

Christ Brings People Together

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] if I could invite you to turn in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 4 and you will find it helpful to have the Bible in front of you whether it's on your lap in an actual Bible or on a device or whether you're glancing on the screen there you'll find it helpful to follow the text along this morning so let's pray as we come back to God's Word Lord we thank you that your light and your truth was sent forth into this world in Christ and we remember that especially at this at this season we pray Lord also that your light and your truth may impact us today as we open your Word and as we consider what's before us we pray that we would know the help of the Holy Spirit here in speaking and in listening and in responding so that we may glorify you in the way that we do we pray that for ourselves we pray that for all the other congregations in this community that meet as we do that you would add your blessing Lord that you would be near and that you would build your church hear our prayers take away us and help us we ask in Jesus name

Amen there's many things about the Christmas season that we enjoy there's many different things that our minds may go to when we think about Christmas we think about the food the turkey and the roast potatoes and the pigs in blankets and the mince pies and all these things that may just be something that we love over this season the giving the receiving of gifts that's something else that we take time to think through and we enjoy it just a time to relax for most people they get a couple of weeks off over Christmas and there's time to to just relax and enjoy a bit of quiet and Christmas is also a time to be together as families

Christmas Calmac permitted tends to bring families together and as we come to the end of Colossians here we see something of how Christ brings people together and from verses 7 through to the end Paul he introduces us to to a gallery of people and as we scan down the list there's there's men and there's women there's slave and there's free there are people from different nations from different backgrounds from different social standings and yet they're all brought together they're all united in and through Christ so what I'd like to do today is simply just think through very briefly some of the people that Paul writes of so tonight or this

I'm not ahead of myself it's not tonight it's this morning this morning I don't actually have points as I normally have points you might say this sermon has no point but we're going to just look at the different names that we have on the the chapter before us and the first name that we come to is Tychicus so you find him in verse 7 there Tychicus will tell you all the news about me he's a dear brother a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord I'm sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about their circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts so that's the first character Paul introduces us to Tychicus there's two things I want to know about Tychicus the first thing we see about Tychicus is he's someone who's stuck with Paul through thick and thin and the second thing we see about Tychicus is he's someone who was willing to be sent by Paul so first of all he's stuck with Paul as many as a parent that said to their child over the years usually after there's been some kind of skirmish or trouble they'll stand back and they'll say to their son or their daughter well if you fly with the crows you'll get shot meaning you have to be careful who you hang around with if you spend time with people certain people they're dangerous and they they can get you into trouble and you can very easily be in the wrong place at the wrong time and you've done nothing but because of the people you're with you get shot now if ever there was a man who could get you into trouble in AD 60 it was Paul and Tychicus knew that in the aftermath of the riots in Ephesus which you can read about in Acts chapter 19 when Paul was public enemy number one many others likely would have and we know did give Paul a wide berth he was just too dangerous a guy to be around because wherever he went things exploded and there was bloodshed and there was riots and there was all kinds of trouble kicking off whatever Paul was and many people would have stepped back from Paul and said it's just too dangerous to be around him but Tychicus stuck with him and in Acts chapter 20 in the aftermath of the riots in Ephesus we find Tychicus he's still there with Paul he's encouraging Paul he's attending to his needs he's going ahead of him as they continue their journey and they navigate through Macedonia and Greece

Tychicus is there with him he sticks with him and then when Paul is going to jail in Rome and many of Paul's friends and colleagues even in ministry they just cut ties essentially many abandoned Paul when he ended up in prison in Rome second stint in prison and yet Tychicus sticks with him when he needed him to so Tychicus stuck with Paul Paul writes to them he appreciates them but Tychicus also is somebody who who always had his bags packed and he was always ready to go at the drop of a hat when Paul said I need to run to run an errand for him so he's someone who not only stuck with Paul but when he needed to he was sent by Paul kids today on their phones they use this thing called Snapchat you have to be a certain age to use it

