? Can I love you? Can I help you? Can I serve you? What do you need? How can I invest in you? Thankful, okay these are the things that I'm grateful and thankful for. And I will also share the things I'm grateful and thankful for, with others to give them hope that God has good for them. And relational, being the person who initiates. I don't care if you're an introvert or an extrovert, you're Christian. People matter to God. We worship Jesus who came from heaven to earth, looking for a relationship with us. That means we can go across the street, that means we can go across the room. I said this at the previous service, and a young couple came up to me, cute as can be, adorable, little girl, newly married. They're like,

"We're new to the Valley. We're those people we don't know anyone." I said, "Well, there's some sweet people right there." I connected them. Now they know somebody, it's relational. The people that they met are dear people. I bet you they're having lunch in a great time right now. And I'm gonna get a great report. It's relational. Life is not meant to be lived alone. This world is a very lonely place. Lots of people use people, few people love people. And what he's talking about is loving people, as God has loved us, pursuing people as God has pursued us, having affection toward people as God and Christ has had affection toward us. And some of you, the reason that, if you are here, let's say you are Christian. The reason you don't initiate talking to people is you're not sure what they think. And you're afraid if they ask you questions about Christianity, you're not gonna be able to answer them. So because you're a little fearful, you don't engage. What he says here is, knowing how to answer each person. Let me tell you this. You don't need to start with the answer, you just need to go get it. That's all. I was a brand new Christian in college, 19, well, the guys on my dorm floor for the most part were not Christians. And I thought I want to talk to him about Jesus and I don't know what I'm doing. So I got the guys all together. I said, "Okay, I'm a Christian now," I pulled out my Bible. "It's official, here it is. I'm a Christian now." I said, "And you guys, I like all you guys, you're my friends," I said so. "Does anybody have any questions about Christianity? Just tell me and I'll write them down." And they started telling me. Some of the questions were amazing, some were, a little different, okay? Write them down. And then the guy, one guy looks at me, he's like, "All right, what are the answers?" I said, "I have no idea." I have no idea what any of these answers are. 'Cause I've been a Christian about as long as it takes to warm up a hot pocket. I've not been in this long time, I'm a newbie. And so the other guy looks, he says, "Well, what are you doing asking us?" I said, "Here's the deal, why don't you guys all come back next week? I'll do all my homework and I'll bring you the answers." They came back the next week, which was shocking. And I answered their questions, to the best of my ability. I spent the whole week researching. Now I'm in college, I'm not really doing a lot of college work, I'm really burdened by this Bible study. I did okay in college, but I was like, "No, I really wanna answer these Bible questions, and I don't know what the answers are." So I started buying books and doing research and trying to figure it out, bring the guys in the answers. Do you have any other questions? They do. We keep meeting for the course of the semester, by the end, most, if not all of the guys on the floor became Christians, got baptized and were going to church with me. And when we started, I was like, I have no idea, but I'll find out. You just need to know as you're pursuing relationships, loving people, welcoming people, praying for people, caring for people, serving people, being generous toward people, you can ask them; "Is there anything I can pray for?" Even non-Christians very rarely say, "No, I hate it when people pray for me, good things might happen." Right? Nobody is opposed to that, right? And sometimes it's like, would you like to go to church with me? Would you mind if I gave you a Bible? I am a Christian, if there's ever anything you'd wanna talk about, I'd be happy to talk about. Or maybe you've got questions, I'd be happy to answer them. You leave the door open lovingly, relationally. Oftentimes people take you up on that and you don't need to have all the answers, just tell them the truth. I don't know, that's a great question, I value. It's an honor you would ask, let me go find the answer and get back to you. And you know what? People appreciate humility and honesty. There is an answer, I don't know what it is, but I'll go find it for you 'cause I love you. That's what he's talking about in being relational. That's what he's talking

