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Growing In Grace: Making Real What We Already Know
THE LIFE THAT PLEASES JESUS
Colossians 1:9-14
May 21st, 2017, Jeff Germo

Every week Callista asks me what the title of my sermon is so she can put it on the bulletin. Last week she sent me a message and asked as usual. And I sent her one back saying the title was, **The Life that Pleases God**. She messaged back, "Thanks," with a smiley face. A few minutes later she sent another message, "What do you think about, '**The Life that Pleases Jesus**'?" And in brackets she wrote, "(Say it out loud)". A little later I walked by her desk and she said, "So, did you like the 'Life that Pleases Jesus'?" "Oh, yeah, I said. I think I like that better. Thank you." "Did you say it out loud," she asked? "Um no. I just said it in my head." "Say it out loud. It rhymes." So, I did. "**The Life that Pleases Jesus**" So, that's how we came up with this title.

This is the third sermon in our series on Paul's letter to the Colossian church. We'll be studying this letter until sometime in the summer. There is so much good stuff here.

Last week we saw how the Good News of Jesus changes hearts and lives, and multiplies our love for God and for others. We saw that there is a ripple effect when we allow God to change us. God's love oozes out of us and gets on to others, and then to others around them. Today we are going to look at what kind of life Jesus wants to produce in us.

I want to start right off the bat by reading Paul's opening statement for this section.

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Colossians 1:9-14 (NLT)

⁹ So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Ruthie and I were talking about this passage on one of our walks last week. She said she had been reading this section over and over again and it made her so excited. She said it is like God wants to give us a peek into his heart. He wants us to know what his will is. He wants us to know his heart for us so we can experience the life Jesus called us to, that abundant, rich, satisfying life we always wanted, but didn't know it.

Paul said that he and his protégé Timothy had been praying continuously for the church in Colosse that God would give them ***"complete knowledge of his will...and spiritual wisdom and understanding."***

That is a great thing to pray for. How many of us wouldn't want complete knowledge of the will of God? How many of us have not begged God to show us his will for our future? I talk with people every week who are struggling to find God's will. And here, Paul says that he has not stopped praying that God would give the Colossian church complete knowledge of his will and spiritual wisdom and understanding. That must mean this is a good thing to pray for.

Here's the deal though. The will that God wants us to know is much bigger than what career we should choose, or who we should marry, or what decision to make about whatever. Those kinds of things are important, but they are small and compartmentalized. Paul is praying for something much bigger than these kinds of life choices. What he is talking about is what kind of people we should be.

Notice, also, that Paul does not say he is praying that they would grow in their knowledge "about" God. He prays that they would have knowledge of his will, of his heart, of his deep purposes for them. He prays that we would get to know God intimately.

That's what Jesus said in John 15 when we told his parable about the vine and the branches. He said that he is the Vine, and his Father is the Gardener, and we as his disciples, are the branches. He said if we remain attached to the Vine we will bear lots of good fruit. He went on to say that we can't bear fruit if we don't hang out with him. And he even went further than that. He said, if we hang out with him and let him hang out with us we can ask for whatever we want and he will give it to us.

That is exactly what Paul prays for the Colossians church. Doesn't that make sense? The more time we spend with Jesus, the more likely we will know what he wants for us. And the more time you spend in God's Word, the more clear it is that God is far more interested in that we get to know him intimately, than that we have more knowledge *about* him.

We talked about this last week a bit. Knowledge about something will not change us.

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Sir Francis Bacon, about four hundred years ago, was the one who famously wrote, "Knowledge is Power". He was an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, lawyer, jurist, and author. He is accredited as being the forerunner of the scientific method of investigation, and coined the Baconian method.

He believed that physical matter is the only reality and that everything else can be explained scientifically. He said that by using inductive reasoning we should be able to deduce the underlying cause of everything. Once you have knowledge of the cause you gain power over it. Hence, his adage "knowledge is power."

