

Oct 1, 2016

Colossians 1:15-20

Fruitfulness on the Frontline

Jonathan M. Romig

CornerstoneWestford.com

In Colossians 1:15-20 we are introduced to Jesus. Jesus is the son of God who is the perfect image of God, the Lord of creation, the head of the church, and is reconciling all things to himself. But why does that matter? How does it apply to me as I live my life? Jesus is the God who cares about all of creation. Everything is made through him, things we see like bananas and mountains, and things we don't see, like physics, electricity, and heaven. This means that the two are connected. Jesus cares about our realities and calls us to join him in his mission to redeem creation. He gives us each a place where we can serve him, our frontlines. According to the LICC, "Your Frontline is the place where you spend the majority of your time outside the church, where you are in contact with non-Christians." (*Life on the Frontline*, leader booklet, pg. 8) Listen to the sermon to learn how you can be blessing and impacting your frontline for Jesus. Check out the [accompanying book](#) here.

*Sermon outline on next page. Corresponding slides on CornerstoneWestford.com/sermons.

Introduction: (Slide #1)

1. This summer has been pretty hard on our lawns and gardens.
2. Monica's garden is full of green and red tomatoes, but this week I saw a little green pea pod.
3. I was so happy for Monica I reached down and picked it so I could show her what her garden grew.
4. Turns out, this green pea pod, was actually supposed to be a red pepper, but it hadn't ripened yet.
5. When I told Monica "Look what I found in your garden", she said "I know, I was waiting for it to ripen."
6. I don't know how to garden, and because of that, who knows what will happen to the red pepper.
7. I thought I was being helpful, but turns out, I needed a little bit more training to be a fruitful gardener.
8. This week's new series, *Fruitfulness on the Frontline*, is about being fruitful in the gardens God gives us.

(S2) "Your **Frontline** is the place where you spend the majority of your time outside the church, where you are in contact with non-Christians." (*Life on the Frontline*, leader booklet, pg. 8)

1. Our frontlines are the places we live and work 5-6 days a week, your office, classroom, gym, grocer.
2. In this series, we'll survey a variety of Scriptures to learn how we can be fruitful on our frontlines.
3. An early Christian leader named Paul wrote a letter to a church at a town called Colossae.
4. In it he thanks God for these early Christians because they are good at gardening.

(S3) **Colossians 1:6b** In the same way, **the gospel is bearing fruit and growing** throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. (NIV®)

1. When a seed takes root, sprouts, grows, and bears fruit, it's a picture of the gospel growth at Colossae.
2. Colossians 1:21-22 defines the gospel as the truth that enemies of God can become friends of God.
3. Through the death of Jesus, anyone who is dirty can be made new and clean, and can know God.
4. At Colossae, people are recognizing their sin, coming to faith in Jesus, and are being made new.
5. But there are predators in the garden who are seeking to destroy this fruit with lies about Jesus.
6. So Paul shares with them a *beautiful Christian hymn* to teach truth and train them to be better gardeners.
7. If you want to be a great gardener, you need to train under a great gardener.

I. Jesus is the chief gardener. (Colossians 1:15) (S4)

A. Jesus is the master gardener. (v. 15)

1. At the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he was mistaken for a *gardener*; he is one (Jn 20:15).
2. In v. 15 Jesus, the Son, is called the *firstborn of all creation*—he was with God at the start.
3. In the beginning, Jesus created the heavens and the earth, he said "let there be light, stars, land..."

(S5) **Genesis 1:11** Then [Jesus] said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. (NIV®)

4. How is this possible? It's b/c Jesus is *the image of the invisible God*—he is the God people saw.
5. In Greek, *image* is the word *eikōn*, which means likeness or idol (of an animal, person, god).
6. Before the Son was born as a baby, he walked in the garden with Adam and Eve. (Gen 3:8)

II. Through Jesus, all things flourish. (Colossians 1:16-17, 19-20) (S6)

A. Through Jesus (the chief gardener), all things flourish. (vv. 16-17)

1. V. 16 tells us that Jesus helped create everything that was ever created.
2. This means 1) Jesus was not created and 2) all of creation is good (*God saw that it was good*).
3. Jesus created everything that's visible (what we can see) and invisible (what we can't see).
4. V. 16 gives examples—thrones and rulers are visible and powers and authorities are invisible.
5. Jesus created granite, beach trees, the Atlantic, plums, potatoes, puppies, pterodactyls, & people.
6. He also created electricity, sound waves, physics, gravity, the wind, souls, angels, and heaven.
7. Notice everything was created *for him* and *in him all things hold together*.