about. And it's because people matter and people are amazing. People are all together fascinating. I love the Bible, I love ministry. Having been a senior pastor for a couple of decades, I still find people to be all together fascinating, more fascinating than anything on TV or in a movie. As you get to know people and they open up and they share their life story with you, you realize that people are amazing. What they've been through, what they've learned, their experiences, there's history, there's always something to learn. And there's always something to be amazed as someone shares their story with you. God values people. God cares about people, God loves people. So at the end of this book, the whole impetus and thrust is, love People, serve people, respect people, care about people, honor people, remember people. And so He gives us a long list of people. So it's a lot of verses, okay? I'm gonna read them all and then summarize. If you were here a few weeks ago, it took me one hour to go through two verses, you probably get nervous CNS, okay? You're like, "Oh boy, here we go. We're gonna have a dinner sermon." No, we'll just read it and summarize it, okay? "Tychicus," and you're gonna start hearing all these names. Let me just preface this. And some of us would be like, "I don't know those people, it doesn't matter to me." You know what? It's you, it's a church, it's a new church that has people like you that have loved and prayed and cared and given and served. And if this book was written to the Trinity Church, and it was delivered and I was to stand up and read it, and your name was in there, you would be paying attention. You'd be like, "I made the Bible. That's amazing. I was an usher and I made the Bible. That's amazing." That's amazing, right? Because God values people who serve the church. God values people who serve people, God values people who serve Him. And He honors them. And He sets in process, a culture of gratitude and of honor. And let me tell you about these people too, they're actually brothers and sisters. This is our extended family, and there's a day coming in the kingdom of Jesus where there's a great reunion. I look forward to that, right? Tychicus, there'll be one day you're walking around heaven, "Hey, what's your name?" "My name is Tychicus." That's weird. There was a guy in the Bible named Tychicus. He's like, "Ooh, I wanna get a selfie?" "Yeah, I do, that's amazing! That's, yay, you're here!" These are real people that planted a real church. They served a real God, they're in the real kingdom. And we're gonna have a real family reunion where you get to meet all these people. So that's how I see it. That's why I get excited. I read names of people in the Bible, it's like, golly! It's kinda like looking at your family history saying, "Oh, what are all my great grandpa was like!" And then one day you're gonna get to meet him. You're like, "Well, I'm looking forward to that." So these are all brothers and sisters in the kingdom. Tychicus, we'll just call him Ty, 'cause it's, I just feel like I'm gonna mess that up. So we're gonna call him Ty, "Ty will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother, a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord." That's a lot of nice things to say about a guy, amen? "I have sent him to you for this very purpose that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts," God wants to encourage you. "And with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you, they will tell you of everything that has taken place here." Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner," he's in jail with Paul. You know a guy is a friend when he goes to jail with you, "greet's you and Mark sometimes called John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome Him." "And Jesus," Nope, not that one, who is also called justice. That kid was like, "He is, he got born with the name Jesus," and what's your name? Jesus. Like, "Ooh, we heard about you." Wow, we got

some stuff for you to do. Wow! Here's a fish, here's a love dude. And he's like, "No, not that Jesus. I'm, just call me justice," all right? He said, "Just call me justice." All right, "These are the only men of the circumcision. Those are the Jews. Among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God. And they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, he goes to their church, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers." This is a guy who's always praying for people in the church. "That you may stand mature, fully assured in the will of God that you'll know what God has for you to do. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and those in Laodicea," a nearby town; "and Hierapolis," another nearby town." Here's another guy, "Luke, the beloved physician greets you as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea," another town nearby, "And to Nympha." That is presumably a woman, "And the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it read to the church to the Laodiceans, so that you read the letter also from Laodicea." Saying, read this, have it spread about, this is for everybody. And here it lists, what I will refer to as seven kinds of people. This is not an exhaustive list, this is an example list. This isn't every of person, he's just looking at the church, the people that he's heard about. Now, here's the thing that's curious, Paul has never visited the church. He's never met these people. But the local leaders know the people love the people, report well of the people, and they go tell Paul. Paul is like, "Those people are amazing! They planted a church, they did it." Ooh, let's thank them, let's honor them. What Paul is saying is, "I'm in prison and I can't make it, but in my heart, I'm with you. So here is a letter to you." And here are the seven kinds of people. People you can depend on. This guy named Tychicus, he's a faithful, dependable guy. He's probably a pastor, he's called beloved faithful, a servant, and he comes to encourage. And what Paul says is, "I'm having him deliver the letter." Now imagine you're Paul you're in prison. You're writing a letter. Let's just assume you don't get a lot of shots at this. There's not a lot of office supplies in the Roman prison, amen? So once you knock this out and you realize, this might make the Bible kind of a thing, right? It's a big deal. I need somebody to deliver it. Where's my UPS guy? I need a guy with a brown uniform and a truck who can assure that this letter gets to Colossae. He says I'm picking Tychicus. 