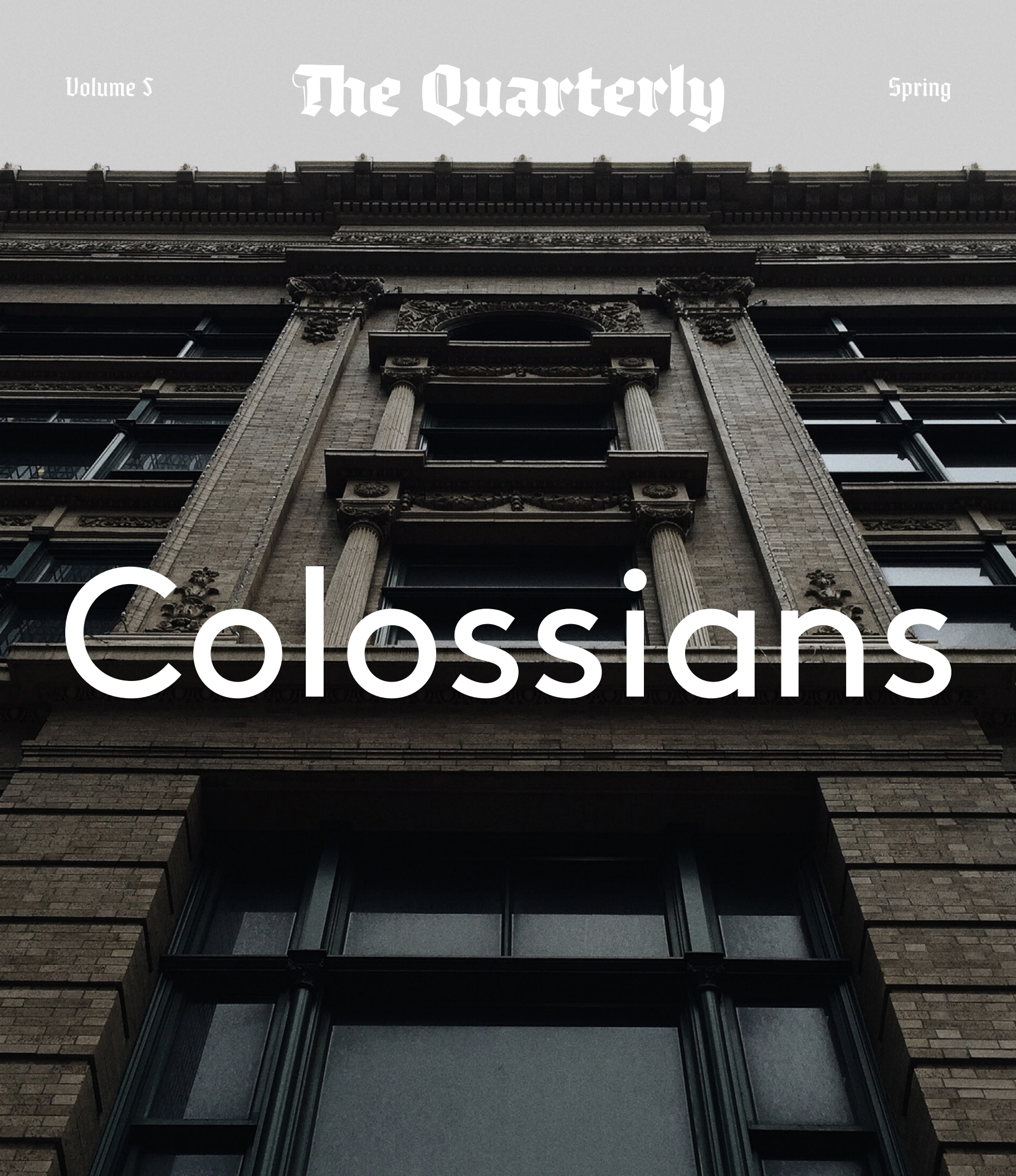


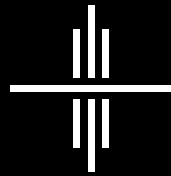
Volume 5

The Quarterly

Spring

Colossians





Cities Church

The Quarterly





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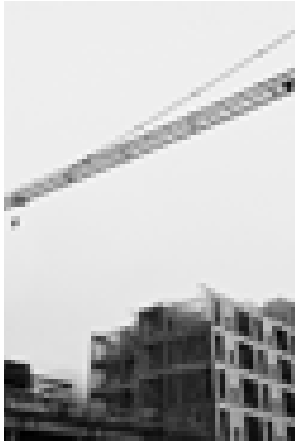


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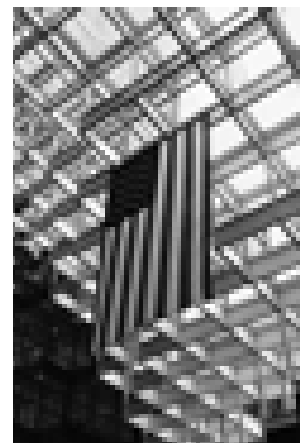
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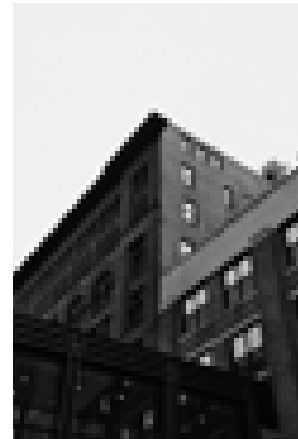
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Jonathan Parnell

**THE
ESSENTIALS
OF
CITIES
CHURCH**



When Jesus speaks we listen.

That makes sense, right? Jesus is the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given (Matthew 28:18). Jesus is the one of whom it will be said, forever, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12). He’s the one to whom every knee will bow (Philippians 2:10) — the one by whom all the tribes of the earth will wail (Revelation 1:7), and from whom the fury of God’s wrath will be executed (Revelation 19:15).

Jesus has that kind of supremacy — so what he says matters.

And beyond that, we’ve been united to Jesus by faith (Romans 6:5), made alive in him by grace (Ephesians 2:4–5), counted righteous in him because of his work (Galatians 2:16). Jesus, in all of his supremacy, is also our shepherd — so we know his voice (John 10:27).

Therefore, by virtue of his power and grace, because he is the Sovereign and our Savior, when he tells his church to make disciples of all nations, we really want to do that.

What Is a Disciple?

Jesus commissions us to “go” — because of his authority — “and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20).

This raises a fundamental question, though — one that even takes priority over the how-to’s of discipleship. *What does it actually mean to be a “disciple” of Jesus?* If we are going to

make disciples, we need to know what that is.

The standard definition of “disciple” (noun) is someone who adheres to the teachings of another. It is a follower or a learner. It refers to someone who takes up the ways of someone else. Applied to Jesus, a disciple is someone who learns from him to live like him — someone who, because of God’s awakening grace, conforms his or her words and ways to the words and ways of Jesus. Or, you might say, as others have put it in the past, disciples of Jesus are themselves “little Christs” (Acts 26:28; 2 Corinthians 1:21).

The four Gospels give us the definitive portrait of Jesus in his life on earth, and if we really want to know what it means to be his disciple, the Gospels are likely where we start. In particular, John’s Gospel shows us three complementary perspectives on what it means to follow Jesus, each patterned after Jesus himself. Building off of John’s profile, we could say that a disciple of Jesus is a worshiper, a servant, and a witness.

1. Disciple Means Worshiper

Most fundamentally, to follow Jesus means to worship him exclusively. This is at the heart of Jesus’s ministry on earth. As he told the woman at the well, the Father is seeking true worshipers — not faux worshipers, but true worshipers — those who worship him in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24). Which means, as it did in her case, we shouldn’t be so quick to change the subject. If we will follow Jesus, we must worship God — through Jesus, because he is our Mediator (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5), and Jesus himself, because he is God (John 10:30; 20:28–29).

This is the fundamental perspective of a disciple because it is more ultimate than anything else we are or do, and most distinctive in our context. As far as ultimate, worshipping Jesus — gladly reflecting back to him the radiance of his worth — is the greatest act for any creature. As far as context, nothing will irritate our pluralistic society more than being an exclusive worshiper of Jesus. Lots of people are cool with Jesus (at least their notion of him), and even following the “ways” of Jesus, when it leaves out the exclusivity part. Jesus the Moral Teacher, the Nice Guy, the Judge-Not-Lest-You-Be-Judged Motivational Speaker — that Jesus is everybody’s homeboy. But that is not the real Jesus. That’s a manmade figure — a far cry from the portrait Jesus gives of himself.

To follow Jesus, to be his disciple, doesn’t mean community involvement and the veneer of tolerance. It means, mainly, first and central, to worship him — with joy at the heart. Making disciples of Jesus means gathering his worshipers.

2. Disciple Means Servant

John shows another picture of the Jesus we’re to worship, and this time he is kneeling before his disciples to wash their feet (John 13:5). I know, it doesn’t sound right, especially when we think of him as the object of our exclusive praise. It didn’t sound right to Peter either, until Jesus said, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (John 13:8). But Jesus is a servant. He came to earth not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as the rescue for sinners (Mark 10:45).

And as a servant, Jesus says of his disciples, to his disciples, “If I then,

your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). In one sense, the posture of servant should characterize Jesus's disciples on all fronts. But in another sense, being a servant like Jesus has a particular focus on disciples serving disciples. It's a family thing. "Let us do good to everyone," Paul said, "and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

This one-another angle is where Jesus takes us in giving "a new commandment," just after he washed the Twelve's feet: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34; 1 John 3:23). In fact, it is this love that disciples have for one another that identifies us as disciples of Jesus to a watching world (John 13:35), and even assures us of saving faith (1 John 3:14).

To be a disciple of Jesus means to serve like him. It means to serve, primarily, by looking at your brothers and sisters and going low in acts of love, even when it's an inconvenience to yourself, even when it flip-flops the world's social order and expectations. Making disciples of Jesus means making servants who love one another.

3. Disciple Means Missionary

John gives us another helpful picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This time it comes in the commission of Jesus, when he says of his disciples, to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21; John 17:18). This means that Jesus's disciples are on a mission. It means, in the broadest

sense, that they are missionaries, that they are envisioned and empowered to step into this world (not of it, but sent into it) as his witnesses (Acts 1:8).

Jesus was sent for a purpose — to reveal God and redeem sinners (John 1:14, 12) — and he set his face like flint to see it accomplished (Luke 9:51; Isaiah 50:7). We too, as his disciples, filled by his Spirit, are sent for a purpose — to tell his good news (Romans 10:14-17).

To be a disciple of Jesus means to point people to him. It means to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love so that others would know him and worship him. It means, in other words, that we gladly seek more worshipers-servants-missionaries. Which is to say, a disciple of Jesus makes disciples of Jesus, as Jesus tells us to (Matthew 28:18-20). And, of course, when Jesus speaks we listen.

Our Three Essentials

And that means that we, as his church, as disciples of Jesus united together in the gospel, really *really* care about three things. These three things come from our mission to make disciples, getting at the heart of what a disciple is. We call them our essentials.

We worship Jesus.

We serve one another.

We seek the good of the Cities.

David Mathis

**No Reality
Without Jesus:
An Introduction to
the Cosmic Christ
of Colossians 1**

Colossians 1



“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to him all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” –Colossians 1:15–20

The first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Colossians is simply one of the most remarkable sections of text ever written. In 29 verses, comprised of just over 600 words in English, Paul teaches us about the centrality of the gospel for all the

Christian life (verses 5–6), how to pray for fellow Christians (verses 9–12), what is the essence of perseverance in the faith (verse 23), how Christian sufferings magnify Christ (verse 24), that the long-held mystery of the ages is now revealed in Jesus (verse 26), and the goal of Christian ministry (verse 28) and the source of Christian energy (verse 29).

At the very heart of this dense, life-transforming chapter, we find verses 15–20 holding it all together. Perhaps no six consecutive verses in all the Bible are more important for a distinctly Christian worldview than Colossians 1:15–20. Steep your soul with me in these six verses, and get just a glimpse of the explosive, all-encompassing, shockingly Christ-centered view of all reality and redemption here. We will see the magnitude and sweetness of the

risen Christ who not only can keep our souls surviving, but satisfy our souls forever.

There are two main sections to this text: Jesus's relationship to creation in verses 15–17, and then to “new creation,” or redemption, in verses 18–20.

Jesus and All Creation (verses 15–17)

By “creation,” I mean all things, all of the universe, every single thing that ever came into existence, big and small—all material substance from the greatest galaxy to the smallest subatomic particle. Verse 16 defines all things as things “in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things.” And verses 15–17 claim that all creation is 1) in him, 2) through him, and 3) for him.

1. In Him

First, verse 16 says, “*In him* all things were created.” Jesus Christ is the sphere, so to speak, or location or setting or environment, in which all reality exists. There is nothing that has ever existed or will ever exist that is not *in him*. No reality came into being or exists apart from him or outside of him. Nothing is beyond his reach and control.

An eternity before creation existed, Jesus Christ was there. And when God the Father created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, God the Son was not just a bystander. All creation came into being *in him*. Without Jesus, the universe never would have existed. Only with his eternal divine Son at his side, and the God-man in mind as the highest point of history, did God the Father launch into the act of creation. Everything was created in view of Christ. And when the Father created, he created in the Son.

Add to that verse 17: “*In him* all things hold together.” After creation, Jesus did not stand idly by, waiting around to eventually come to earth at the first Christmas. Just as all things were created in him, also all things have held together in him. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus “upholds the universe by the word of his power.” Every single moment the universe has existed has depended fully on Jesus Christ. All creation came into being in him and has held together in him.

2. Through Him

Second, “All things have been created *through him*” (verse 16). Jesus is not only the ultimate reality in which all derivative reality exists; he is also the *agent* (or instrument) through which all things have been created. All that exists is not only in him, but also *through him*. He is actively involved in the smallest of details. Everything that exists and comes to pass happens through his agency.

