

Colossians 2:8—15

October 13, 2019

Today we return to an old book. To a timeless book written 19 centuries ago. The United States by comparison is just out of the wrapper compared to Colossians. We return to it because as we read, we hear the voice of God, today.

Let's read together.

“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. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ 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, ¹² 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. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” Colossians 2:8-15

PRAY

Have you ever heard of FOMO? It stands for The Fear of Missing out. F-O-M-O. Eric Barker of Time Magazine writes,

“You hear about FOMO a lot these days. In fact, the word was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013.

What does it really mean? A recent [study](#) on the subject defined it as:

...“the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you’re missing out – that your peers are doing, in the know about, or in possession of more or something better than you”. Under this framing of FoMO, nearly three quarters of young adults reported they experienced the phenomenon.

He goes on.

“It’s certainly not a good thing. And it leads you to check social media again and again and again so you don’t feel out of the loop. So you know you’re doing okay. So you don’t feel left out.

Sometimes that alleviates the anxiety — but often it doesn’t. And either way it drives you to keep running around the digital hamster wheel to feel okay with yourself.”

FOMO might be a new term but humans have been afraid of missing out for eons. And humans have been fashioning all sorts of hamster wheels to run on to feel okay with themselves LONG before social media.

We all want to feel okay The problem is that nothing works.

And we can have FOMO

Verse 8 doesn't say hamster wheel or FOMO but it comes close—We can be held hostage or run around the hamster wheel of “philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition.”

The human tradition hamster wheel we ride around and around and around is when we say _____ will make me feel okay with myself.

We can run round and round on the wheel of—

Better health—then I will be okay

Right friends—then I will be okay

Enough money—then I will be okay

Good education—then I will be okay

Appropriate Respect—then I will be okay

Happy Family—then I will be okay

Round and round the wheel goes and nothing changes and no one feels better and everyone has a fear of missing out. The truth is that we Americans are taken captive, held hostage by a philosophy—a belief system that says, “This make me feel okay with myself.”

We need to stop the madness jump off the hamster wheel.

We need something more. Feeling okay to ward off FOMO is not enough. Today's scripture offer something of enduring value. Something that will do far more than make you feel better about yourself.

The scriptures draw our attention away from ourselves and onto someone else. Onto Jesus. We are simply unable to understand who we are, who we are supposed to be and what we are to do unless we FIRST start with Jesus.

The most important thing about you is NOT you. It is Jesus.

PROP: You can't miss out if you have Jesus.

Do you want to have meaning in your life—go again to Jesus.

Do you want to be a part of something bigger—go again to Jesus.

Do you want to matter in this world—go again to Jesus.

Do you want to feel better about yourself—go again to Jesus.

You cannot miss out if you have Jesus.

1. Jesus IS—

Vs. 9, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily..."

Jesus is not God jr.
Jesus is not God-in-training.
Jesus is not God's padawan learner.

"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells
bodily..."

This also does not mean that somehow in some
mysterious way that the presence of God inhabits
Jesus. We are talking way more than that. Jesus is
God.

He is not merely LIKE God or SIMILAR to God or
God LIKE.

Jesus is the whole fullness of deity. Notice something
else—where does the whole fullness of deity dwell?
In his body.

In the ancient world kings built temples, massive and
grandiose to hold their gods. These majestic and
ornate buildings were constructed on a colossal scale
so worshipers would understand how very small they
are.

The OT people of God had a temple too. The temple
was the place that God met with his people. But NO
WHERE in the OT do we ever read, "For in the
temple the whole fullness of deity dwells."

Quite the contrary.

The scriptures go to great pains to understand that
mankind could never construct anything that could

hold the transcendent God. Solomon, who built the first temple knew this. After he finished the construction he said,

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” 1 Kings 8:27

The same thing is said but God himself through his mouthpiece, the prophet Isaiah,

“Thus says the LORD:
“Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?” Isaiah 66:1

If no building could hold the whole fullness of his deity, no matter how grand, no matter how ornate, no matter how lavish—then how can read this in Colossians 2:9?

Vs. 9, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...”

No building has ever held his deity, but deity NOW dwells bodily. Past generations of Christians had a much harder time believing that God the Son could have a body just like us.

But Col. 2:9 is clear.

Jesus IS the whole fullness of deity embodied.

Who cares?

Now it gets really interesting.

2. *Jesus Fills—*

Verse 10 is one of those sentences in the Bible that we can read in just a few seconds, but we cannot completely grasp. Watch.

Verse 9 again,

⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,
¹⁰and you have been filled in him...”

And you have been filled in him. Seven little words that hold so much. Get the flow here—Jesus is God, no question about it. No doubt about it. He is God, embodied.

