



WEEK 4: SUFFERING AND STRIVING | FEBRUARY 1

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.

Thank you for the gift of today and of this small group study. Amen.

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 4
WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE NOTES

SCRIPTURE

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

COLOSSIANS 1:24 - 2:5

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering 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. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

2 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ² My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

SITUATION

Paul is a realist. He doesn't live with rose colored glasses on and certainly doesn't shy away from describing the resulting implications of following Jesus. The thing about suffering for Christians, is that we ought to view it drastically different than the rest of the world does.

The Christian tradition does not shy away from the suffering that is part of this life, because as undeniably hard as it is, the Christian faith claims that we are mysteriously and uniquely close with Christ in those moments. Jesus taught his disciples that there is more to come – more hope, more love, more beauty, more life. The totality of our existence is not chalked up to what we can see here and now, but rather we are invited into a life with God in peace and resurrected glory.

Paul obviously learned this during his own faith transformation and is clear to include it in his writing and preaching. It is for the sake of his beloved Jesus and the gospel (good news) that he brings, that Paul embraces the struggles of this world. He doesn't deny them, rather he endures them, but with a faithful certainty that suffering, and death does not get the final say. This truism is a key motivation that propels him forward, in all of his striving and hard work on behalf of the gospel.

QUESTIONS:

Christians are called to endure life by focusing on the hope God provides, but it doesn't mean we are immune from suffering. What is the hardest part of being in a season (or moment) of suffering? Why?

Where in the Bible (both the Old Testament and the New Testament) do you recall moments of suffering... what stood out to you about them?

+ What do you think is the "mystery of God" in Col 2: 2?

It is formative, spiritually, to strive to focus on God's promises of hope and restoration. Who is someone in your life does this? What is it you admire about their faithfulness?

Paul describes the suffering of Jesus, to remind us that we are not alone. What is an inspiring verse from scripture that you turn to in times of worry?

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.