'Cause he's the one guy, if I give it to him, he'll get the job done. Some have said your greatest ability is your dependability. Sometimes you don't need to be the brightest, the smartest or the most organized, you just need to be faithful and dependable and get it done, son, that person! So how many of you are like that? You're like, "I get, I am, you can depend on me." You're the person, if somebody gives you an assignment, you will do it. You are the employee that would stay up all night, you'd come in early. You were the student that would pull the all-nighter, you would get it done. That's Tychicus. If Tychicus didn't do his job, we'd lose a book of the Bible. That's a big deal. You never know how important what you're doing is, only God knows. So you wanna do the best you can and be dependable, so that you are the one who's participating in what God intends. That's Tychicus. This dependable, steady guy. How many of you are that person that someone can depend on you? If you say you're gonna be there, you're gonna be there. If you say you're gonna do it, you're gonna do it. If you say you're gonna give in, you're gonna give in. If you say it's gonna get completed, it'll get completed. If you give a deadline, you're gonna make that line even if you're dead, amen? You're gonna get it done. Our world doesn't have a lot of people like that. The employees oftentimes don't execute in this way. The employers are always looking for these kinds of people. But if you're a

dependable person or you have a dependable person in your life, then you are a blessing to others, and or, blessed. The next one is people are transformed. Onesimus, I can only do a little bios on these guys. I think he's mentioned, if memory serves me correct, around five times in the New Testament. His story is kinda one of those crazy stories. He was a slave, who, as far as we could tell, seems like he ripped off his master and ran for his life. In our day, this would be like a jail break with a bank robbery, okay? And the next thing you know, he's in ministry, okay? That's a pivot, amen? That's a career pivot for him. It's a pretty significant career pivot. And so he's out, he's not a believer, he's not a Christian, right? He steals as far as we can tell money, runs away, runs for his life; boom runs into the preaching of the gospel of Jesus. Oh, I'm a sinner, I need my sins forgiven. Jesus is my savior, he's my Lord. He loves me, I love him. I'm a Christian now. What Paul says is, "We'll pay off his debt. Don't punish him, he's really helpful. He's doing a good job in ministry." Some of you don't feel like you should be serving in ministry because of your past. Paul has a past, I told you he murdered a deacon. Onesimus has a past, he was a slave; and that day, they would brand slaves like we do cattle. They were property. Something changed when Onesimus met Jesus. He got a new identity. And as a result, he lived a new life. Some of you, the thing that holds you back from really serving God in ministry, and I'm not talking about going into vocational ministry; as far as we get to help, these are all people that have jobs and are just loving and serving God, with the time that He provides them. Some of you struggle to commit to ministry because of things you've done. And you say, "You know what, I've done some things in my past, as a result, I just feel like maybe I'm not that useful to the Lord." No, actually, it's those things that makes you most useful. See, that the greatest ministry comes from the deepest pain. That's why if you've been through a divorce, you have great empathy and understanding for those who are in the midst of a divorce. If you have gotten remarried to put a blended family together, you know better than anyone, some of the difficulties in navigating those relationships, and you could be perhaps in the most strategic place to help someone who is entering into that experience to help them navigate it as well. If you have regret or remorse in your past, and you've learned from it and you brought it to the Lord, you've healed from it; you can comfort others with the comfort you've received. That's what ministry is. Ministry is taking what I have received and sharing it with someone else. For Onesimus, here's a guy who can minister to slaves. And between a third and half of all Roman citizens, were slaves. Which means a third to half of the people who are coming into church on Sunday, they are branded like cattle. And they're considered sub-human and they're not regarded or respected because of what has been done to them. Some of you don't feel like you're fit for ministry because of what you've done. Others of you don't feel like you're fit for ministry because of what has been done to you. And when they walk in and Onesimus is a greeter and goes to give them a hug, they're like, "You're branded. You were a slave. Then I'm a Christian." Jesus doesn't have any slaves. Jesus only has sons and daughters of the father. Welcome to the family of God. Oh, oh, we could be forgiven for the things we've done, healed from the things that have been done to us, loved by God, brought into the family as sons and daughters, considered equal co-heirs with everybody else. And you can even be in leadership if you were a slave. Yup, my name is Onesimus, welcome. Can you imagine how many slaves started coming to the church? Well, this is the place where you're forgiven, loved, freed, valued; and you can be used of God according to your character. That's Onesimus. Whatever you've been through, bring it to Jesus,

get healed up and use it to help others heal up, amen?

- [Audience Member] Amen.

