

4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;
4:3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,
4:4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.
4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.
4:7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.
4:8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,
4:9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.
4:10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),
4:11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.
4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.
4:13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.
4:14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.
4:15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.
4:16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.
4:17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."
4:18 This salutation by my own hand-Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

November 23, 2025 Colossians 4:2-18

Sermon Title: "Fellow Workers for the Kingdom of God"

Introduction: Where Is the Comfort of God's Kingdom?

Luke 17:11 As Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he passed through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

17:12 As he entered a village, ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance
17:13 and called out, “Jesus, Master! Have mercy on us!”
17:14 Jesus looked at them and said, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.
17:15 One of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, praising God in a loud voice.
17:16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.
17:17 Jesus asked him, “Weren't there ten who were cleansed? Where are the other nine?”
17:18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”
17:19 Then he said to him, “Get up and go; your faith has saved you.”
17:20 The Pharisees asked him, “When will the kingdom of God come?” He replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with signs to be observed;
17:21 nor will people say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For the kingdom of God is within you.”

Good morning, everyone.

Mornings and evenings have become quite chilly. It's only a matter of time before temperatures drop below freezing. I hope you've all been keeping well.

I was recently invited by Pastor Kim Myeong-suk of Hiroshima Church, part of the Japan Christian Council where my parents belong, to meet Pastor Ryu Seong-jun from Korea, author of the book ‘Serve Like Jesus: Servant Leadership’. I had the opportunity to observe the work of Korean church leaders studying servant leadership alongside Pastor Ryu. From Japan, I was joined by a group of about ten people, including pastors who share the Methodist spirit (a Protestant group originating in England in the 18th century by John Wesley, emphasizing spiritual awakening, missionary advancement, social responsibility in faith practice, and the cultivation of spirituality to achieve these goals) and who graduated from Tokyo Theological University. Locally, we were warmly welcomed by many pastors. We learned from their diverse practices—praying for ways to share the gospel with those who rarely attend church—such as café evangelism, library and after-school childcare programs commissioned by the government, and specialized pastoral care for children with disabilities while maintaining their own jobs. The work at one church, housed in a massive building with a gymnasium-sized worship hall, was truly impressive. They literally opened their spacious hall as a sports facility, creating a safe place for local children, forming an orchestra, and running an after-school program that functioned like a school.

As today's Scripture passage states, “Make the most of every opportunity, using your wisdom

to interact wisely with outsiders. Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” It seems our very purpose as “the salt of the earth and the light of the world” is being questioned.

4:2 Be alert and always keep on praying with thanksgiving.

Pray without ceasing, pray for others—prayer is emphasized, with Paul's exhortation to the Colossian church and his own request for prayer intertwined.

“Be alert” means to be vigilant, to observe keenly. Paul urges us to pray with such attentiveness and gratitude, praying without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always.

5:17 Pray continually.

5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

When we think of prayer, we often imagine presenting our requests to God. Yet the Bible teaches that beginning with thanksgiving is truly wonderful.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What a privilege it is that we are chosen by the Lord, redeemed, made children of God, and that whatever we ask in the name of His beloved Son Jesus will be heard! Thus, the very fact that we can pray is cause for utmost gratitude. And then we present our requests to the Lord, which is intercessory prayer.

4:3 Pray also for us, that God may open a door for our message, to speak the mystery of Christ—for which I am in chains—

4:4 and that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

That God may open a door for His message, that we may speak the mystery of Christ. That I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Yes, it is also my earnest prayer that God would open the heavenly gates for the sake of the Word and guide me so that I too can speak clearly what I ought to speak from this pulpit. And in our daily lives, is it not also true that we earnestly pray for the Father's guidance regarding what we should speak?

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

(New International Version) 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

And these words, “God will open a door for us to speak the mystery of Christ (for which I am in chains),” contain Paul's desire for the prison door to open so he could speak words of testimony to those outside. They also include a prayer for us, that the various obstacles standing in the way of proclaiming the Word might be removed.

“That we may speak plainly.” As we consider this, let us turn our attention to the following verses.

4:5 Make the most of every opportunity, and be wise in your dealings with outsiders.

4:6 Always let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person.

Making the most of the present time. While each second of this fleeting time is the same interval, a particular moment or timing is a special opportunity entirely distinct from other seconds—a perfect chance, as if “history was made at that very moment.” It is crucial not to miss that moment, not to let that instant slip away, but to use it to the fullest. That is why preparation through prayer holds meaning. When you pray, you recognize that timing. When you pray, you understand that now is the chance to seize the moment. There's a saying, “Good things come to those who wait,” meaning you can't actively pull opportunities toward yourself. But when you are prepared, you recognize when an opportunity arises and can catch it without letting it slip away. This is the result of prayer.

“Gentle words seasoned with salt”

Salt is salty; when added to pickles, it preserves them. But when I imagine things like umeboshi (pickled plums), I can't help but think that salt-seasoned words might feel more like harsh advice than gentle ones. Yet it's fascinating that your words are described as being sprinkled with salt—restoring flavor through salt—words of grace, kindness, compassion, mercy, and affection. Food without salt is bland and dry. When salt is sprinkled upon it, all the flavors become distinct. As if given life, the deliciousness of each ingredient shines. In the same way, our words of grace, kindness, mercy, compassion, and affection are necessary. The world is so lacking in such words of grace, kindness, mercy, compassion, and affection that it often becomes a place devoid of love, dry and tasteless. How vitally necessary is it for us, in such a world, to respond and answer? Knowing this deepens our prayer that we may speak what needs to be said. And opportunity comes to those who are prepared. Live wisely, seizing the present moment and not letting chances slip away.