[7 : 53] I'm way too old to even download it onto my phone but they message each other with a Snapchat thing don't know if they can call each other on it but they can they can trace exactly where their different friends are not only can they send a message but they can see alright she's in Buna tonight or he's in Ardazig or they're in Kailas they can actually see and track where their friends have been and where their friends are now if we try and track Tychicus he's all over the place Tychicus gets around he's sent by Paul to Colossae he's sent by Paul to Ephesus he's possibly sent by Paul to a place called Epirus on the western shore of Greece you can read about that in Titus 3 and these were no easy commutes you want to get just an insight into the kind of journeys that Paul expected Tychicus to go on for him listen to what this commentator

John MacArthur says he says the trip from Rome to Colossae was a difficult one Tychicus would have had to cross much of Italy on foot try and think about this some of you have been in Italy you know the dimensions of the country you can picture some of the places and yet we've been scooting about in planes and cars and trains listen to this Tychicus would have had to cross much of Italy on foot then sail across the Adriatic Sea after traversing Greece on foot he would sail across the Aegean Sea to the coast of Asia and Mainon after all that he still faced a journey of nearly a hundred miles on foot to reach Colossae so this was not a hop a skip and a jump this was not like popping out to the shop with a letter to post this was a this was many many months of dangerous journey this was a demanding job and because he's going as Paul's postman with this toxic gospel message as far as the authorities was concerned this was a super dangerous job and yet

Tychicus did it and not just because Paul was his friend but because Paul and Tychicus together were fellow ministers fellow servants of the same Lord Jesus Tychicus wasn't preaching as far as we can see he wasn't composing these letters he didn't have a pulpit he didn't have a clerical collar to his name but his ministry was of vital importance because if it wasn't for Tychicus we wouldn't have this letter so Tychicus teaches us to be available and willing to be sent by God Tychicus shows us the importance of doing whatever the

Lord asks us to do being available to go wherever the Lord calls us to go and that could be as close by as across the road to your neighbour's home as the Holy Spirit prompts or it could be that he's calling some to go to the other end of the earth as he was Tychicus on these occasions Tychicus teaches us the importance of being willing and available to be sent by God and Tychicus teaches us stickability he teaches us to be faithful over the long haul he teaches us to be brave we need brave Christians he teaches us to be an encourager to be willing to speak and bring the good news of the gospel from person to person and place to place so that's

Tychicus next person on the list is Onesimus and that's in verse 9 Paul says he's coming that's Tychicus is coming with Onesimus our faithful and dear brother who is one of you they will tell you everything that is happening here my mind goes back to the the 1990s I think it was where I worked in McRae's garage in Skye and I used to go home at lunch time and get my lunch and then head back into the garage in Port Tree and because in Skye you couldn't get hardly any FM channels we used to have Atlantic 252 on the radio some of you remember it it was a long wave radio band and this station I think it only had about 10 songs that were on repeat constantly and when I saw Onesimus my mind went back to this song that would be on the radio and the chorus of the song kept going runaway slave never coming back now

[13 : 41] Onesimus was a runaway slave he'd run away from Colossae and we find him presently in Rome he'd likely stolen from his master before he took off to Rome you can read about him in the book of Philemon that little book but when he got to Rome he heard the gospel message he likely came into contact with Paul and he believes and then he's in fellowship with Paul he becomes somebody that Paul loves and Paul's connected with and at this point when Paul's writing Titicus is accompanied by Onesimus and Onesimus is this young Christian he's faithful they recognise that he's a brother in Christ he's been accepted into this Christian fellowship he's useful as a travelling companion and assistant to Titicus and soon this runaway slave would be going back to his master but he'd be going back as a new man transformed converted born again he's going back as somebody who's in Christ what does