- Our thing here at the Trinity Church is, you don't have to pretend that everything is okay. You just have to bring it to Jesus and help Him make it okay. That's all. That's what Onesimus did. He's a story of a great transformed life. There're also people who pick you up when you are down. Aristarchus, Mark, Justice; probably pick up Mark first. He's also called John Mark. There was a season where he was doing ministry with Paul, and then they had some sort of falling out. And we can speculate about that and maybe make . Let's just say they're both Godly men who love the Lord. It doesn't seem to be perhaps an overt sin issue, they just didn't fit, right? The hand didn't fit the glove. It just didn't work through them. Have you ever had that with somebody? You're like, "I love the Lord, they love the Lord." We just don't, we don't click. We don't get along well, it just doesn't work. And when we try to do something, it just doesn't fit. Doesn't mean that they're evil or I need to repent? We just disagree, or maybe we just don't fit. So they parted ways, for upwards of 11 years. And then Paul says, "Bring that guy back. He's really helpful to me." And they reconcile, they reunite. They start working back together. This teaches us to live our heart open that someone was helpful to us in a season of life, and then maybe there was distance or a strange or broken relationship; but perhaps in the future, there could be a picking up where we left off. It's a possibility, we leave our heart open. He mentions this guy Aristarchus as well. And this guy to me is kind of a rock star. He, we're told, "is a comfort to me and he is a fellow worker." This guy is the guy that as you read the New Testament, he travels with Paul. True or false, traveling with Paul is not a vacation. It's not, right? Paul he's shipwrecked, okay? He's beaten, he's stoned. Not that kind, the throwing rock kind, okay? And they leave him for dead, he's a drift on the open sea, he's flogged and the flesh is ripped from his body. He starts a lot of riots and is beaten and runs for his life, and he serves multiple prison sentences. And if you're looking at Paul saying, "You and me buddy, we're gonna roll together." You're a good friend if you sign up for a life for that, amen? That is Aristarchus. So when Paul's in jail, he's in jail. When Paul's getting beaten at a riot, he's getting beaten at a riot. He is a guy who is there to pick Paul up when he's down. When Paul is struggling, Aristarchus is in it with him. If you have one person like that in your life, you are blessed. The Puritans like to talk about swallow friends. These are people who leave when winter comes. Right? Spring, I'm here. Summer, I'm here. Fall? I dunno, it's getting cold. Winter, good luck! I'll see you when things are better. You're friends of the people who are walking in when everybody else is walking out. Okay? That's Aristarchus. Are you a friend like that? Jesus is a friend like that to us, right? And He wants us to be friends like that to each other. That's Aristarchus. People who get things done, talks about Epaphras. What does he say about Epaphras? He is a servant, He prays, and it says, "He worked hard. He probably planted that church." How many of you are just that way? You're like, "I get stuff done. Give me a checklist, I'll get it done. Just give it to, I'll get it done, I'm a workhorse, I get it done, that's what I do." That's Epaphras. He says he's a servant, he worked hard and he gets stuff done. He's the kinda guy, he just shows up on the job; pen, paper, he's like, "All right, give me the list." And you can just leave, you know that he is gonna do it. He is absolutely the guy who gets stuff done. Do you know anybody like that?