God the Father would not have created the world were it not for the Son. Creation is the overflow of the Father's infinite joy in his Son. Which leads to all things being *for him*.

3. For Him

Third, “All things have been created *for him*” (verse 16). This is perhaps the most stunning claim of all. Not only is the living Person of Jesus Christ the sphere in which and the agent through which all things exist, but he also is the *goal* for which all things exist. This is staggering. In some way, shape, or form, every molecule and every mammal exists to magnify Jesus Christ. All creation is ultimately about him. It's all designed for his glory.

Ponder the relationship between Jesus and all creation being in him, through him, and for him. Have you ever had a window seat on a plane on a clear day without a cloud in the sky? I remember one flight in particular about ten years ago from Greenville-Spartanburg to Atlanta en route to Minneapolis two days after Christmas. As I looked out the plane window, I saw mountain after mountain after mountain. Colossians 1 came to mind, and I thought, “All this—in, through, and for him. And this is nothing compared to the whole Appalachian chain and whole of the continent of North America and the whole of the earth which is just a tiny little planet, dwarfed by the size of Jupiter, not to mention the sun, in a tiny little solar system located in the massive Milky Way galaxy which is only one of many galaxies in an ever-expanding universe that is so big our minds can't even begin to fathom it. And all that is *in Jesus Christ, and through him, and for him.*”

But it doesn't stop here. Jesus is not just mighty over all his creation; he is also merciful toward his people, his church, dying for us and drawing nearer to us than our dearest and deepest earthly friend. He is not only in control, but he is also compassionate. That's the second half of the passage in verses 18–20.

Jesus and All “New Creation” (verses 18–20)

By “new creation,” I mean all salvation, all redemption and reconciliation to God, every ounce of restoration and healing, every one who is born again and everything that those who are born again will enjoy for all eternity. And verses 18–20 state that all new creation is also in him, through him, and for him.

1. In Him

First, verse 19: “*In him* all the fullness was well-pleased to dwell.” Just as only God could create, so also only God—“the fullness”—could re-create. Only God himself could overcome our relationship-severing sin and bring us back into relationship with him. No mere human could span the infinite chasm that humanity’s sin cleaved.

But Jesus is no mere human. Yes, he is gloriously fully human, and he’s infinitely more. He’s also fully God. “*All the fullness of deity dwells bodily in him*” (Colossians 2:9) Note the connection with “the fullness” in verse 19: “*In him all the fullness was well-pleased to dwell.*”

Just as Jesus was the reality in which all created reality came into existence, he also is the reality in which all new creation, all redemption, all reconciliation happens. In him all mercy and grace and peace and joy flow to those who believe. God the Father did not design the gospel apart from Jesus and then convince him to get on board with the plan. Jesus is the Co-Creator of new creation. All new creation is *in him*.

2. Through Him

Second, verse 19: “All the fullness was pleased . . . *through him* to reconcile all things.” Jesus Christ is not only the sphere in which all new creation happens; he’s also the agent (or instru-ment) of new creation. New creation doesn’t just occur in him, but also *through him*. He didn’t just plan new creation, but he also accomplished new creation. The eternal Word himself is the one who came to earth, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life for more than three decades, died a perfect death in place of his people, and rose to a perfect resurrection that was God the Father’s irrevocable stamp of approval on the sufficiency of his sacrifice for ac-complishing new creation.

And right now at this very moment, the risen Christ is seated visibly at the right hand of the invisible God

(verse 15), interceding for us by his mere existence. Right now. Jesus is there at this very moment in time. He’s not just a theological concept or a doctrinal idea. As Pastor Jonathan loves to say, Jesus is real. This is ultimate reality.

3. For Him

Third, all new creation is for him. Verse 19: “All the fullness was pleased . . . to reconcile all things *for him*.” New creation is not just in Jesus and through Jesus, but it’s also for him. He’s not just the sphere and agent of new creation, but he’s also the *goal* of new creation.

New creation is for him in two senses: 1) for his glory and 2) for him entering into a relationship with his people. The *goal* of new creation is the glory of Jesus Christ in his people’s unbounded enjoyment of being in relationship with him.

All creation and all new creation, and all the Bible and every ounce of Bible study, are for Jesus Christ being glorified in the his people’s enjoyment of him. This enjoyment of him happens in relationship to him. Jesus is a living Person to be known, and as Paul writes in Philippians 3:8, we will experience “the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” as we get to know him more.

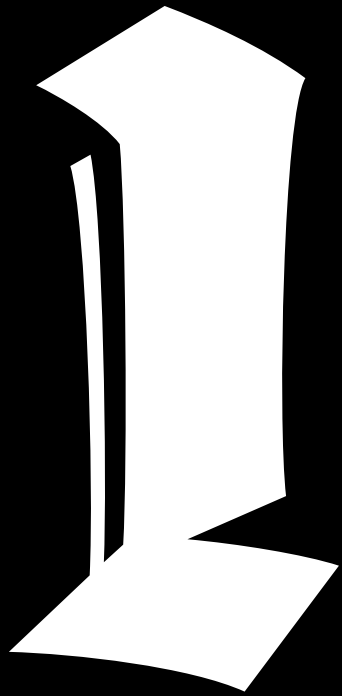
How amazing to ponder the fact that all things—all created substance, all the universe—is in Jesus and through Jesus and for Jesus. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Every single second of history, every square inch of real estate, every volt of energy, every revolution of every engine, every letter in every word on every page in every book since Gutenberg and before exists in some way, shape, or form in him, through him, and for his glory.

But he’s not just Creator. He’s also Redeemer. In the Person of Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Jesus to reconcile to Jesus all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

There is none of God for us to know without Jesus. There would be no reality without Jesus. We would not exist without Jesus. We would have no salvation without him. Everything we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch, and every spiritual pleasure we enjoy, now and forever, is in, through, and for the God-man, Jesus Christ.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 1:1-2

“Paul’s letter to the Colossians has had an impact on Christian theology and practice out of proportion with its size. Christian thinkers since the patristic period [early Christian writers designated as the Church fathers] have turned to its teaching about Jesus’ role in creation and his preeminence over the church to formulate their Christology. Paul’s warnings about people who insist on following certain kinds of rules as basic to spiritual growth have been cited by theologians and laypeople alike to hold up the principle of Christian liberty. And the paraenetic section [meaning advice, counsel] of the letter, though brief, is typified by a collection of broad ethical principles that have provided significant guidance for believers seeking to translate their commitment to the Lord Jesus into practice.” –Doug Moo

1. Read the whole letter of Colossians. Time yourself. How many times do you think you could read this letter while doing this 14 week study? What verses of this letter confuse you the most and would like to understand better?
2. Read the introduction to Colossians from a Study Bible. Who are these Colossians, how did this church form, and why is Paul writing to them?
3. What issues exist in this church that Paul is going to address? Do you see any of these issues in your local church? Have you ever seen these issues?
4. 1:1. How does Paul identify himself? What does it mean that Paul is an apostle? In what ways does that impact your level of responsibility to pay close attention to what Paul says in this letter?
5. 1:2. Given what you know of the context of Colossians after reading the introduction in a Study Bible, what could have Paul said to these Colossians in the salutation? Why is “grace” and “peace” such a powerful way to address these Colossians? How does this differ from what the world would say to these believers?

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 1:3-8

“The ancient city of Colossae (discovered in AD 1835) was situated in Phrygia on the southern bank of the river Lycus and its fertile valley produced large crops of figs and olives. The site of Colossae is now deserted, but the town of Honaz lies three miles to the southeast. Colossae lay on the early main road from Ephesus and Sardis to the Euphrates. Its commercial significance was due to its wool industry. Later the city declined considerably in importance so that in Roman times, two generations before Paul, it was a small town. Colossae had been surpassed by Laodicea, ten miles to the west, and Hierapolis, twelve miles to the northwest, both in the same Lycus valley. These were mentioned by the apostle as places where Christians were to be found in close connection with those at Colossae (Col 2:1; 4:13, 15, 16).” –Peter O’Brien

1. How would you sum up and describe Paul’s perspective of this church? What is Paul’s perception of them?
2. 1:3-5. What characteristics and attitudes do the Colossian believers exhibit? How does this compare to your demeanor and attitude?
3. 1:5-6. What do you learn about this gospel? What impact does it have on people’s lives?
4. What do we learn/know about Epaphras? See Colossians 4:12 and Philemon 1:23. What do you like about this guy?
5. Reread 1:1-8. What is one thing you see or have learned in this section that you want to hold onto in your heart as you begin this study? Write a prayer that you have for yourself as we walk through the book of Colossians.

Day 3

Study Titus 1:1-3

Sermon Notes

February 7, 2016





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CONVENT
MANHATTAN
HOTEL

15

Megan Mathis

Hospitality: Loving Strangers through Filling Stomachs





“In a progressively post-Christian society, the importance of hospitality as an evangelistic asset is growing rapidly. Increasingly, the most strategic turf on which to engage the unbelieving with the good news of Jesus is the turf of our own homes.” –Pastor David

Hospitality is one of our family values. We seek to honor God and serve people with our home and resources. We have a pretty crazy home. We have many that come and go. They see our messes, witness our tensions, and consume my sub-par cooking. In my head, I long for Pinterest perfection each time I swing that door open. In my heart, I know it’s good just to have them at my table. God will show up if I lay my insecurities, expectations, and ideologies aside.

Hospitality is extremely important and enjoyable for us. And hospitality is extremely stressful and burdensome for us. Sounds like life, right? It is my desire to use these four short articles on hospitality to encourage you to invite others in your home. I hope to do some of the work for you by providing you with a few tips and then an easy menu plan all ready to go. If hospitality really is the key to evangelism in the twenty-first century, as Steve Childers suggests, shouldn’t we all be practicing it often?

First, a few quick thoughts on hospitality. I often have to remind myself of these truths and instructions:

1. People love to be fed.

They really don’t care what it is. I love food and enjoy good food and new flavors. But if somebody else is preparing it for me, a can of soup or frozen pizza tastes just as good as that gourmet meal I prepared for myself the night before.

2. A messy house can bless people.

As a household with young children, our home is never in perfect order. This is hard for me. But I started to realize that when I walk into somebody else’s house, and it is a little messy, I actually feel really comfortable. And it gives me a sense of security and camaraderie.

3. Find the right number of people for you.

We have found that two other couples/families is a good balance between awkward pressure of too few people and too many people to have meaningful conversation.

4. Don’t feel bad about asking people to contribute.

Have them bring the salad, beverages, dessert, or a side. Often people will ask what they can bring. Take them up on the offer. Or if they don’t offer, it’s typically very little hassle to just bring one or two items, when someone else is providing the home and main course.

5. Work hospitality into you budget.

Hosting extra people can be expensive. You can pay for one meal what you may feed your family for all week. We have learned not to try to work having people over for meals into our family’s eating budget. Rather, we’ve created a new budget line and draw from there for times we are feeding others. Also, consider getting paper products for the meal to save from a heavy dishwashing load afterwards.

With this as our starting point, I am providing you with four of my go-to menus for having people over or bringing them dinner. Most of these recipes are from others who made them for me. They also vary in difficulty and expense. I pray over these dinner plans that they bless you as you prepare your homes, tables, and hearts to love and minister not only to fellow believers, but also those that do not worship Jesus . . . yet. After all, “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers” — not just strangers to your home, but also strangers to Jesus.

Megan Mathis



Hospitality Meal



February

Chili

One of my favorite meals to make for others is chili. It is versatile, quick, and relatively inexpensive. You can serve it with chips, avocado, cornbread, bacon, sour cream, and/or cheese. With chili, I will often put out an appetizer of cheese and crackers: Ritz and cheddar for some, goat cheese with blueberry jam and gluten-free crackers for others. For dessert, we often do Chocolate Chess Pie.

I love this recipe because you prepare it the night before and let it cook all day. This recipe is from Erin Horn and serves 4–6 adults.

Mix everything together in a crockpot. It is best when refrigerated in the crockpot overnight, then cooked for 6–7 hours on low-heat the next day.

1–1.5 lb. hamburger
(browned w/garlic salt)
2 cans chili beans w/ sauce
1 can kidney beans, drained
1 large can whole, peeled
tomatoes or diced tomatoes
1 green pepper, chopped
1 red onion, chopped
2–3 stalks of celery, chopped
1 tablespoon chili powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
¾ cup brown sugar

Chocolate Chess Pie

Place pie crust in pie pan and poke holes in (use a fork to score) the bottom. Melt butter and chocolate together, either by putting it in the microwave for small intervals or in a double boiler (a metal bowl set over a pan of boiling water). Mix in the remaining ingredients and bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Let cool and top with Cool Whip. Serve with coffee.

1 pie crust, unbaked
1 stick of butter
2 oz. semi-sweet chocolate
squares
1 cup of sugar
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
A dash of salt
Cool Whip on top







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 1:9-14

1. Read Colossians 1:9. What does it mean to be “filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding?”
2. How does your statement from above aid in the call of verse 10 to “walk in a manner worth of the Lord?”
3. In addition to verse 11, read Ephesians 4:16 and explain how these two verses fit and expand on each other.
4. In what way(s) has God qualified Christians to “share in the inheritance of the saints in light?”
5. What were we saved from in the “domain of darkness” and what are we given in the kingdom of Jesus?

Day 2

Questions on 2 Peter 1:3-15

1. Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. To what does the knowledge of God lead us? What do we enjoy as a result?
2. Why is their corruption in the world? How does the text from Colossians 1:13-14 give us hope for this condition?
3. How does the string of supplements listed in verse 5 help us live more Christ-centered lives?
4. What is the consequence of lacking the qualities listed in verse 5?
5. After reading what Peter says in verses 12 to 15, how can you help your fellow Christians with their sanctification?