Onesimus teach us well his name means useful that's what it means literally and Onesimus teaches us to be useful again like Titicus to be available to be willing to be used of God some of us are so busy we're just constantly unavailable both Titicus and Onesimus they're available for God to use and Titicus sorry Onesimus also he teaches us that the gospel message is for people whom sometimes we are tempted to think are beyond God's reach remember Onesimus when he comes to Rome he comes as a thief he comes carrying the loot bag of his master's cash he comes to Rome as an outlaw he's an illegal immigrant in that city he's on the wrong side of the wall he's not the kind of person you'd expect to find in a suit you know in the front row of a church on a

Sunday morning he's not the kind of person you might expect God would take hold of and yet when God's people reached out to Onesimus with the message of the gospel when God's people reached out to this outlaw to tell him about Jesus he heard Jesus speak through them and he saw Jesus in this little community and he believed and he began to follow Christ peace now let's be always ready to share the gospel message with everyone there's no write-offs there's no people that are too far away too far gone for God to reach let's pray that the kids from the

YF when they go into school will have the courage to speak to some of the most unlikely people in Sir E Scott school and that God will take hold of them and let's pray that we'll have the courage to go into all of the area that God puts us in not to share the gospel message simply with the people that we think are going to be receptive but let's tell some people that we think might be absolutely antagonistic and pray that God will take hold of them you never know who is passing by that God has determined he is going to reach through you so there's Titicus there's Anestimus there's then Aristarchus Mark and

Justice and I want to just take these three together you see this in verses 10 to verse 11 these two verses my fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you greetings as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas who had received instructions about him if he comes to you welcome him Jesus who is called Justice also sends greetings these are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God and they have proved a comfort to me I want to take these three together partly for time's sake but also because as one of the commentators says they demonstrate the fact that there's glue in the gospel there's glue in the gospel Paul refers to Aristarchus first of all there and he refers to him in the text that we have or I have anyway as my fellow prisoner now the actual literal rendering of that word in the Greek is

[20 : 00] Aristarchus my fellow prisoner of war is not a dimension to the word and Aristarchus is somebody who had been through the wars with Paul as had Tychicus Aristarchus in Acts chapter 19 was one of the people who was seized and set upon and battered for the sake of the gospel when there was the riots in Ephesus Aristarchus is one that we read of in Acts chapter 27 where Paul and all these people were shipwrecked the trauma of that vessel going down Aristarchus was there he'd lived through that Aristarchus had scars that he could show from these missionary journeys and yet all that trauma and that suffering and these different difficult experiences hadn't caused

Aristarchus to throw in the towel he's still there even in Rome after everything a fellow prisoner of Paul and then there's justice we don't know much about justice Jesus called justice one of the commentators says this he's just mentioned in passing but his inclusion is notable perhaps like so many of us he sought to flourish in the inconspicuous in the daily round and common task it's justice he's not looking for glory for himself he's not looking for people to notice it he's not looking for a round of applause he's just quietly diligently conscientiously serving God and all the unseen things we have quite a number of justices in the congregation here they're hard to spot because they don't want you to see them they don't want any credit for the things that they do but the

Lord sees them and the Lord will reward them for every inconspicuous task they put their hand to that's justice then there's Mark the cousin of Barnabas we know a fair bit about Mark Mark is someone that we can read of in Acts chapter 13 and 15 we studied this in the past but the long story short is Mark quit ministry in Paul's first missionary journey we don't know exactly why but Mark at a critical point in the mission decided he was done he packed his bags and he went home and Paul is left there totally exposed and somewhat infuriated by the fact that his assistant has just walked and Paul was characteristically furious so when that missionary journey ends and the second missionary journey begins two years later

Barnabas who was a good friend of Paul and a cousin of Mark says well let's take Mark and Paul says no Mark walked last time he failed he left me high and dry we're not taking him and Barnabas and Paul fall out and they part company and Barnabas and Mark go one way with the gospel and Paul goes the other direction it's a sad story and yet here maybe I think it's about 10 15 years down the line they're back together Paul and Mark are back together yes they have a disagreement yes there is a valid clash maybe Mark needed some time to mature and to become prepared for ministry again we don't know but what we do know is that those who were apart are brought back together there's glue in the gospel there's glue in the gospel and what we see here also is that in respect to Mark failure is never final for God's people we live in a world where we hear people saying you're fired and you're done we have a

