

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:18-4:6

Series: *Profile*

Theme and Parts:

“You Have an Inheritance from the Lord! So...”

I. Love People

II. Make the Most of Every Opportunity

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In Church History class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, it was our professor’s custom to begin class with a Powerpoint slide entitled, “This Day in History.” Every day he had 3 or 4 events from throughout history that happened on that day. Usually it was that some person was born or died or did something important. Well, 65 years ago *today*, in 1950, something significant happened. You might not think it very significant right away, but in a few minutes I think you’ll see why I’m bringing it up. On February 15th, 1950, the Disney movie “Cinderella” was released. Raise your hands—who has seen Cinderella?

In that movie, Cinderella’s step-sisters and stepmother were not nice to her, and in fact, they were downright mean and nasty. They forced her to do all the work, they never let her have time for herself, and they treated her like utter garbage. The lyrics from one of the songs shows this well—the step-sisters and mother just wanted to beat poor Cinderella into submission with all the work they gave her. (It’s going to be tough for me to read this and not sing...but I’ll try.)

“Cinderella, Cinderella / All I hear is Cinderella, from the moment I get up till shades of night are falling / There isn’t any letup, I hear them calling, calling / Go up and do the attic and go down and do the cellar, you can do them both together // Cinderelly, Cinderelly, Night and day it’s Cinderelly / Make the fire, fix the breakfast, Wash the dishes, do the mopping, And the sweeping and the dusting, They always keep her hopping / She goes around in circles Till she’s very, very dizzy. Still they holler...Cinderelly.”

Now that just may be a cute song from a Disney movie, but it illustrates a point very well. There was absolutely no way that Cinderella could possibly fulfill all those tasks. One line even says “Go up and do the attic and go down and do the cellar—you can do them both together.” I didn’t study these lyrics incredibly in-depth, but that doesn’t seem to be possible—cleaning the attic and cellar at exactly the same time?

The reason why the evil stepmother and stepsisters were forcing all those tasks on Cinderella was because they wanted to keep her busy. They wanted her to be miserable and just serve them and do whatever they wanted. It wasn’t for Cinderella’s good.

Now at this point, you might be wondering in the back of your mind if you’re in the right spot this morning—you thought you were coming to church this morning, not preschool, right? Thanks for bearing with me—because now it’s all going to come together. The point is—the way that the evil step-sisters and mother treated Cinderella—that is **not** how God is treating us in this last part of Colossians! God is not giving us a set of tasks to make us miserable—to make us scurry around like mice for our whole lives. God is not giving us an impossible task list designed to beat us into submission. God is giving us a list of instructions, but they aren’t designed to beat us down and make us miserable.

Here is what to remember as you hear these words from chapters 3 and 4 of Colossians, and as we bring to a close our 7-week series going through the book of Colossians: These words are *our present-day instructions* based on *our future reality*. I’ll say that again—“our present-day instructions based on our future reality.” Listen to the God’s glorious words, as Paul wrote them to the Christians in the city of Colosse—the Colossians.

“Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

In order to understand all these instructions properly, we have to understand them in context of everything else Paul has said in the whole letter. So think back over the past 7 weeks—what else has Paul said in this book? In chapters 1 and 2 Paul made it very clear who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. Jesus Christ is true God and Lord over the whole universe. And as for what Jesus has done—remember these glorious words from a few weeks ago in chapter 2? **“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.** (Colossians 2:13-15)

To understand these instructions properly, we also have to see clearly one verse from this lesson. Verse 24: **“Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord.”**

Those words stand in the very middle of this whole list of instructions. They are the basis for the instructions Paul gives. You will receive the inheritance of heaven!! So here are your instructions. Receiving the inheritance of heaven is your *future reality*, and so here are your *present-day instructions*: **Love People, and Make the Most of Every Opportunity!**

Love People

Paul talks about a 3 different relationships – husband/wife, parent/child, and slaves/masters. We could talk about just those relationships for a whole sermon, and in fact, Pastor Ben had a sermon on just verses 18-21 last June. To go more in-depth on those words—go to victoryofthelamb.com and listen to or read Pastor Ben’s sermon from June 1st, 2014. I’d highly recommend it.

When Paul addressed those three relationships, he gave them three words as instructions: submit, love, and obey. Although we could talk about the intricacies in the meanings of each of those words, that’s not the focus this morning. The focus is that “submit, love and obey” have one thing in common. All of them involve being self-less. They all involve putting yourself underneath other people.