Day 3

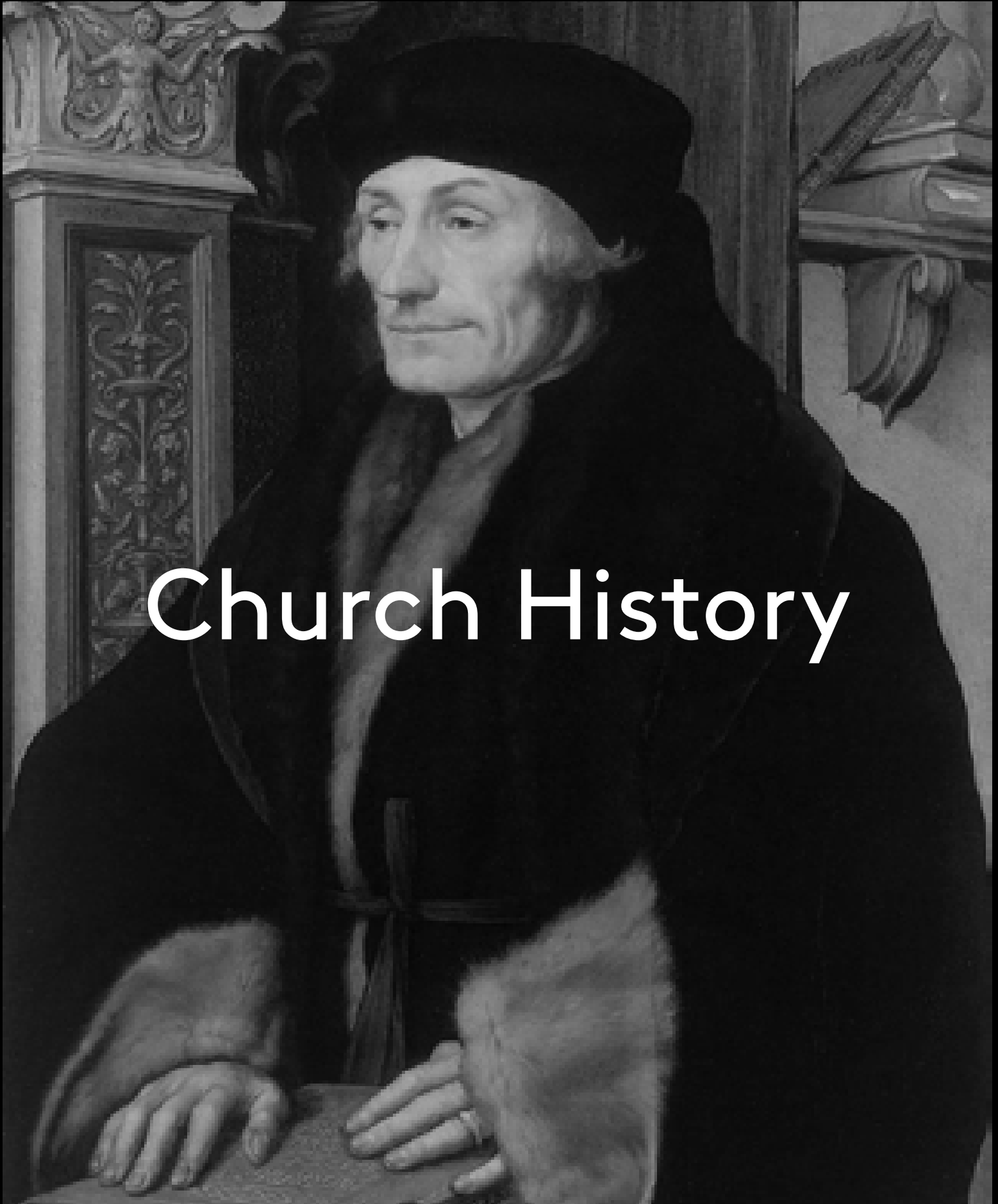
Study Ephesians 1:3-14

Sermon Notes

February 14, 2016









Feb 7, 1945

On February 7, 1945, theologian Deitrich Bonhoeffer was transferred to the Buchenwald, a Nazi concentration camp, where he would die three months later. Bonhoeffer aided Jews in Germany during World War II and even joined the plot to kill Hitler.



Feb 1, 1516

In 1516, Erasmus released his translation of the New Testament. His translation included notes that pointed out incorrect ways the text had been interpreted before. His works served as the fuel for Martin Luther and other reformers. Erasmus had previously written a satirical book called "The Praise of Folly" which mocked Christian Europe.



Feb 18, 1678

February 18, 1678 saw the publication of John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." The book concerns the adventures of a man named Christian. Since its publication that book has always been in print.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 1:15-17

Find some space and write out verses 15-20. Group them together as follows: Stanza #1 is vv.15-16; a transitional group is vv.17-18a; and the last group is vv.18b-20. This is one way to see the progression that Paul may have had in mind. Verse 15 starts with “He is” which lines up with “He is” in 18b. The use of the phrase “firstborn” lines up with each other. Verses 17-18a has in itself in the Greek some unique language that sets it up as its own, namely the use of a unique way of saying “he is” in v.17 and “he is” in v.18a. Credit goes to Doug Moo for laying this out.

1. Define “image”. What does it mean that Jesus is the image of God? See John 1:18 and Hebrews 1:3.
2. What is a firstborn? What does it mean for Jesus to be the firstborn of creation?
3. Describe the extent of what Jesus created. See Genesis 1:1-2, 26-28; John 1:1-3, 14.
4. In Jesus all things are held together. How does that mesh or align with your attitude and perspective on daily life?
5. Which item in these verses do you struggle with the most to believe? Which one is most comforting to you when you apply it?

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 1:18-20

“The word reconcile is one of the most significant and descriptive terms in all of Scripture. It is one of five key words used in the New Testament to describe the richness of salvation in Christ, along with justification, redemption, forgiveness, and adoption. The verb “to reconcile” means to change or exchange. Its New Testament usage speaks of a change in a relationship.” –John MacArthur

1. It is often said that Jesus is the one who is ultimately in charge of the church and Jesus is above the pastors and the congregation. We see that in verse 17. How would you explain this concept that Jesus is really the one who is in charge of the church? How does this work? See Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 1:22-23.
2. If we line up phrases as noted above, then “He is the beginning” lines up with “He is the image of the invisible God”. Read Romans 5:12-21. Why is it significant for us to identify with Jesus as our beginning and not Adam?
3. “The firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” lines up with “the firstborn of all creation”. Why did Jesus have to be the first to rise from the dead? See Acts 26:22-23, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, and Revelation 1:4-7.
4. “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things” lines up with “For by him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him”. Explain the significance of what we received by Jesus possessing the fullness of God. See John 1:14-18.
5. Take a look at this phrase “making peace by the blood of his cross”. How does it work that Jesus can make peace through a violent death?

Day 3

Study 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

Sermon Notes

February 21, 2016





Mike Schumann's Story

One of my earliest childhood memories is watching my mother and father sign divorce papers at our kitchen table. That moment changed my life forever because it planted a seed of pain that grew into the roots of dejection that seemed to fill my heart from that moment on. My father rarely came back to visit us during our childhood. He pretty much stopped seeing us at all by the time I entered middle school. This neglect produced in me deeper feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and illegitimacy.

Up to that point in my life, our family had gone from being nominally Catholic to religiously ambiguous. Because my spiritual life was lacking, I was left grasping for more concrete ways of proving my self-worth. Like so many teenage boys, I turned to sports as my hope for purpose and praise. This path, though rewarding at times, was by and large littered with disappointments. I

often felt like a failure; I was not good enough for my father and not good enough for my coaches.

As time progressed my family began to experience many more problems. As the middle child, I naturally assumed responsibility for our family's health or lack thereof. Thus, our family's downward spiral pointed to my inadequacies and failings as a son and a brother. Where was my hope in such a time? Though I tried so hard, I found that I was repeatedly proven to be unable to be my own savior, let alone that of my family.

As God would have it, a friend of ours was noting our plight and invited us to attend her church. Not only had it been a long time since I had been to church, but I had never even attended a non-Catholic service before. I was really nervous as we drove into the church parking lot. Honestly, I felt so out of place that I just wanted to turn around and run the other way.

Upon opening the doors to this Lutheran church, however, I was immediately captivated by a sense of life, joy, and peace in the hearts of the individuals that I met. As I sat in on the service, I was blown away by worship that seemed genuine and loving, both from the hearts of those on stage as well as those in the congregation. I grew in excitement as the pastor spoke from the Bible with vigor and urgency, talking about this God whom he seemed to know so well.

I don't remember exactly when, but early on in attending this church I was told about the hope that sinners have in Christ Jesus. As I grew in the knowledge of the Bible, attended youth group, and eventually moved on to college, I began to have eyes to see my own sin and need for a savior. I realized that my works could never earn a place before God and that only by the blood of Jesus could I appear before him as redeemed.

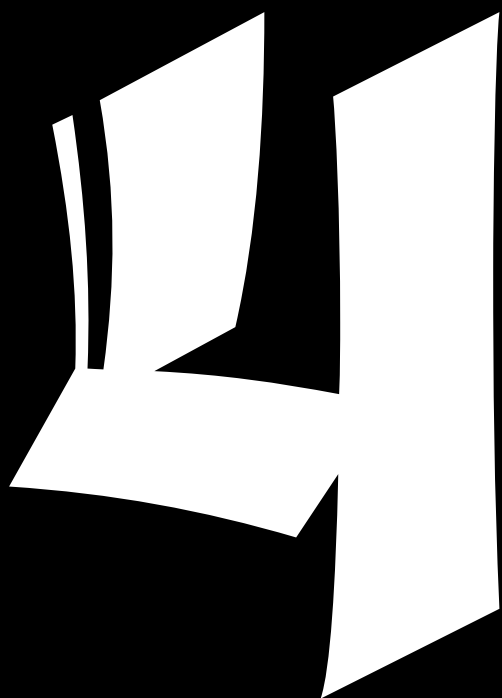
I can only describe this feeling as the most comforting assurance I have ever known. The tireless hours of effort and toil that had characterized all of my life had finally come to an end. I had been freed from self-slavery, had the heavy burden of sin lifted, experienced the confession of personal weakness and failure, and plunged deep into the love of the Father who has promised to love me despite me. God was suddenly no longer distant or ambiguous but present and loving. I was now able to see him as my true father, the one who would never leave me or condemn me despite my failures.

It has been a decade since my conversion; ten years mixed with joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure. I have grown to know Jesus as my best friend, my good shepherd, my conquering king. All of my hope is in him, and there is no where I would rather be than in his arms. I still struggle

with sin and times of doubt. I am still drenched in selfishness and reek of pride. Yet my savior is better. He has promised to continue his work in me and present me before the Father as pure and spotless. I love him. He has been so good to me. I long for you to know him too and would love to share more about his great grace to you.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 1:21-23

“Not only did Jesus take on a true human body, but his resurrection was a physical resurrection, a resurrection of the body.” –John Frame

1. Read Colossians 1:21. What does it mean that to be “alienated and hostile in mind?”
2. What does Romans 1:21-23 add to your understanding of being “alienated and hostile in mind?”
3. What is the reconciliation that Paul is referencing in verse 22? How does that reconciliation through Christ’s death happen?
4. Compare what Paul says in verse 23 to what Jesus says in Matthew 7:24-27. What’s the message at the heart of both of these passages?
5. How do Christians keep from “shifting from the hope of the gospel?”

Day 2

Questions on Philippians 2-11

1. In verse 3, Paul writes that he “put[s] no confidence in the flesh.” What does he mean by this statement?
2. If Paul does not gain his confidence through flesh, from where does he get it? How can he make that claim?
3. Paul writes, in verse 7, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.” What is the gain was Paul referring to? Why does he count he consider them a loss?
4. How do verses 2-11 relate to relate to the reconciliation Paul discusses in Colossians 1:22?
5. In what ways can you apply Paul’s message to your daily life?

Day 3

Study 1 John 4:8-10

Sermon Notes

February 28, 2016



KING

Amelia Schumann's Story

I grew up in a home with wonderful Christian parents. At age 4, I understood the gospel well enough to desire to be in heaven with Jesus one day and to ask him to forgive me for everything I had done wrong. Unfortunately, as I grew, I placed more stock in my reputation as a “good Christian girl” than in my identity as a forgiven daughter of God. For that reason, my story is not filled with “heinous” sins (at least, according to many people) which would require a dramatic conversion experience. That would have been unthinkable for me — not because I loved Jesus so much that I wanted to honor him in everything, but because I loved what others thought of me too much.

However, that is not to say that my life was not still filled with “heinous” sins — by *God’s* definition. My fear of man, which was greater than my fear of God, showed up in many ways. I have

one particular memory which still haunts me: In elementary school, I befriended a girl who had a physical disability. Eventually, my other friends hinted that it was not “cool” for me to hang out with that girl. So, I finally and slowly stopped making efforts to even acknowledge her.

This is just one of many of the ways in which my lust for the approval of other humans proved that I was not truly, or at least not fully, motivated by a passion for God and for the true joy that he gives us when we obey him. Even though I believe, at the time, that I was truly saved, I made choices that hindered my ability to enjoy God.

But when I was twelve years old, my family moved from Connecticut to Minnesota — partly to be with family; partly because my father had been diagnosed with a chronic health condition and was unable to work full-time. He began homeschooling my sisters and me while my moth-

er worked full-time, and everything as we had known it was turned upside-down. During this time, I lost contact with my friends in Connecticut and became involved in the youth program at our new church. Everything was so new, and I coped with the unfamiliarity by withdrawing in silence when in public. (And I mean, *silence*. I didn't make friends with people; people made friends with me).

But God was using that difficult season of change to bring about something for my good! He began opening my ears and my heart to understand that I really needed Jesus on a daily basis. To begin to see the depths of my sin. To be overwhelmed with gratitude for the gift of forgiveness and heaven that I did not deserve, yet Jesus died to give me. To allow myself to be challenged by the Bible — to the point where I began to de-

sire to tell complete strangers about what Jesus had done for me and could do for them.