God who does not say to us you're fired we don't hear Jesus saying to the disciples that's three mistakes now you walk we have a God who is patient we have a God who is loving and we have a God who teaches us as we repent of our sin no matter what that sin is he forgives us and he restores us as he did to Mark next we have Apaphras verse 12 Apaphras who is one of you and the servant of Christ Jesus sends greetings Apaphras now the Colossians didn't really need Paul to tell him anything very much about Apaphras

[26 : 30] Apaphras was somebody who had spent much time with the Colossians Apaphras had been in ministry with them over the past period he was a native of Colossae he had planted this church in Colossae he had been used to establish this church this little community of Christians in Colossae but Paul makes clear that even though Apaphras was not in Colossae at present but was actually in Rome with Paul Paul says he's still working hard he's actually working harder than ever for you Colossians verse 13 he says I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Herapolis now you might say how can how can how can

Apaphras be working hard for the Colossians when he's in Rome when he didn't have a church laptop that he could fire up and start dealing with administrative duties concerning Colossae when he was in a prison in Rome so how was he working hard in their behalf and we get the answer in verse 12 he's always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm in all the will of God mature and fully assured so what does Apaphras teach us well Apaphras teaches us to pray Apaphras teaches us to wrestle to work hard to persevere in prayer and you know I'm thankful for and you also should be thankful for those some who are with us some who are not with us but are absent this morning in their homes and different places there's some actually that we very rarely see and yet

I know that although they're not here very often every morning and every evening they are praying for us they're wrestling in prayer for us praying that we may stand firm in the will of God in a day where we are under such pressure to compromise in the world even from the church and yet there are those who are apart from us as Apaphras was in the Colossians and yet they're praying for us that we'll stand firm in the will of God they're praying that we'll become mature and we won't be a congregation of people who don't develop and get strong and get steady in Christ and Apaphras teaches us that and there's

Luke we're almost done verse 14 our dear friend Luke the doctor we don't know a massive amount of personal details about Luke I haven't done a whole lot of research actually this week in digging into the personality and the background and everything of Luke but I know we don't know a huge amount about him but we know a lot through him Luke gave us Luke's gospel Luke gave us the acts of the apostles Luke was a man of detail he was an investigative writer he was a journalist and God used his writing skills to bless the whole church and give us these letters doctors and Luke also we're told here in verse 14 was a medical doctor and God used these medical skills to be a blessing many times

I expect to the apostle Paul probably nobody in the new testament was more battered and bruised and cut and smashed up physically than the apostle Paul and what a blessing it must have been for Paul to have a doctor with him to attend to him and he comes back in bludgeoned once more and Luke also was a dear friend Paul says our dear friend Luke the doctor what does he teach us well Luke teaches us to use our gifts whatever they might be for God's glory whether we can write letters as Luke did whether we can practice medicine as

[32 : 02] Luke did whether we're organisers of people and events whether we have manual labouring skills whether we can clean whether we can dust whatever it is Luke teaches us that our gifts are things that can be used for God's glory and Luke also teaches us to be a dear friend in a day where we have many hundreds of so called friends and social media it seems to me that there are more lonely and isolated people now than there ever has been Christian your calling is to be a dear friend to some your calling and mine is to be so wrapped up in ourselves that we have no time for anyone else not to be lost in the world of these little devices but to be available to be a dear friend to some and Christian and I speak first to myself on this one our calling is to find and develop relationships with dear friends people who will encourage us when we go down and people who will keep us accountable when we stray

