

## Sermon: Wrapping Up

**Text: Colossians 4:7-18**

### Introduction:

I often think about the words of Jesus when He said, “The last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” (Matthew 20:16) He said this as the conclusion of the parable of the landowner who hired workers to work in his field for the day. Throughout the day, he continued hiring new workers—and then paid everybody the same wage at the end of the day, even those who worked far less hours than those hired at the start of the day. Those who worked the entire day complained, despite the fact that the landowner paid them precisely what they agreed to. In essence, the complaints arose from their jealousy in the fact that the landowner was so generous.

The parable actually deals with our lower story perspective—and God’s upper story “economy.” The same point is made by Jesus in Luke 22:26 when He said, “But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.” I’ve heard some Bible scholars refer to this as God’s “Upside Down Kingdom.” Here on earth, we see things from a very earthly and “linear” perspective. Our attention goes to those who receive the greatest amount of “press” or notoriety. While those “behind the scenes” are rarely if ever noticed. But, Jesus is clear to say, that isn’t how it will be in heaven. Those at the back of the line on earth (in terms of attention and recognition) will be moved to the very front of the line in heaven. In other words—the last shall be first.

And so we come to the final section of Paul’s letter to the church in Colossae. As we’ve seen, Paul has continued to point us UPWARD throughout the letter. He has wanted us to fix our attention on Jesus (the supreme and transcendent creator of the universe and head of the church). He is imploring us to set our hearts on the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God—not on earthly things. Why? It’s because this world is very temporary. The few short years of our life will pass quickly. What we do for Christ will last forever.

Here, in the last few verses, Paul describes the TEAM of people around him who are working TOGETHER to accomplish great things for God and His kingdom. It’s a list of people that, for the most part, we don’t know very much about. There are several names that we’re familiar with—men such as Luke and Mark. We know of these two men because they went on to write Gospel’s that bear their names. But there are numerous other names that we know very little about—men such as Tychicus (I pronounce this “*Tick-kick-us*”), and Onesimus (“*Oh-ness-i-mus*”), and Aristarchus and Epaphras.

I think of people like this when pondering God’s “Upside down” Kingdom. These are the “unknown millions” who, down through the centuries, have done incredible things for the kingdom of God—yet without much earthly recognition. These are the people who will be moved way up to the front of the line when they enter the heavenly kingdom.

- Take some time to think about and discuss who these people are in your life—people that have made a significant impact in your life, but have received very little earthly recognition. Take some time right now to give them some “credit” and appreciation.

### Examination:

- Read **Colossians 4:7-18**

- Verses 7-8 focus on Tychicus (*“Tick-kick-us”*). What three things does Paul say about him in verse 7?
- This isn’t the only time Paul mentions Tychicus. He also refers to him in four other letters (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12). These references indicate that he was with Paul over the span of many years, enduring MANY of the same hardships that Paul endured (shipwrecks, imprisonment, physical attacks, and the list goes on). How important is it in our lives to have companions and loved ones that stand WITH us as we encounter trials and struggles? Has this been the case for you? What are you doing to be a “Tychicus” for someone else?
- According to verses 8-9, Tychicus is the one delivering this letter to the people of Colossae (he’s the mailman!). What are Paul’s hopes as he sends this letter? What does v. 9 tell us about Onesimus? What else do we learn about Onesimus from Paul’s one-chapter letter to Philemon?
- Verse 10 tells us some very important things about Mark. Some back story is very important to understanding why this verse is so important. Read Acts 15:36-41. What happened early in Paul’s ministry that caused great hurt and possible division between Paul and Mark? What do we learn from Colossians 4:10?
- Why do you think the man named “Jesus” in verse 11 was AKA “Justus”?
- Why do you think Paul points out that Aristarchus, Mark and Justus were “the only Jews among my coworkers”?
- Verses 12-13 talk about Epaphras. We also hear about him in Colossians 1:7-8. What was the relationship between Epaphras & the church in Colossae?
- What little piece of information do we learn about Luke in v. 14?
- Approximately five years after writing Colossians, Paul wrote 2 Timothy. In that letter (his last before being martyred), what do we learn about Demas (2 Timothy 4:10)?
- Who is Nympha? What insight does this give us about the church in Colossae?
- There is a term in Biblical scholarship that describes many of Paul’s letters—the term is “cyclical.” This means that a letter isn’t just written to be read by one particular church in only one location. It is meant to be passed along and read by other churches in other places. What does v. 16 tell us in this regard?
- What does Paul have to say to Archippus? Any clues as to who he was?
- Verse 18 is something that Paul often says at the end of his letters—that he is writing this particular verse “in his own hand.” What do you think this implies?
- What does Paul want the people to remember in v. 18? Why?

**Application:**

The application to today’s passage is obvious in my mind: 1) How can we appreciate the many people in our lives who help and support us; and 2) How can we help and support others in the same way that this team supported Paul? Do something about both of these this coming week.