I ended up applying to a solid, reformed Christian college and grew much in my knowledge of God while I was there. But again, my people-pleasing hunger reared its ugly head in a new way, and God revealed yet another aspect of my sinful heart that needed to be killed. I became so devoted to getting good grades that my devotion to God waned. I grew very dry spiritually, to the point where reading my Bible felt like a chore. I even became slightly depressed, as I realized that I could not get myself out of that pit. Yet God did not allow me to remain there; he humbled me through some difficult circumstances that opened my eyes to how little I really understood about God. He allowed me to experience deeper fear than I had ever known — every “what if” began to overtake my mind and heart, and I have

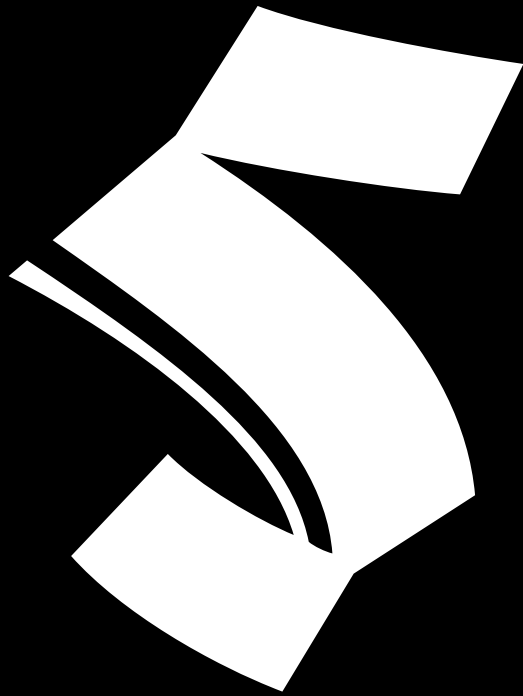
felt the emotions almost as strongly as if those terrifying “what ifs” were all coming true. For a long time I lived in constant dread of dying or losing a loved one. Now I recognize that my fear was a gift given to me as a result of God’s grace. Grace, because it drove me to thirst for the Bible, and for more of God. Grace, because it drove me to the end of myself and my idols, the things I have always clung to which I cannot keep. You see, when those “what if” questions pierced my heart like spears, I had to say, “well, even if ___, still I have hope that___.” Even if my loved ones are killed, I still have Jesus now and forever. Even if the bridge collapses beneath me, and I drown, I will be with Jesus. It is better to die *and be with Christ*, as the apostle Paul said.

I am finally beginning to understand that the wonderful things and people that God has blessed me with are meant to impress two deep truths

upon me. They fill me with joy, which helps me understand God's beauty and goodness and splendor; but they are also meant to fill me with longing, as I realize that even the best things in this world are tainted (and our enjoyment of them is tainted) by sin. Then I experience a deep longing for heaven, where I will one day be with Jesus forever in perfect joy that does not have that nagging thought, "but there's got to be more." And that longing for Jesus drives away the very fear that drove me to him.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 1:24-26

“Paul’s reference to himself as a “servant” of the gospel at the end of v.23 leads into this section, which focuses on the ministry of Paul... Three themes stand out. First, at the heart of the word of God that Paul proclaims is the “mystery”. With an emphasis entirely typical of Colossians, Paul defines this mystery christologically: “Christ in you” (1:27); “Christ” (2:2). Second, Paul highlights the extent to which his proclamation of the gospel involves suffering (1:24) and struggle (1:29; 2:1). Both of these themes are designed to encourage the Colossian Christians to withstand false teaching and maintain their adherence to the true gospel. Third, the Christological focus of God’s word and purpose provides theological motivation for “staying the course”, while the example of Paul’s sacrificial ministry on their behalf provides personal motivation toward the same end.” –Doug Moo

1. What are Paul’s “sufferings”? Why and how can Paul say that he can rejoice in his sufferings?
2. Describe what you know about Christ’s afflictions. How can Paul say that he is filling up what was lacking in Christ’s afflictions?
3. What is the implication for you that there is a way in which believers can fill up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions?
4. Describe Paul’s role in his day in the church. See Ephesians 3:7-13. What role do you play in your local church?
5. In what ways (or how) has the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ been revealed to us through the Bible? See Romans 16:25-27 and Hebrews 1:1-4.

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 1:27-29

“The usual way of taking this clause [v.27] is in terms of God wishing to make known the mystery to the saints. The verb ‘make known’ resumes the ‘revealed’ of v.26, while the recipients of this knowledge are ‘the saints’, i.e. Christians generally. The additional point being made in v.27 concerns the immense greatness of this mystery, the content of which is succinctly stated as ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory.’” –Peter O’Brien

1. Describe some of the things that God chose to do in these verses and in what ways is this counter intuitive?
2. Why is the gospel mysterious? What parts are clear to you from Scripture and which parts are still a mystery?
3. Why do people need to be taught and warned in order to grow or change in their relationship with God?
4. In 1:29 we see a powerful paradigm that is not natural for people. Describe the upset down paradigm that Paul uses to explain his daily work.
5. Who is the “everyone” in 1:28-29? What does it mean to proclaim, warn, and teach everyone? See Acts 20:31. How does “teaching” relate to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)?

Day 3

Study Ephesians 3:1-6

Sermon Notes

March 6, 2016





Josh Adams

Be Not Captives

Colossians 2



When Paul wrote his letter to the believers at Colossae he was speaking directly to them about issues they were facing. They were first century Christians that were living in a world that was radically changing around them because of our savior, Jesus Christ. What they knew, what they said, and how they behaved was in upheaval. As things in upheaval go, confusion abounds, intentions are twisted, and people stumble. In times like this people need someone to be a guiding hand, reminding them of the truth to which they have been saved. Colossae experienced it two thousand years ago and we experience it today. As with Colossians, we have Paul to give us the prodding to once again follow after our good shepherd, Jesus.

In Colossians 2, three main passages rise to the top and connect to form the message Paul is trying to convey. Paul

wants the Colossians to know they should not follow any false ideologies (2:8), they should not have tradition-based judgment cast upon them (2:16-17), and to remember they belong to Christ (2:20-22).

Verse 8: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to the human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ"

There is no doubt, whether in the ancient past of Colossae or in the modern times of the Twin Cities, that we will encounter thoughts, creeds, and assertions that seem good on the surface. The deceptive best of these ideas will be covered in convincing half-truths that allow for the idea to be easier to embrace. These ideas will be easy to attach

ourselves to but will eventually lead to a meandering path away from Christ.

The most convincing philosophies are those that draw upon things we once believed or we are tied to through tradition. These types of ideas evoke something deep inside us that can bypass any intellectual arguments we muster. Because of a past connection, our guard is let down and the hollow idea penetrates our lives, burrowing into us so it can take deeper root.

We need to constantly be on guard against these attacks. Paul tells us not to allow ourselves to be taken captive by these enemy philosophies. In order to keep ourselves from being taken in by false ideas we must find a strong defense in Christ. By knowing more of Christ, by living in loving obedience to him, by being faithful to our savior, we can better prepare ourselves for the eventual (and ongoing) assault that false philosophies wage against us.

Verses 16-17: "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."

Part of remaining strong in Christ is knowing the freedom that we have in him. An issue first century Christians like the Colossians dealt with was the tug-of-war between their new lives and the traditions of their old selves. Like our brothers and sisters from two thousand years ago, we face the same difficulties. We encounter those that believe that we, as Christians, must fall into specific classifications of behaviors, likes, and dislikes.

For the Colossians, they faced the difficulty of being told by some that they had to partake in their old traditions, despite knowing the freedom they were granted in Christ. For a moment, think about a Christian stereotype (we are all Republicans, we all have a special spot in our hearts for "Duck Dynasty," or we think drinking alcohol is a mortal sin) and whether your behavior has ever been impacted by it. Do you allow judgment to be passed on you for things that Christ freed you from on the cross?

Verses 20-22: "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations - 'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch'

(referring to things that all perish as they are used) - according to human precepts and teachings?"

Now it's time for the big question: If we know the truth of Christ, why do we still follow the path of the old life from which he saved us? I can't answer that question for you (I struggle answering it for myself). However, as Paul has laid out through all of Colossians 2, we have no reason to bow down before our old master(s).

Remember what Paul writes in verses 13-14, "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him [Jesus], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

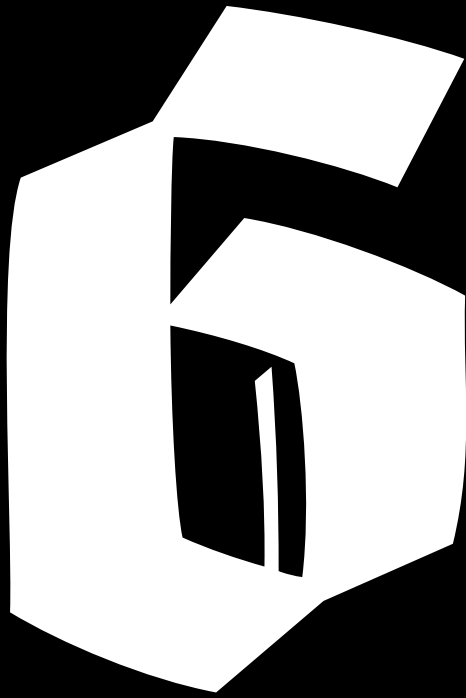
That truth that Paul wrote is not just for those in Colossae. That truth is as much for us as it is for those who bear the name of the letter. As Christians, we have been saved from the life of sin to which we were once bound. In those old lives we hid ourselves from the truth of Christ by distracting ourselves. We would take any little entertainment, stress, or life disruption and let it consume our attention. In our lives as servants to sin we were subject to the whims of our fleeting, destructive desires. That is not who we are now, though.

Through Christ, by Christ, and with Christ we are saved from the penalty of our sins because of his atonement for us on the cross. It is that atonement by which we have been freed from the shackles of worldly judgment. There is no reason why we need ever be captives of the philosophies of this world because we already have the truth! We have been forgiven and there is no need for us to continue messing around with dead-end ideas that only seek to bring us harm.

Know the truth of what you are in Christ. Know him for who you now live. Know that you are not captives of this world. Know that you are free in Christ.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 2:1-7

1. What can we learn from Paul's feelings for his fellow Christians who he has not met face-to-face?
2. How do Christians gain encouragement by "being knit together in love?"
3. How is Christ the "full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery?"
4. In what ways does 1 Corinthians 1:30 help you understand Colossians 2:2-3?
5. What are some "plausible arguments" against Christianity that may come up in conversations? How do you persevere through a situation like that?

Day 2

Questions on 1 Corinthians 2:6-13

1. Read verses 6 and 7. What is the wisdom that's being given? Why is this wisdom only given to the mature?
2. How does the Spirit allow believers to know God?
3. Based on verse 13, what way(s) does the Spirit to teach us?
4. How do verses 6-13 relate to what Jesus says to the disciples in John 16:7-11?
5. In what ways do verses 6-13 expand upon, and fit with, Colossians 2:1-7?

Day 3

Study 2 Timothy 4:3-5

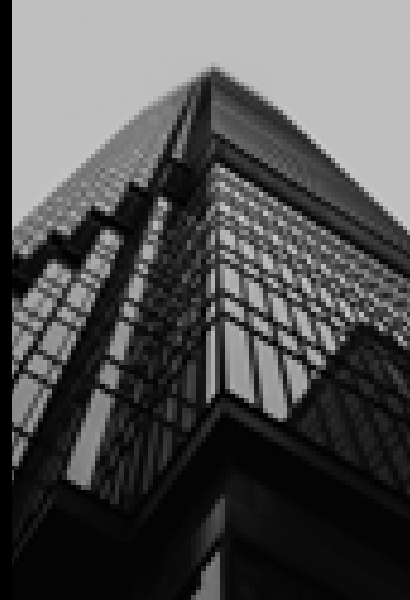
Sermon Notes

March 13, 2016





Megan Mathis



Hospitality Meal



March

Baked Potato Bar

One of the ways I love to feed people is by allowing them to construct their own food. I have done this by having them make their own personal pizza, build their own grilled cheese, top a baked potato, create their own omelet, rice bowls, etc. When you do this, it takes time because people will be creating their own food, but this can be a great informal time of getting to know each other and casual conversation. If you do this, ask each guest to bring a small part of the meal by providing a topping or component (assign it or leave it up to them).

Here, I will list what I would put out for a baked-potato bar. There are many more components you could add to make it your own, but this is a place to start. If you do this, it is fun to put “idea cards” out to help people get started with their creations. Give them fun names too (like The Classic, The Spicy, The Vegetarian, etc.)

Purchase 1.5 potatoes for each person you are expecting. Scrub them and bake them just prior to your guests arriving. They can be kept wrapped in foil in a warm oven or in a cooler to stay warm. Place potatoes in a 400-degree oven for 45–60 minutes. They are done when they are tender when pierced with a fork.

With the baked-potato bar, their creations are going to be the main deal. Serve an easy dessert, like cookies or even just hot chocolate with a truffle on the side. When you plan these meals, remember people will need a very small amount of most of the items so you don't have to prepare much.

