

Raise your hand if you've ever gone on a treasure hunt? There are people who just love hunting treasure. If you love going to garage sales you know you can find a real treasure for under \$5. There are people who have found old paintings that ended up being worth thousands of thousands of dollars for three bucks at a garage sale. Others of you have found a treasure when you put on a piece of clothing from last year and find a \$20 bill in your pocket! I don't know if you've ever heard of D. B. Cooper? Back in 1971, he boarded a North West Airline flight in Portland, Oregon. Shortly after they took off, he handed a note to the air flight attendant who was sitting there in the jump seat. The note read that he had a bomb and that he was high jacking the plane. They flew and landed in Seattle, Washington and his demands were that he wanted \$200,000 in \$20 bills and two parachutes in exchange for letting some people off the plane. He then demanded that they fly south towards Mexico City at a lower altitude. He took a stewardess with him to the back of the plane. As the plane is flying he sent the other air flight attendant up front. All of a sudden the light in the cockpit went off indicating that in the back of the 727 a hatch opened up. What he had done was jump out of the plane wearing a parachute and while strapping the money to his body. He jumped out into the water but they never found his body and don't know if he survived or not. But hundreds of people searched the area where he would have landed looking for that money. Interestingly enough, in 1980 there was a family that was out having a picnic and an 8 year old from this family found almost \$6,000 of that ransom money. That then brought out a lot of treasure hunters who were hoping to cash in themselves.

I want to talk about us becoming spiritual treasure hunters because there is a treasure available to us only in Jesus Christ. We're going to focus in on verses 2 and 3 but I want to start at verse 1 to get the context:<sup>1</sup>**I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.** Paul uses a Greek word for struggle is agonizami that he used in the last verse of chapter one – it's the word from which we get the word agony. It was used of athletes competing in the arena, or of a laborer working to the point of exhaustion. Paul used this same word at the end of his life as he reflected on how he had lived in 2 Timothy 4:7: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Why was he struggling or agonizing over the church at Colossae? Because he was trying to live out his faith among them and it was difficult. Several hundred years before Paul's day, Colosse had been a leading port city. It was located on a Lycus River and on the trade route to the Aegean Sea. But now it was a second-rate market town. As a result, when this young church got started it became the target of heresies so Paul struggles to set them straight and to keep them focused on what they have Christ. Notice that Paul doesn't just work in his own strength; He instead relies on the power of Christ as he struggles. I think it's important also to note that he was also agonizing over the church at Laodicea where this letter was also going to be read. It was only about 11 miles from Colosse.

In verse two we see what his purpose is in this second chapter: <sup>2</sup>**My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love.** The word “encouraged” means “to call alongside” The picture is of someone trying to move a heavy object when another person comes to help out. A discouraged person has lost “courage”. Paul wants to come along side of them spiritually to pour courage back into them and to do whatever it takes to be “united in love.” This is a medical metaphor that means to be “knit together in love.” As members of the body of Christ, we're not to be out of joint with anyone. You can't do it alone. Everyone here needs you, and you need everyone else. Are you out of sync with someone? Anyone you've been avoiding because of some conflict or hurt feelings? Meet face-to-face in Christ and make things right. When we do this then we will have what the rest of verse two says: **the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ...**

I find it interesting that Paul refers to the fact that **1. KNOWING CHRIST IS A MYSTERY.** Some of you like to try to figure out a mystery whether it's in a TV show or mystery novel but I'm the kind of person who likes to have the mystery explained. I don't always like to take the time to figure out a

mystery. To understand us why knowing Jesus is a mystery, I want you to think about your own life. Jesus has never loved you based on how good you are. Do you remember the first time you believed the gospel – when it really hit your heart because you knew you were a terrible sinner – your thoughts weren't pure or you were struggling with something and you desperately needed Jesus? For me the passage: “**There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus**” came to life in high school after I had done some foolish things. I also started seeing how the gospel was able to change not only my life but some of the lives of my friends especially after one of our friends died. As I look back over my life I realized that I didn't embrace the gospel only because I heard it but also because I saw Jesus' power lived out in other people. I have a question for you: do you believe Jesus can transform your problems or a relationship you're struggling with? Do you see Jesus in your common every day experiences? Jesus wants the gospel to penetrate every area of your life.

That's what desired for the church in Colossae because there was a spiritual battle taking place. The congregation there was composed of Gentile believers and Gentiles had always been despised by God's people, the Jews. Jews referred to them as dogs...they refused to spend time with them...wouldn't eat with them. If a Jew purchased anything from a Gentile, the product was washed thoroughly. So when the church first got started it's no surprise that there were no Gentiles in the church but then one day God gave the Apostle Peter a vision that the once hated Gentiles now were acceptable to come into the church. God sent him to the household of a Roman Centurion named Cornelius to preach the Gospel to him and his family. Along with Peter, there came 6 Jewish Christians. So the mystery is that Gentile believers in Colossae were already saved by grace and they were going to heaven because Christ was living inside of them through the power of the Holy Spirit. The mystery was even more astounding than this – not only were Gentile Christians being offered grace but so were prostitutes, adulterers, thieves and swindlers. These kinds of people had no right to get into heaven...but that's the mystery. Paul earlier referred to this back in chapter one and now again in chapter 2 reiterates that anyone can be saved! You can't change yourself but Christ can change any person!