Luke was a dear friend Nympha give my greetings to verse 15 to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in our house after this letter has been read to you see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read it read the letter from Laodicea now if you've got an AV Bible there you might be wondering what's all this about because in the AV it says it refers to Nymphas and the church in his house whereas in the NIV and the ESV it refers to Nympha and the church in her house so was Nympha a man or was Nympha a woman well I think the answer to that question is we don't really know you know there are some names and there are some textual things which make it difficult to know was this a man or was this a woman

I think it doesn't really matter that much the likelihood is the scholars say this was a woman and not a man woman who had a bit of money maybe had done well in business woman who decided she would give of her substance and open up her house and let God's people come in and meet there she offered hospitality and the gospel flourished through that and that's something that we can learn from Nympha we can learn that that gift of hospitality for the first four centuries the church had no buildings we can be thankful for the building that we have that God has given us but Nympha reminds us that for the first four centuries the church had no buildings but people opened their homes and in the day to day example of God's ordinary people who invited people into their ordinary homes the gospel flourished the people met Christ

Archippus is the last name and I could be tempted to gloss over it but I think I should tell you just 30 seconds about Archippus because it says there in verse 17 tell Archippus see to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord this is probably the sharpest letter the sharpest note in this whole section and it's reserved for the present pastor that should give you a bit of a bounce in your heart there's a whole lot of encouragement to a whole lot of people but the person who gets the sharpest note is a minister maybe he was sleeping too late in the morning maybe he was spending too much time watching television maybe he was always down at

Starbucks with a cappuccino and never out visiting people we don't know but Paul gives him a poke and says tell Archippus God has called you to this work now get on with it in verses three and four he glanced back Paul teaches us to pray for ministers like him so that they will give themselves to the work of the Lord and have opportunities to serve God and in verse 17 Paul teaches us sometimes to poke ministers if they don't take note of the order by the way pray first and then poke Archippus is a reminder that it's easy to start a work but God calls us to keep on keeping on so that we'll complete it it's easy to make a profession of faith

[38 : 27] God calls us to keep on keeping on to show the world that we are his that takes us to the end of the list of Paul's people so how do we finish simply with a word of encouragement God requires the names and the works of all his servants in his book to great diversity of people in Colossae there's a whole lot of people under the surface who are working to serve the Lord there's actually a great diversity of people in Targum there's a whole lot of people who are working behind the scenes to serve

God and yet everything that is done God sees you might be very behind the scenes you might think your job's not all that important God says different you might think that no one sees your efforts and maybe they don't but God does so be encouraged and keep on 1 Corinthians 15 let nothing move you always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain and in the final breath hear a word of warning be sure you're in the book and by this

I mean the Lamb's book of life not God's book of service there's one question I didn't mention yet his name is Demas and Paul has nothing to say about him in verse 14 he says Demas sends greetings and everyone perhaps thought Demas was genuine everyone likely assumed that he was in Christ but the weight of the evidence would suggest that he wasn't he was a spectator in Colossae and then just a little down the line Paul writes these sad words to Timothy 4 Demas because you love the world has deserted me it's possible to sit in these chairs and to move in

Christian circles and to be surrounded by Christian people and not be in Christ Demas teaches us to be sure that we are in Christ to be sure verse 18 that his grace is with us make sure you're in the book make sure you're trusting Jesus let's pray Lord we thank you for all these names and these people whom you saw and the Holy Spirit inspired to record in this conclusion to the letter to

Colossians we thank you Lord that you call us all to serve you and you give us different gifts that we can use for your service we ask that you would help us Lord to use the gifts that we have to glorify you and not ourselves and we ask Lord that you would help us to to be encouraged by that reminder that you see everything and we ask Lord that you would help us to respond even to the warning there as we see demons enable us not to be people who love the world more than we love you may there be no one here who is comfortable in Christian circles and yet who has not yet asked for the forgiveness of sin and the salvation the grace that's offered to us in Christ may we be found in the book we pray in Jesus name

[43 : 57] Amen