Butter
Salt and pepper
Sour cream
Bacon pieces
Pulled pork (buy pre-made)
Salami or pepperoni
Taco meat (chicken or beef)
Cubed ham
Beans
Chili
Shredded cheese
Feta cheese
Grated Parmesan cheese
Chopped fresh basil, cilantro, oregano, or dill
Crushed red pepper
Seasoned salt
Green onions
Steamed broccoli, green beans, or asparagus
Grilled corn
Chopped fresh tomatoes
Chopped sun-dried tomatoes
Sautéed spinach
Sautéed mushrooms
Grilled onions
Roasted red peppers
Sliced jalapeños (fresh or from a jar)
Thawed frozen peas (no need to cook them)
Chopped avocados or guacamole
Salsa
Barbecue sauce
Gravy
Alfredo sauce
Nacho sauce
Blue cheese or ranch salad dressing
Marinara sauce
Pesto







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 2:8-10

“Paul’s strategy for urging the Colossians to resist the false teaching in their midst is to begin with the positive: they need to hold onto the authentic teaching about Christ and his Lordship that they had already received (vv.6-7). And he continually returns to this positive side of the necessary response in the verses that follow. But vv.8-23 are dominated by the negative. They are governed by three, roughly parallel, warnings: v.8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy”; v.16 “Therefore do not let anyone judge you”; v.18 “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you”. The section falls into two basic parts. In vv.8-15 Paul develops a powerful positive theological argument against the false teaching by rehearsing the completeness of the spiritual victory we share with Christ. In vv.16-23, he repeats his warning but here backs it up by detailing some of the erroneous beliefs and practices of the false teachers.” –Doug Moo

1. Define “captive”. What are the things that have captivated the Colossians? What is wrong with this situation? What things captivate you?
2. Why do you think Paul moves from talking about “captivity” to explaining that in Jesus the whole fullness of God dwells bodily?
3. How does Paul connect believers to Jesus in verse 10?
4. List out people or organizations that have rule and authority? What does it mean that Jesus has all rule and authority?
5. What does 1 Timothy 6:20 and Ephesians 5:6 add your understanding of this text?

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 2:11-15

“The Colossians heresy was a mixture of pagan philosophy with Jewish legalism. Not surprisingly, the Colossian false teachers, like the Judaizers Paul confronted in Galatia, were teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Every Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. It was the sign that he belonged to the covenant nation. Throughout Israel’s history there had been two schools of thought about circumcision. Some held that circumcision alone was enough to save, since it granted membership in the covenant nation. That view was wrong, since “they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel” (Romans 9:6). Membership in the covenant community did not guarantee individual salvation... The second view recognized that circumcision was only the outward demonstration that man was born sinful and needed cleansing.” –John MacArthur

1. Romans 2:25-29. What does the circumcision of Christ mean? Or, how does circumcision help us understand the gospel more deeply?
2. Compare and contrast the two metaphors that Paul is using: circumcision and being buried with Christ.
3. Explain what baptism is. See Romans 6:1-14.
4. What does it mean to be “dead in your trespasses”?
5. What does Paul mean by a “record of debt” and how does it being nailed to the cross cancel this debt? See John 19:30.

Day 3

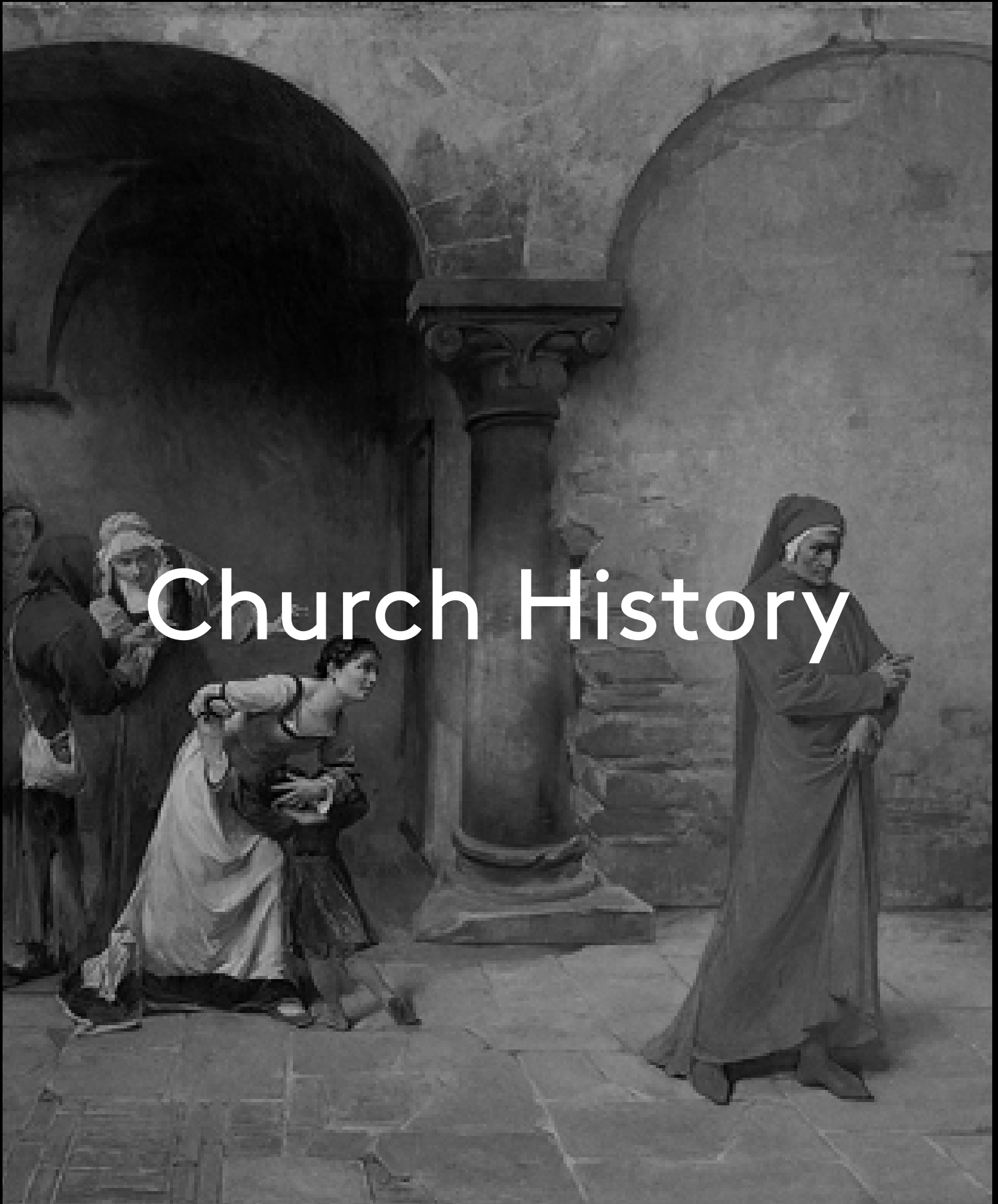
Study Matthew 15:1-9

Sermon Notes

March 20, 2016



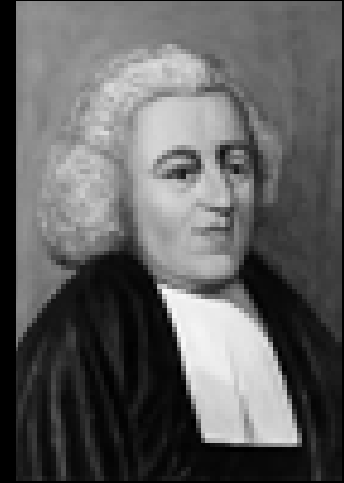






Mar 10, 1302

On March 10, 1302, Dante Alighieri (among many others) was exiled from Florence, Italy due to political disagreements that were born from theological differences. Eventually, Dante's exile would lead him to write the "Divine Comedy."



Mar 21, 1747

Back in 1747, on March 21, John Newton was saved. While aboard a ship that was caught in terrible seas, Newton came to realize his need for Jesus Christ. Later on in his life Newton would write the song "Amazing Grace."



Mar 12, 515 BC

After being returned from exile, the Jews who went back to Judah rebuilt the temple by command of God (through Haggai). The temple was completed on March 12, 515 BC.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 2:16-23

1. Why would people be questioning the people in Colossae about food and festivals?
2. How is Christ counter to the judgment being passed on the Colossians in verse 16?
3. Read verses 18 and 19. What does Paul mean when he writes “puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head?” Who is puffed up? Who is the Head? Why does a disconnect between the two matter?
4. In what ways do you allow yourself to get wrapped up in the same submission to regulations that the Colossians did?
5. Why is promoting (and submitting to) self-made religion dangerous?

Day 2

Questions on 1 Timothy 4:1-5

1. What's the benefit for Christians to know that the Spirit has warned us about people "devoting themselves to deceitful spirits?"
2. Read 1 Timothy 4:1-3. What truths are being twisted by false teachers?
3. Read Acts 10:9-16. How does Peter's vision contradict the false teaching Paul is telling Timothy to be concerned about in 1 Timothy?
4. How does the warning about self-made religion in Colossians 2:23 relate to what's happening in 1 Timothy 4:3?
5. How can you show thanks in your life for the gifts from God? What new methods can you incorporate?

Day 3

Study Mark 2:23-28

Sermon Notes

March 27, 2016





Kevin Kleiman

“The Things Above”

Colossians 3



“I obey, therefore I am accepted.” “I achieve, therefore I am rewarded.” “I did my part, therefore I will receive my due.” The default nature of the human heart is one that feels a great sense of entitlement, seeing the world in cause and effect, where I am the great Cause and I am due my Effects. Even for those who feel like failures, this nature can wreak havoc as we hold tightly to the belief that our actions have doomed us to certain consequences (or that our actions entitle us to different circumstances than we are experiencing). This obsessive focus on what me, myself, and I are doing can lead us down the wrong path when we come to the middle section of Colossians where Paul begins to lay out the practical implications for this glorious gospel.

There are four paragraphs in Colossians 3. The bulk

of the text, the last three paragraphs, consist of Paul’s directions for the people of Colossae on how they should live on this earth: putting away sin, putting on love, and living among others in a kind and compassionate way. But what is absolutely critical to understand is how Paul orders his thoughts here, indeed, how Paul has structured the entire letter. We should begin, and linger, where Paul does... Before mentioning a single practical, he commands the Colossians to “seek” and to “set your minds” on “the things that are above, where Christ is.” Why does he begin like this? The gospel is upside-down, counterintuitive... God accepts us first, and then we obey. Jesus achieves, and therefore we are rewarded. Jesus dies and was raised, and we appear with him in glory. Paul knows that in order for the Colossians to stop sinning and start loving, they need

a heavy dose of remembering, thinking, and seeking the realities of what Jesus has done, where Jesus is, and who we are in Him.

Paul had closed out the second chapter by asserting that submitting to human regulations and precepts as a way to stop sinning appears to be wise, but it is hopeless in truly transforming the desires of the sinful human heart. In other words, we can attempt to legislate righteousness by adding extra rules and defenses, but those can never truly change us. Following that, Paul lets us in on the secret: holiness is not something that we drum up in ourselves or work hard to pull inside-out. Rather, it is a transformative outside-in process by which we “get in position” to behold the glory of Christ and his kingdom, and experience this King and His heaven overwhelming our hearts and minds. It’s like dipping the dirty sponge of our hearts into the cleansing waters of the New Jerusalem.

So let’s take Paul’s advice and look briefly at 1) what Jesus is doing right now, 2) where Jesus is doing it, and 3) how we are involved. First, in John 14, Jesus gives us a glimpse of one thing that’s keeping him busy right now. “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” Catch that? Jesus is preparing a place specifically for you in heaven. Imagine for a minute what that could be like - the One who created mountains, sunsets, diamonds, supernovas, waterfalls, and double rainbows is preparing your room in God’s own house as a beloved member of the family. The writer of Hebrews gives us another heavenly activity of Christ in Hebrews 7, “...he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever... he always lives to make intercession for them.” Jesus is the King preparing his palace, and he’s also the great High Priest constantly interceding for us, speaking with the Father on our behalf as he “upholds the universe by the word of his power,” ruling on the throne at God’s right hand (Hebrews 1:3).

Second, let’s look at what the Bible says about the location, the setting, the environment of these “things above.” We want to ask the question, “what is heaven like?” Randy Alcorn, in a sermon on Revelation 20-22, gives us some of the following particulars:

“Heaven is located up and out there, outside our own universe. It is solid. Real. Not airy. Not ethereal. Tangible. Like our resurrection bodies--real bodies that can be

touched... Heaven is a city whose builder and maker is God. A city by definition consists of residences. People live together... The heavenly city will have all the freshness and vitality and openness of the country with all the vibrancy and interdependence and relationships of a city... Water. No seas to separate people of earth but fresh water—a great river, flowing not stagnant. Trees. Tree of life, bears twelve fruits, leaves for healing, palm trees (palm branches). Vegetation—garden. Why not? Eden was garden. Thrones. Clothes. Precious stones and materials. Streets of gold.”

“We will eat food, have banquets. Christ promised we would eat and drink at table with him; come from all over to sit at table with Abraham and patriarchs. We will feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb.” “We will serve Christ in the kingdom. We are called joint heirs with Christ. We will own property, residences in heaven. We will enjoy those treasures that we have laid up for ourselves in heaven while on earth.” “There will be no temple, no church buildings. We will need no props to worship him. Christ will be the focus of all. Worship will be unaffected, without pretense, and without distraction... We will lose ourselves in worship of Christ, and before we turn to the duties at hand we may suddenly realize that we were so caught up in worship that we have spent the last hundred years gazing upon the Lamb.”

Finally, Paul directs us to meditate on what will happen to us when Jesus appears in glory. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul lays out this wonderful future in some detail: “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” “What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:43-44,49).

That last statement in 1 Corinthians aligns well with Paul’s jumping-off point into the particulars of the Christian life on this earth. If we will bear the image of the man of heaven, if we will put off the perishable body with all its weakness and sin at the final trumpet, how can we wait? Notice how he transitions into verse 5, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...” Why do we kill sin? Because we are meant to start letting the ways of heaven, our true home, invade our lives now. Let that future glory

start flowing in and transforming us here. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). So as we start this journey into the third chapter of Colossians, let’s begin by praying with Jesus... “Let thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven!”