B. Jesus isn't Atlas—a Greek titan cursed to hold the sky forever (Rockefeller Center, NY).

1. Atlas statues are hunched over, pressed down, and straining under the celestial sphere.
2. Jesus is just the opposite, he created everything, and comfortably steps into creation.
3. Jesus sustains everything—It's through his' care that creation flourishes, even today.
4. **Application:** Jesus cares about your piece of creation too—through Jesus, it can flourish.
5. Jesus cares about your visible(s), what you see everyday—your job, family, friends, neighbors.
6. Do you believe that Jesus can make these people and your relationships with them flourish?

(Through Jesus, all things flourish.)

C. This flourishing comes at great cost. (vv. 19-20)

1. Although Jesus created everything pure, people chose sin, and we broke everything.
2. So Jesus had to rescue his garden and the people living in it—It came at the cost of his blood.
3. V. 20 says *he reconciled to himself all things.... through blood shed on his cross* (the cross, NIV).
4. Jesus doesn't garden with a rake, shovel, or gardening gloves; he gardens with his cross.
5. He covered himself with the dirty filth of your sin, of my death, of our hells, and then he died.
6. When he went to the tomb, he buried our sins with him, so that we don't have to pay for them.
7. When Jesus rose again, he arose glorious, perfectly free of our sins, a spotless gardener.
8. If the gardener knows you, you're spotless too... Do you want to know him?
9. No matter how full of weeds or how dead your garden is, Jesus can bring flourishing.

D. "This will begin to make things right."

1. This is the very first line of the newest *Star Wars* movie, *The Force Awakens*.
2. The original three star war movies were a perfect classic creation.
3. Then sin entered the world when George Lucas decided to write and direct three more.
4. The director J.J. Abrams' first lines promise a new beginning, a fresh start.
5. **Application:** Do you believe Jesus can begin to make things right? (our vision)
6. Do you believe he can make your job right, your family right, your hardest relationship right?
7. It's messy and hard and you'll get covered in dirt, but that means we're doing it right.
8. Jesus was accused of eating and drinking with sinners (Lk 7:34); we're to do that too.
9. **Big Idea:** Come dig in the garden with Jesus.

(This is where our call as the church begins... Come dig in the garden with Jesus..)

III. The church gardens too. (Colossians 1:18) (S7)

A. The church gardens too.

1. Jesus is called the head of the church—this means he's our source and our leader.

2. As our source, he gives us nourishment just like your mouth provides you with nourishment.
3. As our leader, he directs us forward into fruitful lives and fruitful ministries on his behalf.
4. His Word, the Bible, gives us a mission, "To make, mature, multiply followers of Jesus".
5. We garden for Jesus' glory, fame, and supremacy—he's first not just at church, but everyday.

(The church gardens two places: together and apart.)

B. First, we garden together—we call this the **gathered church**. (S8)

1. The majority gray dots represent non-Christians in our towns and communities.
2. The **seven** clumped red dots in the corner illustrate normal church gardening.
3. Normal church gardening is a worship service, outreach event, or small group.
4. There is great benefit from these events, but we can only reach so many—**eight** gray dots.
5. Most weeks we get 1-3 new visitors and at a successful outreach we may reach 100 people.
6. This is why Jesus, in the Great Commission, says *go and make disciples* (Matt 28:16-20).

C. Second, we garden apart—we call this the **scattered church**. (S9)

1. When we're not at church, we're still called to be the church.
2. On your frontline, you have a lot more time and access to reach non-Christians with Jesus.
3. When the **seven** red dots scatter, they're suddenly touching **fifty-two** different gray dots.
4. Each of you has 5-15 people you interact with most days at your office, gym, or store.
5. If we have 60 adults here, and each of us is around 10~ non-Christians each day, we are already reaching about 600 people every day; let's start to reach them for Jesus (Top Ten Most Wanted).
6. This **series** and our **small groups** will help you learn how to garden on your frontline (6Ms).

(Come dig in the garden with Jesus.) (S10)

Conclusion:

1. The Westford Community Gardens are right down the street from us... this is a picture of those gardens.
2. Local families get up every day at 5 a.m. to water and on the way home they stop to gather vegetables.
3. What if you and I woke up thinking, I'm going to my garden today, to water, maybe there will be fruit.
4. Don't you want to see what God can grow? Don't you want to see fruitfulness on your frontline?
5. In your barren field, God can grow sunflowers, vines, leafy greens, and whatever this is. (S11-14)
6. Even if you feel like you're a garden gnome, Jesus can use you to plant a flourishing garden. (S15)
7. Come dig in the garden with Jesus.

Preview: Next week we're looking at the first way to be fruitful, modeling Godly character.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (NIV®)