
Sermon Notes

May 22, 2016

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

A Nurturing Church

Colossians 1:28-29

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

To Nurture

- ❖ The outward growth of the church must be supported by the inward growth of her members
- ❖ To nurture = the process of caring for and encouraging the growth or development of someone or something
- ❖ Who needs to be nurtured? Who needs to be nurturing?

Him We Proclaim

- ❖ **Warning**
 - How does warning and admonishing everyone contribute to their growth and development?
 - an eye on the future that leads to action in the present

- God knows we need the warning and admonishing ministry of His Word to protect and keep us on the path that leads to our growth
- who needs to be warned? who needs to be warning?
 - Acts 20:31 shows how passionate and intense Paul is about this
 - warning is the responsibility of every believer (2 Thess 3:14-15, Rom 15:14, Col 3:16)

❖ Teaching

- teaching one another is to be done with all wisdom
- we will keep holding up and passing the truth of God's Word on to one another
- this requires discernment, and discernment requires that we know how to accurately interpret and apply the Scriptures

Why Do We Do This?

- ❖ Proclaiming and warning and teaching have one great goal: *to present everyone mature in Christ*
- ❖ *Mature in Christ* = being complete, finished, brought to an end
- ❖ Finished and unfinished masterpieces

- ❖ God will not leave us as "unfinished masterpieces"
 - the nurturing process of warning and teaching allows us to have the joy of helping one another become "finished masterpieces"
 - being *mature in Christ* means that we become increasingly like Christ
 - we will not fully attain that in this life
 - but we keep pressing on toward that goal (Phil 3:14)
 - we also help one another keep pressing on toward that goal

This Requires Effort and Energy

- ❖ Paul uses very strong, descriptive words in v. 29
 - *toil* = working to the point of exhaustion (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 11:23-28)
 - *struggling* is a word commonly applied to those competing in an athletic event
- ❖ This is not solely about self-effort
 - the driving force behind what Paul does comes from the *energy that [God] powerfully works within [him]* (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 15:10)
 - God provides the power, we provide the exertion

- ❖ To be the nurturing church God calls us to be, we need to seek, invite, and welcome His power to work in, among and through us
 - a divine obligation and responsibility that Jesus entrusts to the members of the church He is building
 - our shared mission is to nurture one another so that we can *present everyone mature in Christ*

Personal Application

1. Do you think of yourself as a nurturing person? Does Colossians 1:28-29 cause you to rethink what that means and how being a nurturing person might show itself in your life?
2. In recent days or weeks, have you received any warnings of any kind (positive or negative)? What was your attitude about receiving a warning? What is your attitude toward the responsibility God gives you to be engaged in warning those in your family of faith about known or hidden dangers?
3. Even if you do not think of yourself as "a teacher", based on this text in Colossians, how are you meant to be involved in teaching others what they need to hear/do in order to help them move on toward maturity?
4. What signs can you discern in your own life that convince you that you are becoming more mature in Christ (*i.e.* more like Jesus)?
5. "God provides the power, we provide the exertion." How much of either is apparent in your life right now? How could you grow forward in both of these areas?