PASSION TIMELINE

Sunday

Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem
Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-10;
L 19:28-44; J 12:12-18

Returns to Bethany
Mt 21:17; Mk 11:11

Monday

Jesus curses the fig tree
Mt 21:18-19; Mk 11:12-14

Jesus cleanses the temple in Jerusalem
Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; L 19:45-46

Returns to Bethany with the disciples
Mk 11:19

Tuesday

Jesus explains the withered fig tree to the disciples on the way back to Jerusalem
Mt 21:20-22; Mk 11:20-21

Controversies arise at the temple in Jerusalem
Mt 21:23-23:39;
Mk 11:27-12:44; L 20:1-21:4

Olivet discourse on the return trip to Bethany
Mt 24:1-25:46; Mk 13:3-37; L 21:5-36

Wednesday

Jesus continues to teach at the temple
L 21:37–38

People plot to kill Jesus
Mt 26:3–5; Mk 14:1–2;
L 22:1–2

Passover Preparations
(includes Thursday)
Mt 26:17–19; Mk 14:12–
16; L 22:7–13

Thursday

The Last Supper
Mt 26:20–35; Mk 14:17–
26; L 22:14–30

Jesus teaches and talks
with the disciples in
the upper room
J 13:1–17:26

Jesus prays in Gethse-
mane
Mt 26:36–46; Mk 14:32–
42; L 22:39–46

Friday

Jesus is betrayed and
arrested
Mt 26:47–56; Mk 14:43–
52; L 22:47–53; J 18:2–12

Jesus faces a trial by
the Jews
Mt 26:57–27:2;
Mk 14:53–15:1; L 22:54–
71; J 18:19–24

Jesus faces a trial by
Roman authorities
Mt 27: 2–26; Mk 15:2–39;
L 23:1–25; J 18:28–19:16

Jesus is crucified
Mt 27:27–54; Mk 15:16–
39; L 23:26–49; J 19:16–
37

Jesus is buried
Mt 27:57–61; Mk 15:42–
47; L 23:50–54; J 19:38–
42

Sunday

People witness Jesus' tomb as empty
Mt 28:1–8; Mk 16–18;
L 24:1–12

Post-Resurrection Je-
sus appears
Mt 28:9–20; Mk 16:9–20;
L 24: 13–53; J 20:1–21:25

JOE CARTER

9 THINGS
YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT
HOLY WEEK



Holy Week is the week before Easter, a period which includes the religious holidays of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Here's what you should know about the days that commemorate the Passion of Christ:

1. Holy Week observances likely began in Jerusalem in the earliest days of the church, though the term first appears in the writings of fourth century bishops, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, and Epiphanius, bishop of Constantia. Holy week does not include Easter Sunday.

2. The first recording of a Holy Week observance was made by Egeria, a Gallic woman who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land about 381-384. In an account of her travels she wrote for a group of women back in Spain, Egeria describes the Palm Sunday she observed in Jerusalem:

... all the children who are [gathered at the top of the Mount of Olives], including those who are not yet able to walk because they are too young and therefore are carried on their parents' shoulders, all of them bear branches, some carrying palms, others, olive branches. And the bishop is led in the same manner as the Lord once was led.

3. Because of the difficulty in some parts of the world of procuring palms for Palm Sunday, leaves from yew, willow, olive, or other native trees are frequently used. The Sunday was often designated by the names of these trees, as Yew Sunday, or by the general term Branch Sunday.

4. An archaic and infrequently used name for the Wednesday before Easter is "Spy Wednesday", named for Judas' becoming a spy for the Sanhedrin.

5. Maundy Thursday is the day before Good Friday. The term "Maundy" is derived from the Latin word *mandatum* (commandment). The term refers to the commandment given by Jesus at the Last Supper: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." (John 13:34)

6. The historical origins of the "Good" in Good Friday remain unclear, though some entomologists believe the term "good" is an archaic form of "holy."

7. In Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, Holy Saturday commemorates the "harrowing of hell," the time

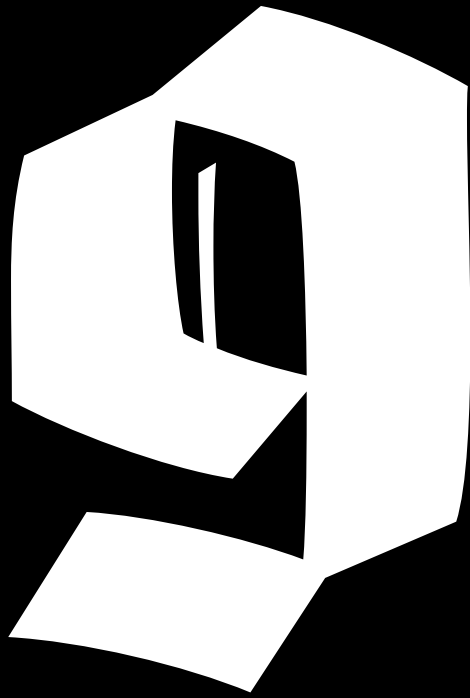
between his Crucifixion and his Resurrection when Christ is believed to have descended into hell. Some Protestants, however, don't believe that Scripture warrants believing the claim, found in the Apostle's creed, that "[Christ] descended into hell." As John Piper says, "there is no textual basis for believing that Christ descended into hell."

8. In Medieval Europe, Christians would abstain from eating eggs and meat during Lent. Eggs laid during that time were often boiled to preserve them and were given as Easter gifts to children and servants. Some traditions claim the Easter egg is symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus, with the shell of the egg representing the sealed Tomb and cracking the shell representing the Resurrection. Christians in the Middle East and in Greece painted eggs bright red to symbolize the blood of Christ.

9. The Christian scholar Bede (673-735 AD, aka, the Venerable Bede) claimed in his book *De Ratione Temporum* that Easter was named after Eostre, a pagan goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Later scholars, however, claim that the term derives from the Anglo-Saxon word "oster", meaning "to rise" or for their term for the Spring equinox, "Eostre."







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 3:1-2

“Paul focuses on the believer’s union with Christ [in vv.1-4]. The past experience of dying with him and being raised with him is the basis for our present status as people whose heavenly identity is real and secure, yet hidden, an identity that will be gloriously manifested in the future. But if the paragraph looks backward, it also looks forward, laying the groundwork for the more detailed elaboration of Christian thinking and its outworking in Christian behavior in 3:5-4:6. Therefore, Colossians 3:1-4 occupies a transitional place in the argument of the letter. It applies the key theological concept of union with Christ, which Paul develops negatively in vv.16-23 to counter the false teaching, in a positive direction, calling on believers to recognize the basic implications of their status as “dead” to the “elements of the world”, “alive” with Christ in heaven, and destined for glory.” –Doug Moo

1. Lay out the if/then clause. What is it telling you?
2. Read Ephesians 2:1-10, noting the same word “raised” in verse 6. Compare verse 10 with the “then” clause of Colossians 3:1.
3. What does it mean that we have been raised with Christ? What implications does that have on our daily life now? See Romans 6:1-4.
4. Define “seek”. What does it look like for you to seek the things that are above on a daily basis? See Matthew 6:33. Note this phrase in 3:1 could also be translated “set your hearts on things above”.
5. We have two main commands in 3:1-2, “set your hearts” and “set your minds” on things above. What is different about these two, why does Paul mention both hearts and minds? In what ways are setting your hearts and minds on things of earth harmful?

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 3:3-4

“In what sense has the believer died? In the sense that the penalty for sin has been paid. The wages of sin is death, so we must die. By union with Jesus Christ, we die the required death in Him, thus the penalty is paid and sin can never claim us again. We have thus died to sin in the sense of paying its penalty. Its presence and power still affect us – but it cannot condemn us.” –John MacArthur

1. Note and layout the time progression (past, present, future) of events in 3:3-4.
2. What does it mean to have a life hidden with Christ in God? See 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 6:17, 2 Peter 1:4.
3. Note the blessings of eternal security when we are hidden with Christ in God in the following passages: 1 Peter 1:4, Hebrews 7:25, John 10:28, and Romans 8:31-39.
4. How would you explain to your neighbor that Jesus is your life? See Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, and Philippians 1:21.
5. Define “glory”. Do you ever think about yourself appearing in glory? In what ways do you dream about lesser glories of this world? What type of glory should we have on our mind?

“So how with the coming Lord Jesus be glorified in relation to his people? Not ‘among’ them, as if they will be the theatre or stadium in which he appears; nor ‘by’ them, as if they will be the spectators, the audience who watch and worship; nor ‘through’ or ‘by means of’ them, as if they will be mirrors which reflect his image and glory [although, in a sense all those are true]; but rather ‘in’ them, as if they will be a filament, which itself glows with light and heat when the electric current passes through it.” –John Stott

Day 3

Study Galatians 6:14-16

Sermon Notes

April 3, 2016





Megan Mathis



Hospitality Meal



April

Chicken Enchilada Casserole

The combination of this being make-ahead and just a good comfort food makes enchiladas one of my favorite meals to feed people. Serve with chips, guacamole, or avocado slices, sour cream, and salsa on the side. Vanilla ice cream with caramel sauce makes an excellent dessert pairing.

This recipe is from Emily Thiel, who got it from Brook Kleiman — and I am sorry if I am not giving credit where it is due!

To cook the chicken before assembly, I put 2 pounds of chicken breast or thighs in the crockpot and add 1 cup of chicken broth and 1 tablespoon of taco seasoning. Cook in the crockpot on high-heat for 4 hours. I usually assemble the enchiladas earlier in the day so I just have to put them in the oven before dinner.

Put a small amount of sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 pan. Place a layer of tortillas, then 1 cup of beans, half of the corn, onions, chicken, cilantro, and 1 cup of cheese. Then another layer of tortillas and the other half of the chicken, beans, onions, corn, cilantro, and 1 cup of cheese. Put one more layer of tortillas and a layer of sauce. Bake in the oven covered with foil at 375 degrees for 20 minutes. Remove cover, add the rest of the cheese and bake 10 more minutes.

2 cans enchilada sauce (I don't always use the entire two cans but find that one isn't enough)

8 tortillas, halved

2 cans of black beans

1 can or 1.5 cups of frozen corn

6 green onions, diced

2 pounds of chicken, cooked and diced, or shredded

3 cups of shredded cheese

1/2 cups of cilantro, chopped





10

Day 1

Questions on Colossians 3:5-11

1. Read verse 5. How are the things that Paul lists as being earthly related to the sin of idolatry? Why is it important to realize root sins?
2. What ways can you put these earthly things to death?
3. After reading verses 8 and 9, why do we have to rid ourselves of “anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk?” Why are we called to not lie to one another?
4. How is our new self renewed in knowledge through God?
5. What’s the importance in verse 11 when it’s said, “Christ is all, and in all?”

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 1:27-29

1. According to verse 1, for what reason did Christ set us free? How did his death accomplish this?
2. What are the consequences of us not realizing the freedom Christ gave us?
3. Read verses 2-3. Why is Paul so adamant about the false need for Christians to be circumcised?
4. In verse 5, Paul writes, “For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.” What does he mean by “the hope of righteousness?”
5. Based on the text in verse 6, what is the only thing that counts for our lives in Christ?

Day 3

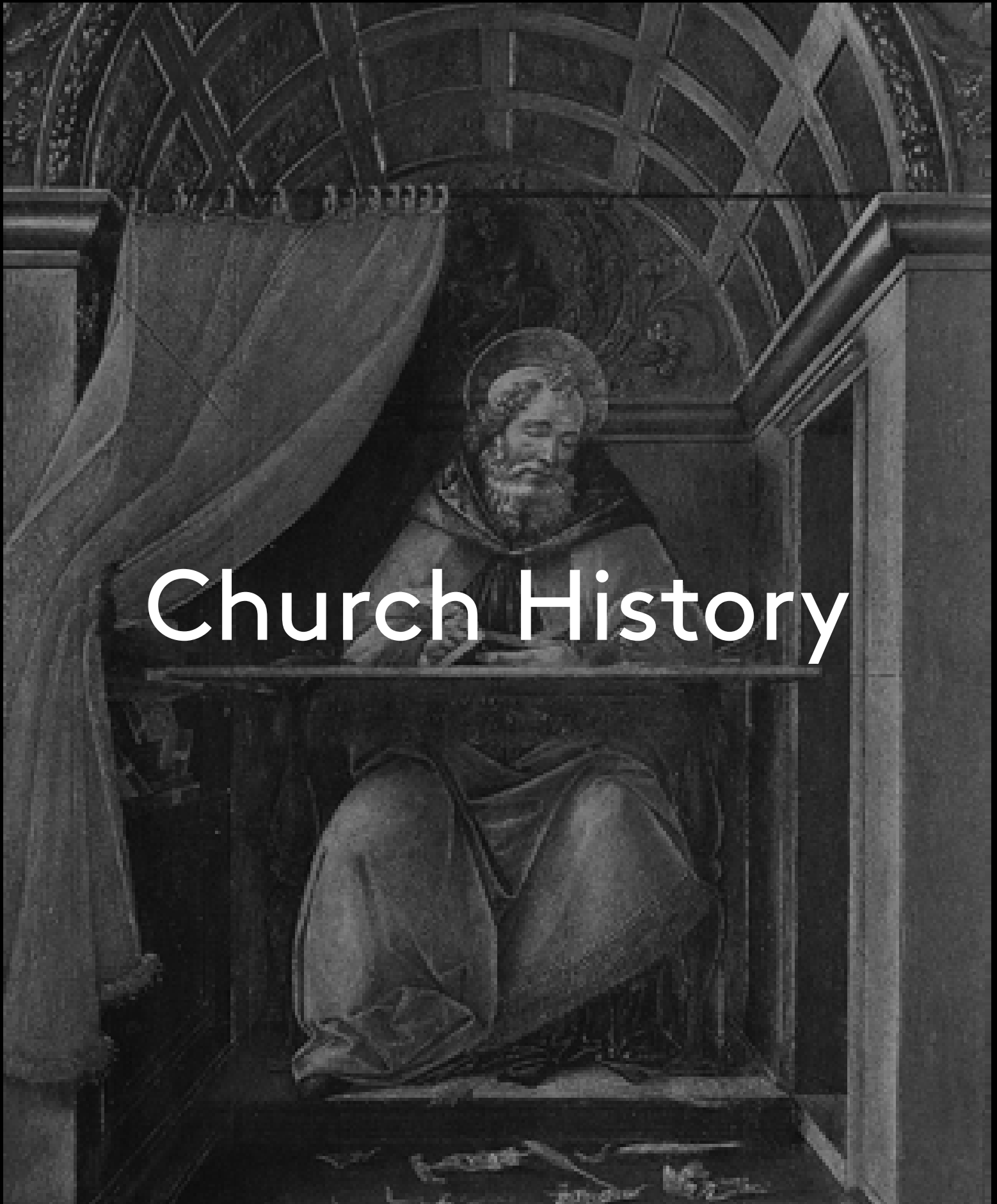
Study Matthew 16:23

Sermon Notes

April 10, 2016







Church History



Apr 15, 1912

On April 15, 1912, the Titanic sank. Of the 1,522 people who died from the sinking of the ship, one of them was John Harper, an evangelist. After getting his young daughter to safety on a lifeboat, Harper rushed back to warn others about the dangers. As he did this he also spread the gospel and sharing Jesus with people.