These people are amazing! Employers, too or false, you're looking for these people. Man, if I could tell you to do something and you'll do it, that's amazing! Right? And you'll do it efficiently. That's amazing. Are you people like that? You just get things done. You're responsible. You execute, you get over the finish line, get things done. That's Epaphras. Praise God for people who just get things done. But here we are, we're a baby church, all that's happened, it's 'cause there are some people here who frankly, just get things done. Every day We're in office, there are people literally just show up. They're like, "Give me something to do." Oh, God does answer prayer, welcome. Yeah, that's amazing that people would just show up and just ask for things to do. That's the heart of Epaphras. How about people who have unique skills? Luke. He says, "Luke is the beloved physician." Now, here's what you may not know, there is no indication that Luke is a pastor. He's not called pastor, he's not called apostle. He's a medical doctor. So what's a medical doctor doing in the New Testament? Well, a couple of things: one he's traveling companions with Paul. So when Paul gets beat up, Luke shows up with the first aid kit. That's what he does. I think one of the reasons that maybe Luke made it along with Paul, is 'cause Paul really needed him. I mean, who's gonna be the cutman in Paul's corner, right? So Luke is out on the battlefield of with the mission of the gospel, and as Paul takes his beating, Luke is there to put him back together. Luke does not have vocational ministry as his job. He's a doctor. And he writes most of the New Testament. Now by books, there's 27 books in the New Testament, Paul writes 13, maybe 14. There's a debate over a book called Hebrews. But as far as sheer volume goes, the number one contributor to the New Testament is Luke. He writes Luke and Acts. Those are very lengthy books of the bible. And if you work a job, you're like Luke. You're like Luke. He didn't go to seminary, he wasn't a priest, he wasn't a prophet, he wasn't an apostle, he wasn't a pastor. He's a medical doctor who does ministry with Paul, and God uses him to write the Bible and to put Paul back together. Here's what I want you to know, you don't have to leave your job to serve the Lord. Your job is the place that the Lord has you to serve the Lord. We don't believe here at the Trinity Church, that there are first class seats for vocational ministry, and then couch seats for everybody else. We believe that Luke is first class, we believe that everyone who belongs to the Lord Jesus, is first class. And what this world needs, in addition to more Bible teachers, it needs good doctors and good lawyers; and I'll just put it out there, good mechanics, okay? Can you all pray with me that we would have more good mechanics, right? There are just some practical people with really great skills, that if you find them and they're honest, and they're integris, and they're hardworking, and they do their job and they give you a budget, they're gonna execute on, if they give you a deadline, they're gonna do it, those people are amazing, they're a great witness to Christ, they have a relational network with a bunch of non-Christians and they have an opportunity to love and serve people on behalf of Jesus with integrity. And that's what Luke is in does, and he's a faithful guy. It says this ,in 2nd Timothy 4:11. He says, "Luke alone is with me." That's what Paul says elsewhere. Everybody else left, Luke is still there. For all of you that have a job, that all of you wake up tomorrow and you go do something that is your vocation, I want you to know, God wants you to be like Luke. To do a great job there, and use your gifts and abilities to love and serve Jesus, and to share the love of Jesus with others. The next one is concerning people who quit on Christ. There's this guy named Demas. Demas is listed here, he's part of a great church. He's under Paul's leadership. He's working with all these other amazing people who love and serve God. He's got

great teaching, he's doing fine. He's walking with the Lord, he's serving the Lord; yet, hear this, Paul writes in 2nd Timothy 4:10, "Demas in love with this present world has deserted me." How many of you know somebody like that? You're like, "What happened?" They were serving the Lord and now they deny the Lord. That couple was married, loving Jesus, sent their kids to Christian school, they were in our small group, mushroom cloud! That thing blew up and now they both don't go to church, read their Bible, and they're not even sure that Jesus is real. What happened? That pastor taught the Bible, and now he's an atheist. Like what the heck happened? That's Demas. Demas serves as an opportunity for each of us to search our own heart. Here's what I wanna tell you, the most important day of your life is the last day. Okay? It's how you finish. Okay? Onesimus, got a bad start, but he has a good finish. Demas has a good start and it looks like he's gonna have a bad finish. Now we don't know what happened to Demas. We know he was walking with God and then he turned his back and he walked away from God. We don't know if he ever turned around and came back. We don't know. But it says, Paul says, "He has abandoned me because of his love for the world." The Bible says, do not love the world. When it talks about the world, it's talking about the sinful aspects of culture. That we're to look forward to the kingdom, Jesus is coming. Sin will be no more. The world as we know, it will come to an end. I'm looking for the second coming of Jesus. I'm looking for the unveiling of God's kingdom, and what that does, that sets my heart into the kingdom of God. And that does not set my heart on the culture of the earth. And what he says is Demas had a tragic error. He took his heart from the kingdom and he put it in the culture and he fell in love with this world. And he loves sin more than he loved Jesus. For any of you that have a foot in the kingdom and a foot in the world, let me warn you. It's like I love Jesus, and I love sin. I wanna walk with Jesus, but there's some areas I