

“Full Christ, Full Life!”

This is a picture taken about 16 years ago. The girls are our two oldest children, Maddie and Isabelle, and the lady in the middle is Fannie Powell. Fannie was my family’s housekeeper when I was a kid. But I never saw her as anything less than another grandmother. We were very close. In fact, she’s a big part of the reason I am a pastor today, because she’s the one who actually told me about Jesus. But she didn’t just tell me about him once or twice nor did she just tell me the basics. Fannie told me something significant about his life and what it meant to her life, almost every time we were together. Because Jesus was her Lord. You see, Fannie believed and trusted that Christ put himself in the center of her life, and because he did, her life revolved around his. So when bad things happened, or when things got tough, or when her sin, or the sin of this broken world, seemed to rule the day, her response was a life faithful to him.

Fannie passed away not long after this picture was taken. She was 96. But if you would have met her, I assure you she would have told you something about her Savior. And like me, you probably would have heard whatever she said about him and thought to yourself, “Wow, it sure sounds like it’s going to be OK.”

We all need those consistent reminders about the true fullness of Christ, don’t we? Because on our own, we are so vulnerable to just follow whatever the most popular voice is saying about him, regardless of whether it’s right or wrong. But this is nothing new. The Colossians were hearing things about Jesus that were counter to what they had been taught. And these things were starting to cause a lot of doubt as to what was really true about him. So Paul stepped in and wrote to them, reminding them of the fullness of Christ, and what he really meant to their lives. And even though his words were first written for them, God knew we would all be in the same position one day, struggling with the same things. So he gave Paul’s words to us as well. And if you’re like me, you need to hear them regularly. Because the competing voices just keep getting louder and louder. And whether we want to admit it or not, we listen.

So, I want us look at the words from Colossians, chapter 2 again. But this time I want us to hear them as if Paul was writing to each one of us. Because in these few verses, we, like the Colossians, are reminded that the fullness of God dwells in Christ and Christ dwells in us. And if we are in Christ, then his life has everything to do with ours. And there’s no better news. So hear we go.

Col. 2:6-7

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

- Who have we received? Christ Jesus as Lord, that is, as true God. We are in him, saved by his grace through faith. So we walk in him, knowing our lives have been rooted—like a tree that continues to stand year after year no matter the conditions—and built up in him. We are established in the faith that we have been taught. So with great joy and thanks, we live in him. But—

Col. 2:8

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

- We are to live in Christ’s truth and not allow ourselves to be held captive by human devised things and philosophies that can ultimately take us away from that truth. So, stop reading the horoscopes. Stop dabbling in new-age spiritualism, like weekend retreats where you talk to trees or channel inner peace through the energy of rocks and crystals. And stop this mess, which is such a problem in our society, of worshipping at the altar of FB and Instagram! Why?

Col. 2:9-10

“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

- We don’t allow ourselves to be held captive by all those outside things because all the fullness of God dwells in Christ. If it’s genuine power that we’re looking for that actually does something for our lives, the one place to find it is in God in the flesh!
- And we have been filled in him! He’s is the head of all rule and all authority. We don't need to go to those other things searching for answers or identity. We have everything we need, because we are joined to the one in charge of it all! But how did we get in this situation?

Col. 2:11-12

“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

- Now I know what we usually think about when we hear someone in the Bible talking about circumcision. But Paul is making the point that in this new kind of circumcision, one done without hands, Christ has transferred our body of flesh. He took us from Adam’s team to his. And now that we’re on the redeemed team, we live in him.
- Because in baptism we have been buried with Christ in his death and raised with him. This is the foundation of our Christian lives! God has done this work by the Spirit, and through faith we now have this new life in Christ. And Paul has even more to say about this:

Col. 2:13-14

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,”

- You and me, being dead in our sin, being not baptized, God made us alive together with Christ. He washed away all that was against us and we owe him nothing. How can that be?

Col. 2:14

“By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

- We all have this debt that we can’t pay. It’s called sin. But this contract with all its obligations, which have been held against us, God took that contract away from us by nailing it to the body of Jesus on the cross.
- And in the body of Jesus, who was buried, just like we were with him in baptism, we rise with that same body to this new life. Everything held over our heads—all of our sin that has caused so much pain—it’s all gone. It’s been nailed to our Lord, who died in our place, and has been taken away.

- So, no longer do we need to go searching. No longer do we have to question if our existence really matters, or if our lives are really worthwhile. And no longer do we think our sin doesn't matter because it does. It matters so much that the Lord himself was willing to die for it. So we come to the cross and repent, trusting that God considers us good, only because we are in the one who has born all the blame. And finally,

Col. 2:15

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

- God allowed his Son die, and in doing so he disarmed Satan and his minions, and put them to shame by triumphing over them in Christ. They will still try to take us away, and we have to constantly be on guard. But evil's power to accuse the faithful before God has been defeated.
- So when we want to find the victory of God, we only look to his victory in Christ on the cross. That's what strips away all that is held over us.

So, do you think think verses are the reminder of the true fullness of Christ that all of us need? But let's be real. Are we all going to leave here today talking about Jesus like my adopted Grandmother, Fannie did? Probably not. Are we going to routinely go to Colossians Chapter 2 when find ourselves submitting to the things of our culture, rather than the things of God? I sure hope so, but again, probably not. But neither should we continue to live as though Christ is just another character we've added to what we consider a pretty decent life. Jesus is Lord. Through baptism, our decent lives have been united to his perfect life. Things will still go horribly wrong for many of us. Sin and death will continue to cause us pain. Life will still be a struggle against those outside things with the loudest voices. But God resolved to redeem it all, which is exactly what he did in Christ. And now it's Christ who continues God's redeeming rule over all things, including your life and mine. So, if you remember anything about this sermon, I hope it's this. Because we are in Christ, it's going to be OK. **Amen.**