Apr 25, 387

Augustine of Hippo was converted on April 25, 387 (Easter day of that year). Augustine, a Christian theologian who has impacted Christians for centuries, is best known for his works *Confessions* and *City of God*.

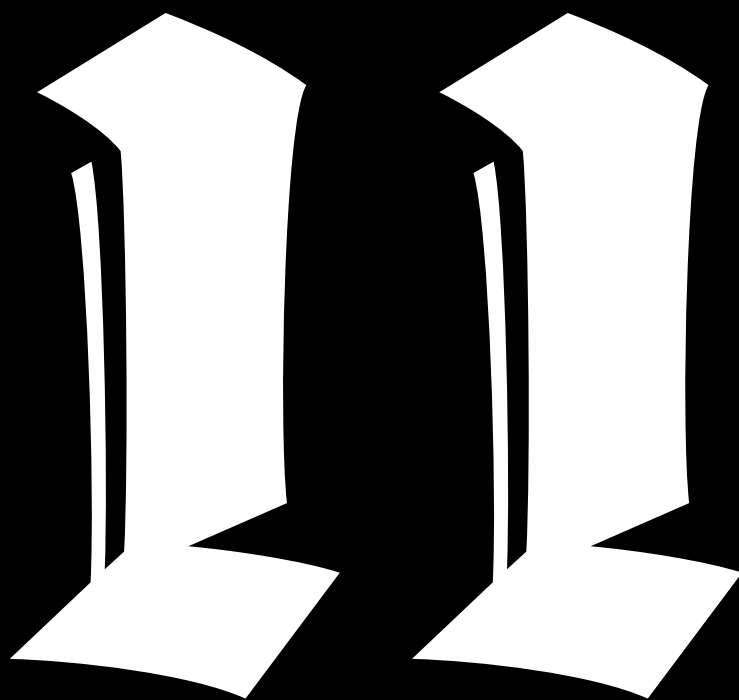


Apr 13, 1742

April 13, 1742 was the first time Handel's *Messiah* was ever played for an audience. The first performance of the classic piece was held in Dublin. The piece concerns Jesus, his role as savior, and his coming as king.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 3:12-14

“In vv.12-17, Paul enumerates positively some of the attitudes and behavior that should typify the “new self”. And in keeping with the collective significance of the new self, the focus in these verses is on those virtues that foster community identity and cohesion.” –Doug Moo

1. 3:12. “Put on” can also be translated “clothe yourselves”. What does Paul mean when he uses this imagery (see Romans 13:14)?

2. 3:12. List out and explain the significance of the three ways Paul characterizes the church. Note the main concept is “chosen people” with the other two supporting it. See also Ephesians 1:3-6 and 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5.

3. 3:12. List out and define the 5 virtues that Christians are to wear. Which one do you think needs most attention in your life and how is the gospel necessary to help you?

4. 3:13. Describe a complaint you have had with another member in your church (whether carried out or just in your mind). How did you handle it? What does Paul say you should handle it? What can you do now about it?

5. 3:14. Describe love and why is it so important and special among people?

“Much of the ground that Satan gains in the lives of Christians may be traced to unforgiveness. It isn’t hard to figure out why, once we realize that unforgiveness breeds bitterness, resentment, anger, unkindness, and even despair.” –Sam Storms

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 3:15-17

“Rule is a word used only here in the NT. It was used to describe the activity of an umpire in deciding the outcome of an athletic contest. The peace of Christ guides believers in making decisions First, is it consistent with the fact that he and Christ are now at peace and thus on the same side? Second, will it leave him with a deep and abiding peace in his heart?”
–John MacArthur

1. Define “peace”. Explain what it means to have the peace of Christ rule your heart (See Romans 5:1, Philippians 4:7)?
2. Reread vv.12-14. Why is an accurate understanding of peace and thankfulness so important to live out the high calling of vv.12-14?
3. Define “dwell”. What does it mean that the word of Christ should dwell in you?
4. What should your personal Bible study be producing in your life? Has this been your experience lately? Explain.
5. Paul uses the concept of thankfulness for a third time in these verses. What is Paul getting at? Why is this so important for Christians?

“So, whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” –Paul

Day 3

Study Ephesians 4:1-3

Sermon Notes

April 17, 2016







NICK AUFENKAMP

REVELATION
&
RESPONSE



From 2008-2009, I attended a small Bible school in Cambridge, New Zealand. During that year, I spent six weeks on an outdoor/exploration program, over the course of which I spent days-on-end hiking, kayaking, surfing, and eating freeze-dried foods. On one of our five-day outings, we went down to the Waitomo Caves in the central part of the northern island. After a day full of caving, our leaders took the twelve of us for an unexpected late night hike. We loaded up in the vans and about fifteen minutes later pulled off to the side of the road. There was no evidence of a trail and it was pitch black

out, but we started following our leaders through the brush, descending through a forest of fern leaves until we finally arrived at the entrance of a cave. The whole hike down into the valley had been filled with light-hearted laughter as we joked and jeered with one another recalling moments from earlier in the day, but I remember as soon as we stepped into the entrance of the cave the whole group instantly fell silent.

Together, we walked forward, about 300ft., into the dome of the cave. We were gathered on a rock that jutted out some three feet above a body

of water. Our leaders told us to turn off all of our lights. Almost in unison, there were the quick clicks of everyone's light turning off followed by a harmony of gasps, "awe"s, and "wow"s. Instead of being surrounded by complete darkness, the entire dome of the cave was lined with millions of glow-worms - tiny insects, only found in a dozen or so places around the world, that are nearly undetectable by day but at night appear with vivid incandescent greens and blues. For a few minutes we all just sat, huddled together, with no words, just sitting paralyzed in awe. Then, to the beat of the

drops of water falling from the roof of the cave into the water below, we began to sing "How Great Thou Art." It was a rousing chorus - it resounded from the depths of each of our hearts, it was full of robust conviction, and it reverberated beautifully inside of this God-made concert hall. We prayed prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God. We walked back up to the cars, this time our conversation marked by the gravity of God's glory and the gladness of seeing His creative beauty.

I often think of that night, especially when I am discouraged, doubting God's goodness



or His presence, or when I am depressed. As I've contemplated why that night was so impactful, I've come to a few conclusions.

1. I'd liberally suppose that there are maybe 1,000 people who have ever been inside of that cave in the absolute Middle-of-Nowhere, New Zealand. Estimates say that since creation until now there are about 108-billion people who have lived on planet earth, which means that if my guess is even remotely close, only .00000001% of the population has ever enjoyed the glow-worms God hung on the walls of that unnamed cave. I could spill thousands of words

belaboring this point, but think about the infinite creativity of our God, especially in light of Psalm 104:31: "May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works." Our Father has paid meticulously close attention to detail in His created world, and He has done so because He is infinitely beautiful and therefore cannot help Himself but to beautify even the most unlikely of places. By all pragmatic standards, God filling a cave with such astonishing beauty that so few will ever celebrate or even see seems utterly pointless, but God is not a pragmatist and He doesn't

need the affirmation of man to validate His creative perfection. He puts glow-worms in caves for His pleasure! And to think, His earth is filled with spots like this, many likely still undiscovered. God's glory is everywhere and He sets us loose to seek His beauty, even in the darkest and most unlikely places.

2. Speaking of dark and unlikely places, the most significant element of the beauty of the cave is that it was filled with brilliant light. Without the light of the glow-worms, the cave would have been a very ominous and desolate place to be. It would have been cold, damp, and un-

comfortable. Because of the light of the glow-worms, the cave was vibrant - as if we had just entered the grand ballroom of a royal ball - everything twinkled, the walls felt warm, and the water seemed alive as it reflected the beauty it beheld.

3. We were humbled and awe-filled. Everyone later expressed how they felt at the same time unthinkably small and unfathomably significant. Given points one and two, we were devastated by the holiness of God evident in this cave. If all we knew of God was what we saw in this cave, it would have easily evidenced that He was a God



of infinite power, ability, and wisdom - who else could think to create a living worm with a bioluminescent rear-end that would live in colonies of millions only on the walls of obscure caves where no one would think to look for them? None other than a holy God who obviously must be our creator, mindful of our presence, and fully capable to crush us should he so choose. Praise be to God though, for we were Bible students, which means we had His word to direct us on how to think and feel! The famous passage from Matthew 10.29-31 may as well have been interpreted for us that night, “Are

not two glow-worms sold for a less than a penny? And not one of them will burn-out apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many glow-worms.” If our God knows and cares about the glow-worms in central New Zealand, how much more does He care for us, who He crafted and formed in His own image and likeness?

4. After several moments of taking it all in, we could not help but respond to our God in Spirit-filled praise! Words were simply insufficient - we couldn't just say, “God, You are

so awesome.” We had to sing it! We were joyfully, whole-heartedly joining our Triune God in delighting in His goodness and beauty, and we couldn't get enough of it. It was an amazing thing as very few people in the group would normally consider themselves singers but in those moments every voice rang out in harmony with creation around us in a beautiful ode to the glory of God.

5. Notice the “we” that pervades this story. I thank God I was not alone when I was in the glow-worm cave. Certainly, it would have been beautiful and I would have worshipped my God

there, but how much sweeter it was to share that moment in the fellowship of my brothers and sisters with whom I am eternally bound by the blood of Jesus. My brothers and sisters made the expression of my praise richer, sweeter, and fuller. Despite our many differences in theological convictions, personalities, nationalities, ethnicities, and interests, we were unified in adoration and worship of our God who saved us by His grace.

What does this story mean for Cities Church, and particularly our corporate worship?

For one, my prayer is that Cities Church would be like this



no-named cave. I pray that we would be a place where God puts his creative beauty on display though the lives of our people. Psalm 16 tells us that God is going to lead us into beautiful places. He will lead us, as a congregation, to all sorts of different valleys and vistas, caves and capes, mountain peaks and mid-west plains where we will behold His glory in fresh and unique ways. The evidence of us seeing His glory and grace is that our lives will stand out against the world like the glow-worms stood out against the walls of the cave. May our sufferings with Jesus our Comforter be by our side and our

rejoicings with Jesus our Victor leading our charge be the lights that illuminate and beautify the world of darkness and despair.

Second, I pray that we are ever increasingly more like my little group of Bible school adventurers. Namely, that we would be filled with awe at the holiness of God and sense the gravity of His glory, and at the same time that we would be people who are made glad by the Gospel of Grace. In response to all He is to us, I pray that we will increasingly be a people who are compelled to sing. I pray that we find that our words alone are not adequate to express the joy

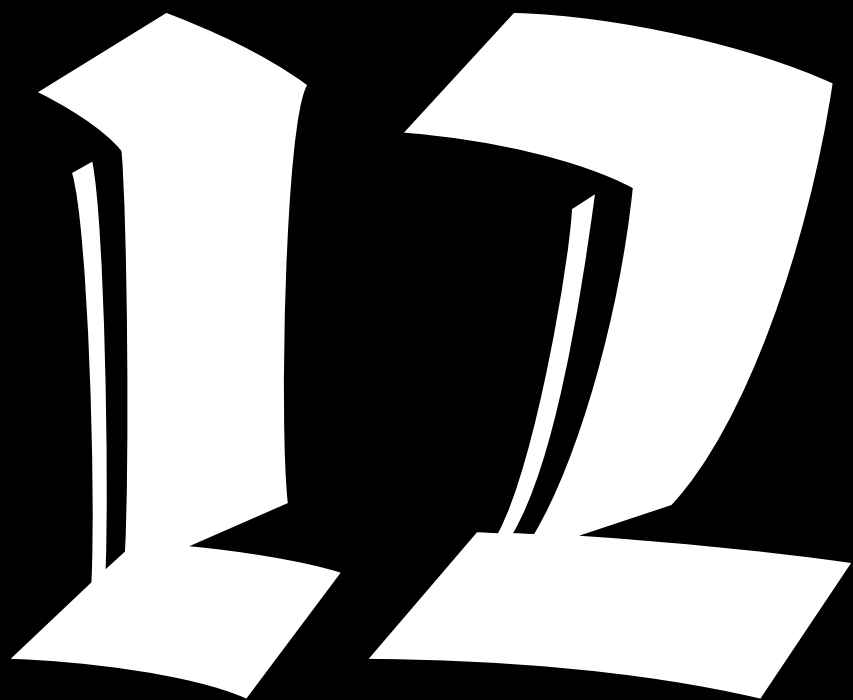
we find in Jesus, so much so that either our roommates/spouses are weirded-out by our jubilant singing or that our kids grow up joining us in our songs!

Finally, Cities Church, I pray that we cherish the “we” in our corporate gatherings. We share in life in Jesus together. We come from very different places, circumstances, and backgrounds, but we celebrate the same grace of God that has saved us. Jesus has purchased us and we are His forever. For now, singing, celebrating, glow-worms, and caves are a foretaste of the fullness of the fellowship we will one day enjoy, but I hope we delight

filling our plates with as many helpings as we can fit so that our appetites will continue growing for the Great Feast that Jesus is preparing for when He returns again.







