

## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October - Colossians 1:1-14 Mission: sharing good news, living new life

How are you at finding 'Good News' stories in a newspaper today? I've been visiting my mum in hospital these past two weeks, and I've been buying a newspaper for the crosswords and puzzles to do together. But Mum has been asking, "What's in the news today?" Not wanting to depress her too much, I've avoided the first 20 pages or so and looked for lighter news to share with her. Hardly any! How sad is that? One study in the mid-2000s found that about half of US, German, Italian, and Austrian campaign coverage conveyed bad news, while as little as 6 percent conveyed good news. Another recent study found that the "proportion of headlines denoting anger, fear, disgust and sadness" grew markedly in the US between 2000 and 2019. However, an international survey from Oxford's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2020 found that in almost every country surveyed, trust in media is falling, and more people are saying they're avoiding news. Why? Because, respondents say, it "has a negative effect on their mood." Deep down we all like to hear 'Good News!' Being a Christian, means we have Good News to share with others - the love of Jesus Christ, his teachings, how to live a full spiritual life!

Today's reading, written by the Apostle Paul and perhaps Timothy as well, as Paul mentions him at the beginning of the letter, was mainly written as a response to the false teachings which were threatening the stability of the church of Colossae. We don't know the details, but Paul is responding to the situation and is encouraging the new believers, in their growth towards Christian maturity. Paul is stressing the importance of the Gospel and their duty as God's people to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Paul is thankful for the Colossian's hope for what God has ready for them in heaven. He goes on to say that this hope they have in Christ, the true message of the Gospel, is bearing fruit. He's thankful for their faith. It's a faith that comes from hearing the word of Christ, responding to it, and thus bearing fruit, with lives being changed. This is Good News! If you've ever watched the film 'The Nativity' there's a catchy song they sing entitled 'Good News' with the opening line - Okay people hear the news, I got something to yell about, Okay people forget the blues Here something to feel swell about, Good news! When we have good news, we maybe bursting for others to hear it - a successful job interview, or passing an exam, a new addition to the family whether it human or animal. We want to share our good news. As we've been told before - gospel literally means 'Good News'. Knowing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sharing that knowledge with others, is part of today's message. The people of Colossae have been on a journey of faith - Paul talks about where they've come from, where they are and where they are going. We hear Paul praising the people of Colossae for their faith in Christ Jesus and their love of all God's people.

Paul talks about the people hearing the Gospel and learning about God's grace from Epaphras. That their knowledge in Christ has come from listening to a 'faithful' minister. Who told you about the Gospel? Maybe it was a minister in your church. Maybe someone else who has come into your life who shared the good news of the Gospel with you. What have you done about that knowledge? Paul has already told the people of Colossae that it's not just where they are that the growing knowledge of God's good news is being heard but that it's gone viral - it's worldwide! He reminds them that he's heard of their love in God's Spirit too.

He continues to pray for them because as Christians, we pray for each other. We have groups that meet to pray for our church communities and beyond. We have a confidential prayer chain where people can send prayer requests. Paul is praying that the people of Colossae will grow in their knowledge of God and that their faith will become stronger. Knowing Jesus Christ is a relationship where His people will grow in their knowledge and love of Him. This can be for us too - as we are growing in knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, we will bear fruit in good works, demonstrating our faith in love for one another and for those who do not know Christ. You may be a new believer, you may have been a follower of Jesus Christ your entire lives - however long it has been, I'm sure you've got stories of how God has worked in your life - during the good times and the bad. These are stories that are good to share. So let's take every opportunity to share these stories with others!

Those who've been attending the Alpha course this autumn will know that we've heard that a life with Jesus means that we are loved unconditionally, and God's grace means we are forgiven for our transgressions. This is a good message to hear for us all!

Today's reading also made me think of the Parable of the Sower - Mark 4. Here Jesus is explaining to the disciples how the word of God and what we do with it, is essential to living the best we can as Christians. The parable describes how different soil (representing our hearts) take on the seeds in different ways. It's the last soil that pleases God - <sup>20</sup> Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown." It points to how good mission can happen, firstly in our own hearts and then shared with others.

If any of you have been following Matt's daily inspirations on our church website, you'll know that Mark's gospel has been the focus for the past couple of months. St. Mark describes Jesus' mission of spreading his message to all that are willing to listen. No doubt Mark was hopeful that many of the ears who listened were like the good soil and would share Jesus' teachings. We sit in church on a Sunday, and we listen to the variety of ministers, lay preachers (including myself today!) who lead our worship. We may stay for a cuppa and a natter after the service and then we leave this building. Or online, you stop watching. What do we do next? Where do we go? Who do we speak to? Do we tell them about the 'Good News' we heard at service that morning? If we don't, why not? What's stopping us? Maybe it's that we don't want to offend anyone. Or we don't want to be seen as 'Bible bashers'. However, we're not told to be evangelist, but instead we are invited to be witnesses. When others know we're a Christian, they will watch us. They will see how we live, the choices we make, the words we speak. They will judge us. But if we're true to the teachings of Jesus and we make choices that we know in our hearts, God would be pleased with, then we're doing our best to stay on the right path. Of course, we will make bad choices, say the wrong thing because we're only human. But it's what we do with those mistakes. Sometimes acknowledging the errors of our ways publicly allows others to see how we're aware of our shortcomings. And that being a Christian doesn't make us perfect! So being a follower of Jesus, just like the Colossians, means we need to make changes to the way we live. But for the better! How? By -

Reading the Bible everyday - it doesn't have to be a lengthy session! Matt's daily inspirations are a good place to start!

Spending time with like-minded people, i.e. other believers of Jesus Christ. Coming to church, being part of a home group where the word of God can be discussed - which in turn can help us to grow in the knowledge of God.

Praying - anywhere, anytime, any length of time. Ask for forgiveness for all the mistakes we've made in thought and action. Pray for anything and be thankful for what God has given us. <sup>12</sup>...giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you[f] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

Being witnesses of Christ's Spirit in our everyday life. <sup>10</sup>bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.

Taken from Alpha - *When someone becomes a Christian, God comes to live inside them by his Holy Spirit, (Romans 8:9)* If we do all of these things - we can have Zoe - fullness of life, spiritual eternal life.

So, to finish, if we live more Christ-like through reading scripture, spending time with other Christians, praying, inviting God's spirit into all situations & loving others, it'll rub off on those around us, both those familiar to us and those not. Love conquers all situations and Christ's love is unconditional, and for everyone. And finally - share those Good News stories - as a person once said to me - go gossiping the Gospel! **Amen**