don't want Jesus to meddle in my life or tell me what to do. There are things I want surrendered to God to be healed, there are some other things that are private that I just wanna continue doing without God getting involved. You're all in, you're all out. Somehow in Demas' heart, he had one foot in and one foot out. And next thing you know, he has two feet out. So it's an opportunity for us not to judge him, but to soberly judge ourselves, as we consider his example. And then lastly, he mentions a person who is likely a woman, Nympha who practiced hospitality. It talks about the church that meets in her house. She opened her house and she had people over. You need to know that this is still a magnificent ministry. Some of you are not preachers, but you can entertain. You like to have people over. You like to say hi, you like to connect people, you like to build relationships. That ultimately the church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God, they are an intersecting network and web of relationships. I can still remember, we now have wonderful people that we know are in love in Arizona. The relationships have been microwave. They've grown very warm, very fast. And we praise God for that. When we first moved here, we literally just knew a couple of folks. And we didn't know a lot of people. And I still remember the first family that invited us over for dinner. And they invited us over, and to this day, those people are very dear friends of ours that we love very much. I remember thinking, we're used to knowing a lot of people, now we don't know any people. Somebody who will invite you into their home, what they're doing is they're inviting you into their life. They're saying, "You can come over and hang out at my..." Okay, good. So now it's like family. It just takes the edge off. A lot of our relationships are business and professional. That's not bad or wrong, but when you open your home, you're saying, "You know what? This is

where I live, I wanna do life with you. This is where we live, we wanna do life with you." These are friends. These are relationships. She's a woman who opened her home, and next thing, she's got a church. People are in it and they're coming. Some of you need to know, especially this time of year, let me just implore you, I love you. But sometimes we think June, July, up, we're done. We'll see you again when it's not as hot as a pizza oven. And then we'll start serving Jesus again. This is the time of year where everybody moves to the Valley. This is the time of year where they sell their home, they move from where they are, they land here and they show up and they don't know anyone. And this is your opportunity to help them unpack, to welcome them into your home, to have them over to start to build a relationship; because we love people, and this world is a lonely place. And this woman got that. And as a result, a church came in her home and exploded to do ministry. Now, let me say this, if somebody knew you or knew about you, and they were gonna write a letter, what would they say about you? Here's all these people listed and what their reputation is. If it's good, praise God. If it's something that needs adjustment, let's all be humble and make those course corrections. And then he closes with this, here's the grand finale for the book of Colossians. Colossians 4:17-18, "And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the ministry you've received in the Lord.'" Can you imagine that? That's kind of awkward. Don't you think? And tell Archippus to get it done. They're like, " " Archippus was a guy apparently God told him to do something, he knew what it was, and he hadn't done it yet. How many of you would say that's me? I know what my ministry is, I know what am I supposed to do, I know what I'm supposed to give, how to serve, what to pray, I know who I'm supposed to go apologize, I know what I'm supposed to do, I just haven't done it yet. This is God's way of saying, "I love you, go do it." That's His way of saying it. I love you, go do it. Get it done, move forward. And what he's saying is, "Fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." Every one of you, if you are a Christian or become a Christian today, turn from sin, trust in Jesus; God has a ministry for you. And what you need to do is fulfill your ministry. I don't know what that is. Every one of us has a different part to play in the kingdom of God. This is like a team, and everybody's got a different position. And so you gotta figure out what your position is. Lord, what is my thing? What am I to do? What's the thing you've made me to do? And then fulfill your ministry. Don't covet someone else's ministry. Don't try and fulfill someone else's ministry, just do your thing. And he says, "I, Paul, write these greetings with my own hand." He's in prison, in chains, loving people. You know what that means? You can always love someone. You can always love someone. "Remember my chains, grace, be with you." And what Paul ends with, is grace. Paul is in prison, but he trusts God's grace to give him a ministry even from prison. Paul is in prison, he trusts God's grace to get him out of prison. God is through Paul trusting the people in Colossae to receive this letter, with grace, and then by the grace of God to live transformed lives on mission with Jesus. I don't know what you're in, what you're dealing with, what you're going through; he's in prison, whatever situation you've got, it is bigger than you and you're going to need God's grace. And God's grace is the difference between what you can handle, and what you will handle. The difference between what you can handle and what you will handle, is the grace of God. And so God's grace is there for Paul, and God's grace is there for you, and God's grace is there for me. A couple of things in closing, some of you've asked this. For some of you, this is such a great honor for me. I know I talk long. I get so excited though, about teaching books of the Bible. This is my thing, right? This is it, right? So this is my