If there was only the material world, this might be the case. If, however, there is an unseen spiritual world, his theory breaks down, big time. If we followed Bacon's theory to its logical conclusion with God, by gaining all knowledge about God we should be able to gain power over him. That, of course, is not going to happen, because God is infinite and we are finite. We can get to know him more intimately as we walk with him, but we will never tap the depths of his knowledge.

Francis Bacon was a very smart guy. He was someone who held a lot of power in his lifetime. He moved up in the political ranks to become the Attorney General and the Lord Chancellor of England during his career. He had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He was one of those very annoying guys who seemed to be good at everything. But the ironic thing is that, even though he gained more and more knowledge, Bacon fell from power in 1621. He was charged with twenty three separate counts of corruption and was deemed unfit to hold office or sit in parliament. So, really, the adage "Knowledge is Power" is an inadequate statement, because really, it depends on what you do with the knowledge you have.

Ever since The Fall, in the Garden of Eden, man has been trying to outsmart God. Remember what happened? Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat from the tree that was called what? "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil." What did Satan say they would get if they ate from the tree?

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"your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." (Genesis 3:5)

Satan fed them the same line. "Psssssssssst. Hey, you wanna buy some power? You wanna taste freedom? Don't you want to be your own man, your own woman? Eat this and it'll open the door to all kinds of opportunities for you. Knowledge is power, man. Knowledge is freedom."

The human tendency, ever since the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden, has been to break free of God. More knowledge, more power equals less God, or so Satan would have us believe.

God has a greater desire for us than to know more *about* him. Just think about your most important relationships. The more time you spend together, the more you should get to know them, not just things about them, but their heart.

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I've known Ruthie almost thirty two years. We've been married for about thirty and a half of those years. We know each other quite well, but not completely. I am continually getting to know her in deeper ways.

When we were first dating, we liked going to movies. Our first movie was *The God's Must Be Crazy*. We both loved it and split our sides laughing. Our second movie was *The Color Purple* with Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, and Oprah Winfrey. I liked that movie a lot as well. I think Ruthie thought it was a bit intense. I didn't know her well enough to really read her at that point in our relationship.

I thought I would pick up the intensity a bit and I asked her to go with me to a war movie; *Apocalypse Now*. That was a mistake of epic proportions. It wrecked her. I learned something about her that day. She is a very sensitive woman who feels deeply and is affected powerfully by what she watches.

I thought I had that figured out until a couple weeks ago. There was a movie I watched on Netflix by myself a few months ago. I thought she would have loved it. It was called *The Man Who Knew Infinity*. The reason I thought she would love it was because it was about a math genius. And Ruthie is a math tutor.

We started watching it and it soon came to light that this young math prodigy had to leave his new bride in India while he went to study in England. She asked me, "Do they get back together?" I couldn't remember. We continued watching and the uncertainty kept building. There were no signs that they would get back together. That is where we stopped watching the movie. She couldn't handle the thought of them being separated across the ocean and not knowing if they would ever get reunited. I got to know Ruthie a little better that night. She feels badly about how sensitive she is. I think it's a gift from God. She is able to feel things about how other people might be feeling that I completely miss. The only way Ruthie and I are able to get to know each other is by spending time together. We don't just know about each other. We know each other, and we get to know each other better all the time so we know what

brings each other joy, what makes us sad, what causes us anxiety, and what fills our tanks. And we learn more and more what kinds of decisions will be in line with each others' hearts.

That is how Jesus said we could get to know him if we spend time with him. And that is the kind of knowledge of God that Paul prayed for the Colossian Church.

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10 Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

When we spend time with Jesus we will get to know him so well we will know what pleases him and what doesn't, and our desire will be to live our lives in such a way that he is pleased with us. That will give us his joy.

Look at what Jesus said in John 15 just after he told his parable of the Vine and the Branches.

