Verse 4 writes about the "hope stored up for you in heaven". This is a powerful promise. What do you think it means?

- + What are some milestones or moments when you have experienced hope?
- + What inspires you to hope, even in difficult circumstances.
- + What would you write in a letter to encourage others to "hope"?

GROWTH:

JOURNAL PROMPT

God, help me to live intentionally this fall as I learn more about your Holy Spirit and the attributes of a life rooted in you. Nourish me through my study of your word, community with my small group, and worship in church. Show me clearly the tasks, relationships, and work to which you are calling me. Amen.

CALLING PROMPT

God is inviting you to participate in his ministry by answering the unique call on your life. How can you actively respond to scripture and God's presence this week?

CLOSING PRAYER

Let's prepare for the week ahead, shaped by our time together today.

Gracious God, we trust that you go with us in the week ahead. We are changed each time we gather to learn more about you and your Word. Please give us boldness to proclaim your good news in the coming week and bring us back safely together again in this community. Amen.



OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for being with us during our gathering as a community today. May we strive to grow in faith both individually and together. We ask that you bless this time of learning and fellowship, as we read Colossians.

COMMUNITY

Time to build relationships: mix + mingle!

- + What specific point resonated with you from the weekend's sermon?
- + If you couldn't attend, ask others in your group what stood out to them. (Note: Links to both video and audio versions of previous sermons can be found at https://standrewmethodist.org/worship/sermons/)
- + Where did you see God's presence in your past weekend?

VIDEO – WEEK 1 WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE NOTES

SCRIPTURE

A great starting place is always in God's word. This week we are in:

COLOSSIANS 1:1-6A

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters[a] in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. ³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel 6 that has come to you.

SITUATION

As a shepherding pastor, Paul writes a variety of letters to groups of believers in different cities encouraging them in their faith in Jesus. These letters were likely circulated and read orally to anyone who would listen. To begin his letter to Colossae, Paul includes a very important topic sentence: "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God". An apostle, or messenger who is sent by God, in order to bring the good news to whom they are sent. This is essential to understanding not only the identity of Paul, but the larger movement of the early founding churches. The nature of "Apostles" requires that they are "sent". Here we see Paul attributing his calling (and faith transformation) by the will of God. From this role, he writes to the faithful gathered community to embrace what God IS doing and WILL do. In true gospel-sharing fashion, the introduction hinges upon the hope one can have in Christ.

QUESTIONS:

What is the distinction between being an "apostle" or just a follower of God?

+ Why do you think Paul often, specifically, describes himself in this way in his letters?

Consider the reality of sending and receiving letters in our current culture. Contrast this with Paul's culture and how you think his letter circulation was impactful for the growth of the Church?

What tone of voice does the letter to Colossae reflect in Chapter 1?

+ What do you think Paul's purpose in writing this letter was?