And you have been filled in him.

Is Paul saying that we are divine too? No. But he is saying something we had better pay close attention to. We are filled NOT by him, but in him. That is kind of a weird way to say that.

Wouldn't it be more natural to say, 'you have been filled with him...' and not 'in him.'

What is the idea?

The point is NOT that we have a little bit of Jesus filling us up like a pump at a gas station. “Fill me up

with Jesus on pump 3.” No. The idea is this: you are filled because you are in him. Because you are associated with Jesus.

Because you are IN HIM.

None of us can lay claim to deity here this morning, but all of us can say that I am so closely associated with Jesus in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells—we are IN HIM.

We are inseparable from him.

We are going to continue to explore what it means to be so closely associated with him that we are inseparable but something we need to see here clearly—

Any philosophy, teaching, belief, preference, conviction that takes us away from or moves you on from Jesus is no good. Here is the tricky thing, our preferences might not be wrong but if they move you further from Jesus you aren’t holding them rightly.

Is there anything in your life that you love or want more than Jesus?

If your convictions about:

Education

Illiteracy

Vaccinations

Money

Environment

Government

Politics
Diet

If any of your convictions about those things or many other grow more important than Jesus and who he is for you—you are just running around and around in a hamster wheel.

PROP: You can't miss out if you stay close to Jesus.

Also,

Look again at verse 10,

¹⁰ and you have been filled in him..."

I don't want to give a grammar lesson for two reasons. First, it would be really boring. Second, I'm not very good at grammar. But even I know this, when I hear "and you have been filled in him..." we cannot readily tell if that 'you' is singular (just you, the reader) or plural (y'all, yous guys).

Here in verse 10 the you is plural.

So the idea is that YOU have been filled in him. This is one of the many places where the scriptures clearly teach that Christianity does not make sense in isolation. All real believers must be knit into a particular church.

Have you ever heard—the Bible never commands Christians to be a part of a church? Nonsense. That is like saying, The Bible doesn't command us to breathe.

Why? Because we will die if we don't. You don't need to command the obvious or the basic.

To be faithful, Christians must be knit into a church.

But don't think that the church is the only place that Jesus can wield his authority. It is not as if he is a regional manager flexing around his people.

No, vs. 10

¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

He is the head of all rule and all authority. The Jesus who the WHOLE fullness of deity dwells—that Jesus with whom we can say we in him—that Jesus is not petty chieftain.

He is head of all powers and authority.

Jesus IS
Jesus FILLS

Now the flow of thought turns in earnest toward his people, with a surprising image and turn of phrase.

3. IN Jesus—

That is who we are. Look

Vs. 11,

¹¹ 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,

Okay. Welp. Who saw that coming?

It is not every day you go from talking about the deity of Christ and how he has all authority to—circumcision. Huh.

Why?

In the OT, circumcision was the sign from God that marked his people out as different from everyone else. It was a sign on all males that they belonged to God above.

But verse 11 is clear. The circumcision here is not a physical marker. It is a circumcision made ‘without hands.’ Now, God’s people are marked by their association with Jesus and that is something he does without our help.

To put it succinctly, we are circumcised through Christ’s circumcision—that is through his death. Christ’s circumcision is more than the cutting of a bit of flesh, but the sacrifice of his entire body.

So to say, “In him also you were circumcised...” is saying that when he died, we died. What marks now?

A physical marker, like circumcision?

No we are marked by his death.

Do you see that this is so much more than saying something like, “Jesus died for my sins.” That is wonderfully true, but there is more.

He died for us to be sure. But also.

“Christ’s death was so effectively for us that it was our death.” John Woodhouse

How close is our association with Jesus? We are so “IN HIM” that when he died on the cross we can say, we died too. I realize that sounds powerfully strange. The reason it is strange is because it is other-worldly. Normal language sometimes is simply unable to communicate the reality of our union with Jesus.

His death was our death.

That is not all.

Verse 12,

¹²having 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.

Look how closely this one with the fullness of deity—look how closely he associates with his people.

He died we died.

He was buried we were buried.

He was raised we were raised.

We might be able to say you simply can't understand who you are if you don't understand Jesus first. If you are a Christians that is the nature of your association.

There is one more move in the progression here. We go from—

Jesus IS GOD
Jesus FILLS US
IN Jesus

4. ALIVE with him—

Verse 13,

¹³ 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,

To be dead in your trespasses does not mean that your body is a corpse. The dead are those who have no relationship with God. In him is life—apart from him?

Death.

What did God do?

And you...God made alive

God made us alive on his own. By himself. God acted on you and God acted on me to make us alive.