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John 15:10-12 (NIV)

10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

The more we get to know Jesus, the more we will live the life that pleases him, and accomplishes his purposes, the more we will love others, and consequently, the more joy we will have. The obvious question here is, what kind of life pleases Jesus? Look at verse 10 of Colossians again. In verse 9 he said that he was praying that the Colossian Jesus-followers would get to know God more. For what purpose?

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Colossians 1:10 (NLT)

10 Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

All the knowledge, all the wisdom, all the understanding God gives us is for the purpose of producing good fruit in us, so we can love others better.

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Knowledge that lies dormant in our heads without producing fruit is just trivia. It might be a nice fun fact, but what good is it doing, other than making us feel good about ourselves because we know something someone else doesn't?

We honour Jesus by allowing him to produce good fruit in us, more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. So, again, are you growing in these ways? We're never going to get it right all the time, but we should be growing. Next year at this time I should be more of all these qualities than I am now.

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All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

The more we get to know God, the more fruit we will produce. As we learn from Jesus and allow him to change us, our relationships will get better and we will get more joy. If life is about relationships, it only makes sense that if our relationships are good we will have more joy.

So, how do we get to know Jesus better? We spend time with him. Spend time reading God's Word. Especially the Gospels. Marinate in them. Read them over and over again. Be aware of the presence of Jesus every minute of every day. If you have received the forgiveness of God based on Jesus' death and resurrection, he is living in you. You have his power in you. He will change you if you let him. But, he won't force himself on you. You need to cooperate with him.

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¹¹ We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light.

Do you see what's happening here? Paul continues to pray that we would be strengthened by the power of Jesus, so we would have the patience and endurance we need to grow. How many of you feel like you aren't growing fast enough? I feel like that sometimes. And I can get impatient with myself, especially if I fail in some way. If I get defensive when someone confronts me about something, I can feel like a failure. I thought I already learned that. Sometimes it's like I take a couple steps forward and another step back. And sometimes it feels like it's the other way around, one step forward and two steps backwards. It's usually not, but it feels like it sometimes. And I can get impatient with myself.

But, as we've said before we don't learn this stuff over night. We don't go from being an idiot to super Christian in one grand movement. It happens little by little as we surrender our hearts to Jesus and practice taking risks and learning to love more.

Each time we experience growth through the power of Jesus he gives us more joy. Paul says, when that happens, celebrate. Thank the Father - always. Because when that growth happens he is enabling us ***"to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light."***

This is exciting stuff. He has given and is giving us life. He has given us life already because Jesus defeated sin and death by rising from the dead. He is giving us life on an ongoing basis by transforming us into his image as we cooperate with him. As he does this, we will no longer feel the need to hide. We will walk in the light as he is in the light and will have true fellowship with each other and with him.

Do you know why we sometimes have bad relationships? Because we hide. We wear masks. We are afraid to let people see who we really are. We are afraid of intimacy. If someone sees who I really am, they will judge me. Do you know that Jesus defeated sin and death so you can walk in the light? His death purchased our freedom. We no longer have to pretend we are something we aren't.

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¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Let's marinate in the verse for a bit. Soak it up.

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

This is such an amazing truth. He rescued you. Why would he do this? Because you are worth it. **For God so loved [you] that he gave his only Son...**" (John 3:16)

He rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of light. We no longer have to pretend. We do not have to live in shame of our past. He has forgiven us, of everything.

Remember who you are. You are a child of the King. You are a member of the holy priesthood. You are part of the Kingdom of God. You are an ambassador of Jesus Christ representing His kingdom.

This is who we are. We have a choice to live according to our identity in Christ, being strengthened with power according to his glorious might, or we can live according to the flesh. It is so important that we live in the identity purchased for us by the death of Jesus. He bought us. We are his.