He finishes verse 3 by saying: <sup>3</sup>**in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** The word “wisdom” means having insight or it's seeing beyond the surface to deeper meaning. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and you knew there was something deeper than what was being shared? **2. WISDOM IS SEEING WHAT GOD SEES.** It's you having His perspective on things. How often do you see what God sees? All too often we follow the wisdom of the world instead of the wisdom of Jesus. As Americans, we tend to find our identity in everything but Jesus – we find it in our spouse, our children, we find our identity in our jobs some even find their identity in their sports teams. If you want to know what's important, just look at bumper stickers or t-shirts because they tell us what's valuable to them. Family is important to most of us and that's good but what happens when your family or spouse or children become more important than God – that's called idolatry. We tend to think too much about what is temporary instead of what's eternal. So when someone close to you dies, if most of your identity is placed in that person, you may never get over the loss because that person has become more important than Christ. In chapters one and two of Colossians, Paul is so clear about this – he takes everything and moves it out of the way and says, “Look, do not find your identity in anything here on earth because everything is fleeting or passing away. Your treasure lies in Jesus!”

One of the practical insights of wisdom can be explained by snorkeling. How many of you have been snorkeling? (Put on snorkeling mask). Water is unusual because there are things you wear under water that you'd never wear out of it. In the water, you look cool wearing this. You wear this to work tomorrow, it's not good. I went snorkeling for the first time on our cruise – I discovered there was a lot more happening under the surface than I realized! We were down in Grand Caymen Island and when we got our faces under water we saw amazing colors of fish. Wisdom is seeing below the surface. Paul wants us to seek the things below the surface that Christ says are important. When faith is given to us in Jesus, our perspective of life changes where we realize that we're no longer the boss. Our goal is to live for Christ.

How many people do you know today that live this way? Too often we live for ourselves. To walk by faith means to do things how God wants me to do them. In Hebrews chapter 11 Abraham is mentioned because of his faith – he’s known as the father of our faith. When you look at his life there were two radical things he did that demonstrated that he followed God’s wisdom instead of his own: one was that he took his family and moved toward the Promised Land and the other thing was that he almost killed his only son with a knife. What does radical faith and wisdom mean for you and me? It’s taking every situation and trusting in the mysteries of God (v.2 of our text) even though we don’t understand them. It’s setting our heart and mind on what God wants. On Sunday mornings it’s easier to do this, isn’t it. But then once you leave God’s house it’s a lot harder because of what the world throws at you. You can watch TV and be convinced of things that aren’t true. The world tries continually to tell you things you need to have and Paul is literally saying: “Tell the world ‘no.’”

Do you remember when Jesus was talking in Matthew 16 with His disciples? He told them He had to go to Jerusalem to die but Peter pulls Him off to the side and says, “You’re not thinking straight...never must this happen.” And Jesus says something that is so classic. Matthew describes how Jesus looked at Peter and said, “Get behind me Satan!” Wow! Can you imagine someone you love coming up to talk to you about something that ends up being worldly wisdom and you respond by saying: “Get behind me Satan”? Then Jesus looks at Peter and says in effect: “Peter, you’re relying on your own wisdom, you have set your mind not on the things of God but on the things of men.” The fascinating thing is that Peter was sincere because he loved Jesus and didn’t want to hear Him talk about death. Peter demonstrated that just like the rest of us, he thought more earthly than he should have. I would say that we probably act more earthly with the things we love the most. I think we’re afraid of losing the things that are most precious to us – our wife or children – those kinds of things. And we tend to make more earthly bound decisions about those people than anything else. Do you know how many people think their job is their life?

When we’re stuck in a situation our tendency is to call another person to ask for their advice instead of seeking the answer in God’s Word. One thing we need to remember is because we’re all sinners, the advice you give may not be from the Lord. **3. IF WE LEARN TO SEEK GOD FOR THE TREASURE, HE WILL SHOW US.** Romans 11:33 says “**Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearched His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out.**” Paul says how rich and amazing is God’s insight to everything. It’s beyond our comprehension that He could know it all! It’s like finding an amazing treasure. Let’s go back to Colossians 2:3 **<sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**” Not just some of the treasures but all of them! Jesus always knows the best decision of what you should make all the time. Have you ever been excited about finding treasure in God’s Word? If I told you there was a huge treasure worth a lot of money hidden somewhere in your back yard, you’d figure out a way to find it. Would you do the same thing spiritually? If the Holy Spirit lives within you, He will lead you through God’s Word to the treasure.

How do you find wisdom? First of all, you need to be convinced that Jesus has it all and desires to share this wisdom with you. Second, start diving into the Word and get your goggles clear. Sometimes you get water in your goggles and it’s hard to see. Sin clouds our eyesight and if your heart isn’t right, you won’t see clearly beneath the surface. Once your heart is right, the more God’s Word becomes part of you, the more He will use it to speak to you. It’s will be amazing the spontaneous thoughts that will come to you from God as a result of you spending devotional time with Him.

In May, 2007, the largest treasure from a sunken ship was found. The Ocean Salvage Company (out of Florida) found the wreckage of a Spanish ship called “Our Lady of Mercy” that sank in 1804 that was sailing from Peru back to Spain. On board was a treasure of silver and gold coins that was estimated to be worth five hundred million dollars. They had searched for it and plotted the ocean floor and found it. As amazing as that is, wouldn’t it be amazing if we had the same heart and attitude to find a greater treasure made available to us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

I want to close by asking you a few questions: where do you need God's wisdom? How clearly are you seeing beneath the surface? I love what James 1:5 says: **"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 'But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.'**"