The world does not like that idea. And if you’re honest, deep down inside, neither do you. It is not natural for us to submit to others—to put ourselves underneath them. We balk at God’s instructions to lower ourselves and raise others up. We balk at God’s instruction to love others totally self-lessly.

We balk at God’s instructions, but Jesus didn’t. Jesus followed God’s instructions perfectly. Even though he could have at any time said, “I’d really rather not give up my life to save these people. I’m not going go through the most extreme suffering possible. I am God Almighty, after all!” Jesus didn’t do that. He loved you selflessly. He made himself less—he made himself *nothing*—to make you more—to give you *everything*! He loved you, that you in turn love others.

We can love others and strive to do what's best for them in many ways, but the greatest way we love others is by **making the most of every opportunity**. And Paul spends the last few verses of our lesson showing us how to do just that. In chapter 4, verse 3, Paul says: **“Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.”**

You can talk with Pastor Ben more about this, but he will tell you all sorts of stories of doors that God has opened in this community, especially in conjunction with the new building. Another huge example of a door that God has opened...25 years ago, when Communism was even more powerful than it is today, no one would've ever dreamed that in 2015 there would be a thriving Christian community in Asia. But God has flung open the door and the gospel is reaching new people every day!

“Pray that I may proclaim it clearly.”

The Apostle Paul—asking to proclaim the gospel clearly! If anyone could proclaim God's Word clearly, you'd think Paul could. But he needed prayers too. And so I'll echo Paul's words to you. Pray for me—a soon to be pastor, for pastor Ben, for WELS pastors all over the country, and pray for all Christian pastors—that they proclaim law and gospel clearly. I can't tell you how much it means to us to know that you are thinking about us and praying for us.

After asking the Colossians to pray for him and his ministry, Paul encourages the Colossians in their own personal ministry. **“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, Seasoned with salt. So that you may know how to answer everyone.”**

Every unbeliever is in a different place in their lives. Some think they have no need of a God or a Savior. They think they are doing fantastic all by themselves. Some are opposed to God and Christianity and think they are above it. In cases like these we need to season our speech with the salt of the law. It is very difficult to show people their sins, and trust me, it is not fun to do. But just like love requires a parent to sometimes discipline the child, love for unbelievers requires us to show them their sin. Because if someone doesn't recognize their sin, they don't see any need for a Savior. And the ultimate goal is to show them Jesus!

However, some people who don't know Jesus are anything but arrogant and sinfully proud—there are people who know that they are broken, that they are missing something. They know there is a gaping hole in their lives. What they don't know is that it is a Jesus-shaped hole. To the person who knows he is broken, we season our speech with nothing but the comforting, sweet, pure, gospel. We give them Jesus, Jesus, and more Jesus.

Is that always easy—to season our speech for each individual person? No! But we are not alone. Paul encourages us to pray to the one who has trusted us to do such important work. When you get discouraged, or you are unsure about your ability to share Jesus with people, remember that God gave you this task. And he wouldn't ask you to do an important job unless he knew that he would be there to help you. It's just like any new worker a company hires. A company doesn't hire a new worker and then say, “Okay—you're on your own—figure it out and hopefully you don't cause the company to go into bankruptcy!” No—they provide training, they provide mentoring, and they provide coaching.

God is the same way. He doesn't send you out to share Jesus without the proper tools. He promises that his Word is effective—the Bible works miracles! It changes hearts! And God is a mentor and coach that you don't need to schedule an appointment with—he is available on the prayer help-line 24/7. So pray to God. Pray for pastors, pray for each other—because you are all called to share Jesus with others. And pray for yourself—that God would help you to share Jesus as best as you possibly can.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, God is not like a wicked step-mother who gives you a ridiculous amount of rules to follow and tasks to complete so that your life is miserable. God has given you the

inheritance, the reward of heaven. He gave it to you when his Son Jesus nailed your sins to the cross and left them there to die. God has given you that inheritance, and he implores you to share it with others.

So share it—share Jesus! Share him by loving people in all the different relationships you have. Think of your family, your friends, and even people you don't know before you think of yourself. Show them a self-less love.

And share Jesus by seasoning your speech to everyone. Proclaim the law—that people are sinful and desperately need a Savior. And most importantly—share Jesus. Only one thing can fill in a Jesus-shaped hole in someone's heart. That's right—Jesus. So go out and give them Jesus. And finally, pray. Pray for your pastors and pastors everywhere. Pray for your Christian friends and pray for yourself—that God would give us all the strength to make the most of every opportunity. Amen.