

Colossians 1:24-29 (NIV)

²⁴Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

²⁵I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness--

²⁶the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

²⁷To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

²⁹To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

51-01-04-The Jesus on the Inside

God's glory, hope, epiphany, indwelling Christ, ministry

Col 1:24-29

We are to live out a manifestation of the Christ living within.

INTRODUCTION: (Text for "Scripture Reading")

–*Epiphany celebrates Christ's manifestation to the world.* Today's **text** is about *Jesus being manifested in us*: **HOM.idea**. [**Frederick Hosmer** in his poem "How Little Joe Named the Baby," wrote: "Mamma, I've named the baby!" / "You have? What is it Jo?" / "I'm going to call him God, Mamma, / That's the best name I know." // Wee prophet of the highest— / Who touched thy little tongue / To speak so clear the holiest thought / That e'er was said or sung? // The preaching of the pulpit / Seems vague and far away / Beside thy bolder faith that sees / Immanuel to-day. // Ah well, if in each other, / As through the world we go, / We saw what in that babe was seen / And named by little Jo.]

–Others will see in us "what in that babe was seen and named by little Jo," only if we manifest *the Jesus on the inside* (**title**). His *manifestation is the mystery* mentioned twice in our **text**. And it begs *some questions... first*:

I. What's So Mysterious About Christians?

- A. They're just *normal* people, but different [as **Mathetes** said back in 130 AD): "Following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they (Christians) display... their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry... they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are **citizens of heaven**."]]
- B. That's a big mystery! We're "**citizens of heaven**" while still on earth!
 1. We have *hope*, even *joy*, during *earthly trials!* [**Anne Swetchine** (early 1800s) wrote: "Christianity dispels more mystery than it involves. With Christianity it is **twilight** in the world; without it, **night**."] (That's honesty: Christianity shines light on life's darkness, but life is still hard.)
 2. It's also a *mystery* that we aren't just religiously connected with Jesus but in relational communion with Him as a living Person!
 3. A greater mystery is what Paul says about participating in Christ's very own work!– **v.24**, "*I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*"

TRANS: *What a “mystery”—to finish Christ’s work! A philosopher I read in my teens was drawn to Christ by such mysteries. [Mortimer J. Adler wrote, “My chief reason for choosing Christianity was because the mysteries were incomprehensible.... If it were wholly comprehensible, then it would be just another philosophy.”] But another mystery leads to the question....*

II. Why Is it That Christians Are Special to God?— Col 1:26-27, *the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

- A. God likes temples, but *His plan* was for a special kind of temple.
1. God built a magnificent universe, but that’s not His *sanctuary*.
 2. He had a *Tabernacle* and *Temple* built, but Solomon’s wisdom saw those concepts as incomprehensible mysteries— 2 Chr 6:18, “But will God really dwell on earth with men? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”
 3. God’s plan all along, “*hidden for ages*,” was to indwell humans as temples: “*Christ in you*.” (It’s not such a “*mystery*,” if we remember we were made in His image—created to be *at home with God*.)
- B. “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” isn’t a hope for heavenly fame or for spiritual exaltation but for *companionship with the living God!*
1. Life’s hard knocks tell us, “*This isn’t home!*” So, our souls reply, “*Then I need Emmanuel* [“God with us”] *for my journey thru life!*”
 2. [“Brave” by *Out of the Grey* captures this human need: “Lord, I know you go before me on this road / Who could ever be against me? / Every step I take I know I’m not alone / You’re my courage for the journey // And you make me brave / You make me strong / I’m not afraid / You’ve been here all along / In my weakness, You’re my strength and my song, / You make me brave.”]
- C. This special living arrangement with God comes by our *authentic response* to Him in love and loyalty— in John 14:23 (NKJV), Jesus says, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”

TRANS: *What’s the alternative? [Thomas Browne illustrated the answer: “If thou could’st empty all thyself of self, / Like to a shell dishabited, / Then might He find thee on the ocean shelf, / And say, ‘This is not dead’, And fill thee with Himself instead. / But thou art all replete with very thou / And hast such shrewd activity, / That when He comes, He says, (‘It has enough now) / Unto itself – ’twere better let it be, / It is so small and full, there is no room for me.”] To be true temples for God, self must be off the throne... self must be off center stage. We are*

to live out a manifestation of the Christ living within.

III. How, Then Do Christians Manifest Christ?

- A. The NT job description is: “Love one another;” “wash one another’s feet;” “serve one another in love.” (It’s *our job*, but it isn’t done on our own.)
- B. God—the Triune Team—ordains teamwork— v.28, *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. (Heb 10:24 says our team-working task is to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds,” “so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” That means, yes, I am “my brother’s keeper.”)*
- C. We manifest Jesus by being His co-laborers. (What He wants, we must want and work for, prayerfully and practically— v.29, *To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*).
1. Our personal will is involved in the process: “*To this end I labor*.”
 2. But the “energy” for the job is from the Jesus on the inside— [Paul says] “*struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me*.”

CONCLUSION:

—“*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” is no longer a hidden “mystery.” We are to live out a manifestation of the Christ living within. How we live our lives should show that we are “citizens of heaven”—*visible temples, aglow with Christ’s glory, obedient to Him in loving and serving one another.*—Jesus wants us to be *epiphanies* of Him, manifestations of His life. The Jesus on the inside wants to be revealed on the outside. Only by seeing “*Christ in you*,” will others realize that they too can know this great “mystery” of “Emmanuel... (God with us).” *Hopefully, they will also be led to invite Him to be their own indwelling Savior and Lord.*