thing, and for some of you you've told us, this is the first time I've ever gone through a book of the Bible. Which is awesome, so thank you for giving me the honor of teaching you God's Word. And some of you have asked this question, it's a really good question, why a letter? I was like, "That's actually a really good question." This isn't a legal brief, this is not a contract, it's a letter. Why is so much of the New Testament, including Colossians, a letter? Why do you think? 'Cause it's personal. It's relational. How many of you don't keep all your emails? Unless you're really disorganized, you probably don't, amen? How many of you, though you keep letters, handwritten, personalized letters? Did any of you have some of those? Love letters when you date, letters from your kids, letters from your grandkids; you're the grandkid, letter from Nana, right? We live in a day when people tend not to write letters anymore. But when you get one, it's really special. Especially when they've written it with their own hand, amen? Did you get the form letters? They always get it wrong, and they spell your name wrong. It's some computer, they're pretending like they know you. We get those! Handwritten. Came to my office this morning, I had a stack of handwritten letters from people in the church. We love your family, we're praying for you; I'm not saying send me letters, I'm saying, send other people letters, I've already got a bunch, and I appreciate it. But they mean a lot, amen? And that was really kind. That was loving, that was personal. Who could you write a letter to this week? Who could you thank? Who could you encourage? Who could you honor? Who could you bless? Who could you acknowledge? That's exactly what Paul is doing. So we wanna learn from him, but we also wanna follow his example. I would encourage you guys spend some time writing letters, thanking people, in your past, in your present, honoring them, blessing them, just being a bit of grace to them. And let me close with this, and when a preacher says that, doesn't really mean anything. He just means he wants to pay attention. Most guys are like, "In conclusion," you're like, "I don't believe that." So in conclusion, Colossians is four chapters. The first two chapters are very theological, very doctrinal, very deep dive, big concepts, big ideas. How many of you are like that? You're doctrinal, you're theological, you like deep dive, you're in your head, you're a student, you're, that's you? You're my nerd friends, okay? All my nerd friends, all right? The second half of the book, chapter three and four, it's all relational. People's names, relationships, opening their homes, caring for one another, praying for one another, serving one other. How many of you are my relational people? You're my relational people. You're like, "I was reading a book, but Sally was hurting, so I went to hug her, and I can't find my book," right? So you're those people. Other people are like, "I didn't know Sally was hurting, I was reading my book." Okay, so what happens here is God show us that He wants us to be theological. And if you're truly theological, you'll be highly relational. That the goal of knowing sound, good, theological doctrine from the Bible, is to give you the ability to really love and care for and bless and minister to people. Okay? And we see it both here, some churches are, "We're the doctrine people, we're the relationship people." And then we criticize the relational people 'cause they don't have enough doctrine. And then we criticize the relational people 'cause they're so mean. And or, we can all come together and say, some of us need to get more doctrinal, more Bible, more theology. Some of us need to get more relational, more loving, more caring, better listening, higher empathy, pursuing others for relationship. And he puts this all together for the Colossians. And I wanna commend you, I say this, not as a flatter, but with great fondness. I believe we are seeing our values lived out. We say we open our Bibles to learn Colossians one

and two, we open our lives to love, Colossians three and four. Some of you are really learning your Bible, others of you are really learning how to love people. And I love what God is doing here. I see a sweetness, I see multiple generations, all different kinds of people. I see a hunger for the scripture, and a love for one another. And so this book of the Bible doesn't have any strong rebukes, it doesn't have any heretics or wolves to chase off, it's just encouraging good hearted people. And I picked this book because that's the kind of people you are. There's some really wonderful dear good hearted people in this church. It's an honor to be your pastor, I love you very much. And thanks for letting me teach a book of the Bible. It's been a lot of fun and I appreciate doing that. So thank you, yeah. So I'm gonna pray and we're gonna take communion and celebrate Jesus a little bit. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for the scriptures. Thank you that men like Paul suffered and persevered through hardship so that a letter could be delivered. That a few thousand years later, it's still bringing the soul changing, life altering, destiny shaping word of God. Lord, Colossae was a great church, I believe the Trinity Church is a great church. There were some really dear hardworking, faithful, sweet people there, and there are here; and they were getting to know one another and we're getting to know one another. And Lord, I pray that this would be a hospitable place where new people would feel welcome. I pray this would be a healing place where broken people feel encouraged. I pray this would be a hopeful place where struggling people would find grace, and Lord, we ask that the Bible would be open, but so would our hearts and our lives to love well. And Jesus, we just say thank you that we get to be part of the church, which is the outpost in the beginning of your great kingdom on the earth. And Lord Jesus, we look forward to the day when we meet all of these people and we get to know them, and hear their story, and hang out, and we all get to worship together and be the family of God, in the presence of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.