We are not made alive by:

- Praying a prayer
- Raising a hand
- Signing a card
- Being baptized
- Going to church
- Believing rightly
- Getting Religion

But by God—

He has made us alive.

How do we know that God has made us alive?

And you...God made alive together with him

With who?

With him.

When by the wonder working power of God Jesus broke the bonds of death and walked out of that tomb—we can say we live because he lives.

We are not just alive untethered from anything—we are not just alive. We are alive with him. We are alive with Jesus.

We can have life because our many sins that caused us to be 'dead' are now fully and finally forgiven.

Vs. 14,

“having forgiven us all our trespasses,

But watch how he describes forgiveness.

Here is the HOW of forgiveness.

¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

What did he do?

He canceled the record of our sins.

Don't think for ONE moment that our sins are imaginary.

The guilt is real.
The shame is justified.

How real?

All of our many sins have been recorded and they make up what verse 14 calls a record of debt. It stands against us shouting—GUILTY. And we are guilty. Along with that guilt comes legal demands.

What are we seeing here?

There is a record of debt that stands against all of us, recorded in excruciating detail. Nothing was missed.

Every word spoken in anger.
Every thought baked in lust.
Every unspoken bitterness.
Every unsavory action.
Every vain imagination.

If you knew there was as document like that about you and all you have done—what would you want to do with it?

You would want to make sure that it would not fall into wrong hands. You would want to hide that document away in some dark corner somewhere that only you know about. But hiding it doesn't make it false.

Hiding the record does not make it false.

We need something better than a good hiding place.

And that is what Jesus did for us—

¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

He canceled the record of debt.

Get this.

The record of all our wrongdoing was destroyed along with Jesus on the cross. Tell me that this doesn't bring a bit of sweetness to the death of Jesus Christ. All the evidence gathered that would ensure your guilt was destroyed.

The payment of your sins was put to Jesus. AND the record of those same sins are completely obliterated. The record of your wrongs are gone. Justice demands that we die—but Jesus died in our place.

And all the evidence against us has been destroyed. This does not mean that somehow our sins were magically turned into NOT sins. No, they were real. They ARE real.

But the record of them is gone.

What is wiped away is NOT your sins but the record of your sins. Do you see the difference? It is NOT that you never sinned. It is that all record of your sins have been wiped away.

Canceled.

How canceled?

So Canceled.

So canceled that no power in the universe can find record of your wrongs.

He disarmed our enemies.

¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

He disarmed Satan.

Do you know what Satan means? It means accuser. His primary weapon against us is guilt for real wrong we have done.

Satan is the accuser of the brothers and sisters. He is able to fashion all manner of accusatory fiery darts

and zing them at you and at me. Those darts hurt, but can they do lasting damage?

No.

¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

And our record of wrongs is canceled. He may hurl the accusations in our direction but he is the only one. The Lord never does that. He has canceled our debt.

It is not as if God pretends that you did nothing wrong. It goes deeper than that. We all know we are sinners, Jesus had to die. No, God knows we did wrong he just destroyed the evidence when he destroyed Jesus.

There is no evidence.

He canceled your sins.

How much better is the cancelation of your sins than the hiding or covering up the record of your sins? Where could you hide the record of guilt, your record of wrongdoing from God? (With apologies to Psalm 139),

- If you hid the record in the heavens—he could find them there.
- If you took the wings of the morning to hide them in the uttermost parts of the seas—he could find them there.

- If you covered the record with darkness—darkness is not dark to him—he could see them.
- If you could charter a ship and zoom off to deposit the record in distant galaxies—he could find them there.
- If you could burrow deep in a mountain and hide the record under tons of rock—he could find it there.
- If you could commission a legion of angels with flaming swords to watch over your record of wrongs—they could do no good against him.
- If you could hide the record in the abode of the dead—he could find them there.

Better than hiding our wrongs.

He knew them all and canceled them once and for all. Forever. When Jesus cried, “It is finished.” We know he was talking about his life, but also the record of our sins.

When God destroyed Jesus he destroyed the record of your wrongs.

How can we have FOMO when we have a savior like that? How can we miss out when we have been so forcefully forgiven like that?

What hamster wheel are you on?

Better health
 Right friends
 Enough money
 Good education
 Appropriate Respect

Happy Family

You will miss out if you live for those things.

- What do we really miss out on when we have Jesus?

NOTHING

If he canceled the record of our debts—why do we record and keep that of others?

We have no right. This is not to ignore that you could have been sinned against greatly. But it is to say if you are have had the record of wrongs destroyed against you—you must destroy it with the people in your life.

PRAY

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rm. 15:5-6