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In Disney's animated movie *Toy Story*, Woody (a toy cowboy) confronts Buzz Lightyear (a toy astronaut) with the fact that he is only an action figure, and not really a space hero. Early in the movie Woody shouts, "You're not a space ranger! You're an action figure—a child's plaything." Only after failing to fly, Buzz realizes the truth of Woody's statement. He is grief-stricken and disillusioned by this realization and hangs his head in resignation, declaring, "I'm just a stupid, little, insignificant toy."

Woody later seeks to comfort his friend by underscoring the love of the boy who owns them both. "You must not be thinking clearly. Look, over in that house, there's a kid who thinks you're the greatest, and it's not because you're a space ranger; it's because you're his." As Buzz lifts his foot, he sees a label affixed to the bottom of his little shoe. There in black permanent ink is the name of the little boy to whom he belongs.

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¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

We have been bought, at a great price through the death of Jesus. We have been marked with permanent ink by the Holy Spirit. We are his representatives to the world.

What a privilege. What a joy. Maybe that sounds scary to you. But, when we believe from our hearts that it is true, something changes in our hearts.

What difference should it make that we believe from our hearts that we are God's children and that he truly loves us? It should take away the risk factor. What looks scary and dangerous really isn't when you truly believe that God is in charge and that he has your best in mind.

As Paul said in verse 11, as we leave ourselves open to his Spirit, God **strengthens us with all power according to his glorious might so that we may have endurance and patience.** There is a beauty that comes from experiencing God's love as he transforms us through the experiences of life.

There is a classic children's story called *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery William. The story is about a plush toy rabbit and its quest to become real.

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"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?" "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.

It doesn't happen all at once. You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to those who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby.

But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand." "I suppose you are real?" said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive.

But the Skin Horse only smiled. "The Boy's Uncle made me Real," he said. "That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always." The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him.¹

Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, theologian, and author from the 1800's was someone who struggled with insecurities and depression. He wrote, ***"With God's help I will become myself."***

I think sometimes we are afraid of surrendering to God because we think he is going to take away our identity and rain on our parade and make us into something we don't want to be. Nothing could be further from the truth. What he wants to do, actually, is help us to be the best us we can be, for his glory.

He is the great Master Sculptor. We are his masterpiece. He is chipping away at our rough edges and making us into something beautiful, something that will satisfy us and will bring much glory to him. His desire for us is that we would be filled with joy and share in the inheritance that he purchased for us. And he wants his life in us to spread to those around us so his kingdom of joy and love will spread all through out Campbell River and around the world.

¹ <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/williams/rabbit/rabbit.html>



Growing in Grace: Making Real What We Already Know
The Life that Pleases Jesus
Colossians 1:9-14
Week of May 21, 2017

Objective of this study: To understand that, as we spend time with Jesus, he will give us a picture of what pleases him, and supernaturally transform us so we can live it.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 - 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalms 65:1-5** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything jump out at you?**

Welcome

Do you have a favourite toy from your childhood? Why did you like it so much?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word

1. What stood out from the sermon?

Sermon Quote: "...it is like God wants to give us a peek into his heart. He wants us to know what his will is. He wants us to know his heart for us so we can experience the life Jesus called us to, that abundant, rich, satisfying life we always wanted, but didn't know it."

2. Read Colossians 1:9-14
 1. From this passage, what is God's heart for you? (Dig deep into the passage. Don't settle for pat answers.)
 2. How does Paul say we grow? (Dig deep into the passage. Don't settle for pat answers.)
 3. How do we get to know God better?
4. Read John 15:1-17
 1. What does Jesus mean when he says, "If you remain in me..."?
 2. What are the outcomes of spending quality time with Jesus? (Dig deep into the passage. Don't settle for pat answers.)

Work

1. What picture do you see God painting of his heart for you?
2. Do you get a sense of what that could mean for your life moving forward?
3. What would be some evidence in your life that the picture is becoming real for you?
4. How do you currently spend time with Jesus? Share ideas with each other.
5. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. Start by praising and thanking Jesus.