4:7 As for my circumstances, my dear brother Tychicus, who is a faithful servant and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you everything about me.

4:8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he himself may be encouraged by your company.

4:9 I am sending him with him, our faithful and beloved brother Onesimus. They will tell you everything about us.

4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, send you greetings. (You have received instructions about Mark, so that if he goes to you, welcome him.)

4:11 Jesus, called Justus, also sends greetings. These three are the only ones among the circumcised who are fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

I am sending Tychicus to you, who is one of the faithful and a dear brother, to tell you everything that is happening here. He will make you fully aware of our situation, and you will be encouraged.

Paul says that Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus, who are with me in prison, are the only three among the circumcised who are fellow workers for the kingdom of God and have become my comfort.

We see that the circumcised Jews were still hostile and cold. Paul himself, after all, had been sent by the high priest to Damascus to persecute Christians.

Even so, for what purpose should we live, what should we speak, and what should we do?
The letter to the Colossians states the following:

3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

“These three alone are fellow workers for the kingdom of God.” We too desire to be fellow workers for the kingdom of God, wisely discerning the Lord's heart.

Luke 17:11 As Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he passed through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

17:12 As he entered a village, he was met by ten men with leprosy. They stood at a distance

17:13 and called out, “Jesus, Master! Have mercy on us!”

17:14 When he saw them, he said, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

17:15 One of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, praising God in a loud voice.

17:16 He came back and fell at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. This man was a Samaritan.

17:17 Jesus asked, “Weren't there ten who were cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

17:18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

17:19 Then he said to the man, “Get up and go; your faith has saved you.”

17:20 The Pharisees asked him, “When will the kingdom of God come?” He replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with signs that can be observed.

17:21 Nor will people say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ For the kingdom of God is within you.”

Many people think about others but not about God. Yet God stands at our door, knocking. When we welcome God and obey Him, His kingdom comes within us.

4:7 As for my circumstances, my beloved brother Tychicus, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you everything about me.

4:12 Greetings from Epaphras, one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus. He always keeps you in his prayers, earnestly praying that you may stand firm in all the will of God, fully assured.

“He earnestly prays that you may be fully convinced of God's will.”

We desire to be wise and faithful servants who truly discern God's heart. Let us pray for one another that we may become such. That we may stand fully convinced of God's will as complete persons. That we may be perfected, complete, fully mature, and fully grown into all that God desires, wills, and hopes for us. To reach that point, to draw even one step closer to it, we press on in prayer with all our might, wrestling, striving, fighting, striving to win the prize, always doing our utmost.

May God's kingdom come. May it come into the hearts of those who are humble and reverent toward God. There is true fellowship there. I have received much of that true fellowship in Korea and have returned with it. And we can see that same truthfulness within this church.

4:17 Greet Archippus, telling him to take care to fulfill the ministry he has received in the Lord.

4:18 Paul himself writes this greeting with his own hand. Remember me in your prayers, for I am bound in chains. Grace be with you all.

“Take care to fulfill the ministry you have received in the Lord,” Amen.

Colossians 1:22 But now, through the death of his body of flesh, he has reconciled you by his blood to God, presenting you holy, blameless, and irreproachable before him.

1:23 Only, continue to stand firm in the faith, not shifting from the hope of the gospel you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and I, Paul, am its servant.

1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

1:25 I have been made a minister of the church through the commission of God given to me for you, to proclaim the word of God in its fullness.

1:26 The mystery of this word has been hidden for generations past, but now it has been

revealed to God's saints.

1:27 God desired to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. so that they may be fully equipped in Christ.

1:29 For this I labor, struggling with all His energy that so powerfully works in me.

2:1 I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not met me in person.

2:2 My goal is that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and that they may have all the riches of full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, namely Christ.

2:3 In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Philippians 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

1:13 For it has become clear to the whole praetorium and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ.

1:14 And most of the brothers, because of my imprisonment, have become confident in the Lord and dare much more to proclaim the word of God without fear.

Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

16:26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosened.

16:27 The jailer woke up and, finding the prison doors open, immediately drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking the prisoners had escaped.

16:28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here—every one of us!"

16:29 Then the jailer, seizing a light, rushed in and trembling fell down before Paul and Silas.

16:30 He then brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

16:32 Then they spoke the word of God to him and all his household.

16:33 At midnight he took them and washed their wounds. And he and his entire household were baptized immediately, every one of them.

16:34 He brought them into his house and set food before them. He and his entire household

rejoiced greatly because they had believed in God.

Galatians 4:12 Brothers and sisters, I urge you to become like me, for I have become like you.

Acts 26:29 Paul said, "Whether I speak briefly or at length, I pray to God that not only you, but everyone who hears my words today, may become like me—except for these chains."

2 Timothy 2:8 Keep in mind Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.

2:9 For this gospel I suffer as an evildoer, even to the point of being chained. But God's word is not chained.

2:10 That is why I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

2:11 This is a trustworthy saying: "If we died with him, we will also live with him.

2:12 If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us.

◇Prayer: **Heavenly Father, we thank you for today's worship. Thank you for advising us to "make the most of your time, acting wisely toward outsiders. Always speak with pleasant words seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person."** Thank You for this guidance. Lead us this week to walk as the indispensable "salt of the earth and light of the world." Lead all who suffer into Your salvation and peace. Bless our families and our neighbors. Use us. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.