Day 1

Questions on Colossians 1:15-17

1. Why are wives called to submit to their husbands in verse 18? What does Paul mean by submission?
2. Read Ephesians 5:22-24. What image is painted by a wife's submission to her husband?
3. Why would Paul's explicit message to husbands, in Colossians 3:19, be "love your wives, and do not be harsh with them?"
4. How does Ephesians 5:22-33 expand upon Paul's message to husbands in Colossians 3:19?
5. Why does Paul dedicate two passages (one in Colossians and another in Ephesians) to the roles of husbands and wives? Why doesn't he give the same message to both husbands and wives?

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 3:20 – 4:1

1. Why would it please God for children to obey their parents, as they're instructed to do in verse 20?
2. According to Ephesians 6:1-3, what is the benefit of children obeying their parents? How does this apply to all Christians in their relationship with God?
3. What's the message to father's (concerning their children) in Colossians 3:21 and Ephesians 6:4?
4. While verses 22-24 of Colossians were written to the culture of that time, we can still gain insight into our actions and behaviors today. Specifically, how can you apply the message of verses 23 and 24 to your work (whatever form it takes)?
5. What does Paul's writing to Masters (in Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:9) say about the role of leadership?

Day 3

Study Proverbs 1:8-9

Sermon Notes

April 24, 2016





Zach Krych

Colossians 4

Colossians 4



Much of Colossians is written to counter a heretical teaching that had weaseled its way into the Colossian church. Surprisingly, Paul does not counter the heresy by arguing against the false teaching but by expressing the glorious person of Christ. He shows the beauty, fullness, and supremacy of Christ over all things. He marvels at this glorious mystery of Christ in us who has brought us from death to life, darkness to light, controlled by the flesh to being led by the Spirit, from minds set on the world to minds set on the world to come.

With this massive background centered on Christ, Paul finishes this epistle with specific instructions for specific roles: wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, masters, do this... Now, in Chapter 4, Paul gives final specific instructions to the church as a whole, regardless of roles.

These instructions are for everyone. He instructs the normal Christian life, emphasizing prayer and speaking. Paul asks the whole body to pray to God, speak to outsiders, and pray to God for the ability to speak to outsiders.

Unless we think this speaking is confrontational in nature, Paul gives beautiful guidelines to our speaking. It is always to be gracious, to taste good. It is to be winsome and wise. No matter the situation we bring a flavor of grace. Not only in conversations that are specifically “declaring the mystery of Christ” (Col 4:3), but we are to “let [our] speech always be gracious” (Col 4:6). Always, always, and always be gracious. We are not double-tongued people who gossip, assume the worst, and criticize others during “normal” conversations and then suddenly flip into “grace mode” when we share the news of Christ crucified for the

sins of the world. We would do well to write this command on our foreheads and bathroom mirrors during this upcoming political season when we will face the temptation to let our speech be attacking, seasoned with venom.

Paul's one and only request for himself in this letter is not for financial support or physical help, but for prayer. Not for prayer for freedom from prison or better governing officials (which are good prayers), but that he may "declare the mystery of Christ". He asks for the same thing he instructs his church to do, to pray to the Lord for the ability to speak to outsiders.

As the epistle comes to an end Paul addresses individuals, which may seem irrelevant to us today, but it is a comfort to see how the early church is already filled with a variety of people and complicated relationships. The church is already messy. There is the "beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant", Tychicus, whose name brings memories of loyalty and service with Paul on his long missionary journeys. Yet right along side him is another "faithful and beloved brother", Onesimus, whose name brings memories of disloyalty and controversy, for he is Philemon's run-away slave. Onesimus's presence in Colossae will cause such controversy that these men also carry the New Testament letter to Philemon in their back pocket.

These "beloved brothers" are on a mission of reconciliation. Yet it is a joint mission of reconciliation and encouragement. For just as this Epistle is meant to encourage the Colossians that they are deeply cared for by a Savior "in whom all things hold together" (Col 1:17) these men are to be a tangible form of the same encouragement. Most, if not all of us, are burdened in one way or another, and often the brighter your light is shining for Christ the darker the shadows around you, and the more burdened you feel. Beloved people are those who encourage you. Tychicus and Onesimus are sent as reminders to lonely sojourners in a society where following Christ brings persecution that they are not alone. Do not underestimate the importance of being an encourager to people. These men traveled far for this very purpose.

Another messy individual is Mark, whose history of fear and unfaithfulness in proclaiming the gospel caused a painful division between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:37). Yet Mark is not rejected by the church due to his past failures, for he has been reconciled to Paul and is now considered a comfort to him, a useful co-minister (2 Tim 4:11). Nor is he disqualified from being God's servant. For the Holy Spirit will give Mark the grace of authoring the Gospel of Mark.

This man who tried to save himself and abandoned Paul is reconciled through grace to the point that he can humbly pen the words of Christ: "Whosoever will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it. Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel, the same shall find it." (Mark 8:34-35)

Finally, at the end of the greeting and the end of the book we see Epaphras contrasted with Archippus. Epaphras, the one who brought "the word of the truth, the gospel" (Col 1:5) to Colossae, is also called a "beloved fellow servant" and "faithful minister of Christ" in Col 1:7. Paul says to the Colossians that he has heard this man pray and there is an exertion, a passion on their behalf; he is wrestling for them. Epaphras's prayer that they may "stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col 4:12) references back to Col 1:28. "Him we proclaim...that we may present everyone mature in Christ." For us to stand mature in Christ we need to find the way to exalt Christ in everything, because God's will is to make much of His Son. If you want to be "fully assured in all the will of God", start making much of Jesus and see what happens. Epaphras was doing this for he was engaged in passionate ministry proclaiming Christ. However, Archippus, who is called a "fellow soldier" in Philemon, for some reason is sitting on his sword, idle, and disengaged. He needs a loving prodding from Paul to "fulfill the ministry that he received from the Lord."

When I am not engaging my culture by exalting Christ as He is, it is rarely due to ignorance, lack of resources, or lack of opportunities, but because I'm simply not paying attention. I am focused on myself and my small power rather than paying attention to God and His active power in the world. I may be frozen by fear of my own inadequacy instead of looking expectantly to see how God's power can overcome every hindrance to the gospel. Like Archippus, I need a prodding reminder that my engagement with people around me is a commission from the Lord, not my own idea. My anxious nearsightedness causes me to lose the thankfulness that "Christ holds all things together" and has "reconciled to himself all things". Col 1:17, 20.

Colossians shows us how engagement with the world is done through a focus on the massive reality of Christ as Lord over all. He came to us as the true "beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant", and He calls us to walk as He did.

Megan Mathis



Hospitality Meal



May

Low Country Boil

When May hits, people want to get outside! One of my favorite memories growing up was having “Cream Can Dinner.” I have learned that some from the South call it a “Low Country Boil.” Whatever you call it, it is easy, collaborative fun — and delicious.

This one might sound complicated as far as cooking goes. You can cook it in an old milk can over an open fire. Or you can just cook it in a big pot on your stove. We use a propane burner and big kettle outside. Prep your ingredients a few hours before and then just add them in the pot by the intervals indicated. To serve it, roll out parchment paper down the center of the table and just dump it on the table. Have salt and pepper and butter on the table and allow people to enjoy! You can have guests each bring a prepped ingredient to make it easier on your budget.

In an 8-quart pot, bring Old Bay, salt, water, and beer to a boil. Then add potatoes and onions; cook over high heat for 8 minutes. Then add chicken and smoked sausage to potatoes and onions; continue to cook on high for 5 minutes. Then add corn to pot; continue to boil for 7 minutes. Then add shrimp in shells, cook for 4 minutes. Then drain cooking liquid. Pour contents into several large bowls, shallow pails, or mound on a paper-covered picnic table. Sprinkle with additional Old Bay if desired.

To break that down even further:

Boil the water with the seasonings in it.

Put potatoes and onions in the water.

8 minutes

Add chicken and sausage

5 minutes

Add corn

7 minutes

Add Shrimp

4 minutes

Drain and enjoy!

½ cup of Old Bay 17 seasoning
(or you can buy packets of pre-mixed seasoning for “boiled seafood dinner”)

2 tablespoons of salt

4 quarts of water

1 (12 fluid ounce) can beer
(optional)

8 red potatoes, quartered

2 large sweet onions, cut in
wedges

2 lbs. of chicken breast, cut
into strips

2 lbs. of lean smoked sausage,
cut in 2-inch lengths

8 ears of fresh corn, broken in
half

2 lbs. of large shrimp in shells





13

Day 1

Questions on Colossians 4:2-4

“With this paragraph, Paul concludes his series of general exhortations about the way the Lordship of Christ is to be lived out in daily life (3:5-4:6). It also brings to a close the letter body. This central section of Colossians is driven by imperatives that spell out how the believers in Colossae are to manifest the Lordship of Christ, the Head of creation and the church (2:6-7). In the earlier part of this letter body (2:8-23), the focus is on the need to assert Christ’s exclusive role in salvation and Christian living with respect to the rival claims being put forward by false teachers. In the second part of this letter body, however, explicit concern with the false teachers fades and is replaced with exhortations relating to the Christian life in general (3:1-4:1). Almost all of this material has been inward-looking, focusing on relationships within the Christian community. Colossians 4:2-6, however, looks outward, with a focus on Paul’s evangelistic work and the community’s relationships with non-Christians.” –Doug Moo

1. Read Colossians 4. Lay out the different things you learn about prayer in verses 2-4.
2. Define steadfast. What does it look like to be steadfast in prayer?
3. What does it mean to be watchful in prayer? (See also Mark 14:38)
4. Why is a spirit of thanksgiving so important in prayer? (See also James 4:1-3)
5. How does Paul want the Colossians to pray for him?

Day 2

Questions on Colossians 4:5-6

“Here Paul is indicating that not only the content but also the manner of speaking are important when it comes to the influence the believer exerts on outsiders.” –Peter O’Brien

1. Read Colossians 4:5-6. Define the command “conduct”.
2. Describe how you are to interact with unbelievers. What do you think it means to conduct yourself in a “wise” manner?
3. Why do you think Paul adds in this clause “making the best use of the time”? There probably has never been a point in time where someone has not said “I’m just too busy”.
4. Describe how Paul wants Christian’s speech to be? (See also 1 Peter 3:13-17)
5. What is the purpose of having gracious speech (as denoted with “so that”)?

“Salt has literally hundreds of uses. Like other natural compounds, salt can be used negatively or positively. The Bible’s writers made generous use of salt imagery, sprinkling references to its use and abuse throughout Scripture, particularly in the OT. Biblical writers are well aware of salt’s properties, associating it with images of seasoning, preserving, and purifying – or with powerful images of death, desolation, and curse.” –Dictionary of Biblical Imagery

Day 3

Study Mark 1:35

After studying Mark 1:35, using a study Bible search the New Testament for uses of the word “pray” or “prayer” and note what the text says. Then for application, lay out one way you’d like to change your prayer habits.

Sermon Notes

May 1, 2016







Church History



May 9, 1914

Fans of Mother's Day have Ana Jarvis to thank. After a campaign to get the day recognized by both house of the US Congress, Jarvis saw her work pay off on May 9, 1914 when President Woodrow Wilson made Mother's Day official.



May 24, 1844

May 24, 1844 brought a new form of communication to the world when Samuel Morse sent his first Morse Code message: "What hath God wrought?" That same message was sent on July 12, 1999 when the last commercial Morse code transmission went out.



May 20, 325

On May 20, 325, twelve bishops came together in Nicaea to settle the debate about whether Jesus was a created being or if he was God. The heated debate lasted for days and ultimately ended with the Creed of Nicaea being issued, stating that Jesus is God and not a created being.





14

Day 2

Questions on 2 Peter 3:14-18

1. In verse 15, Peter writes, “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation.” What does he mean by this statement?
2. Peter references Paul in verses 15 and 16, saying that Paul writes things that are sometimes hard to understand and are sometimes twisted. How does Peter tell his audience to prepare themselves for such situations?
3. What’s the significance of Peter writing (about Paul’s letters) that unstable people twist them “as they do the other Scriptures?”
4. Stability comes up twice in this passage. What are Christians supposed to be stable in? How can we achieve this?
5. How do Peter’s parting words differ from Paul’s in Colossians 4:7-18?

Day 3

Study Philemon

Sermon Notes

May 8, 2016





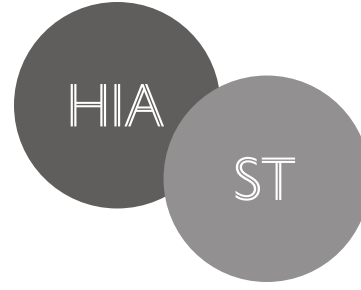
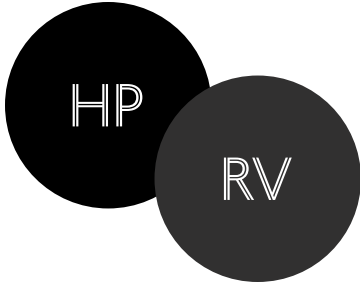


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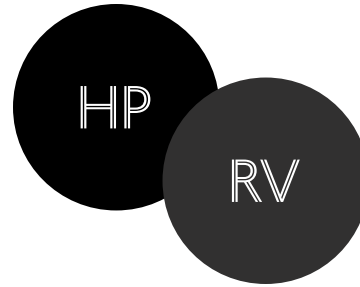
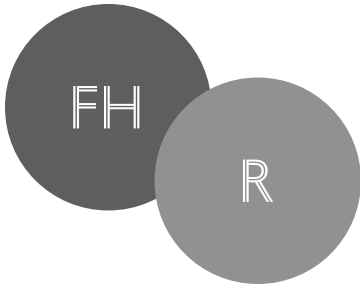
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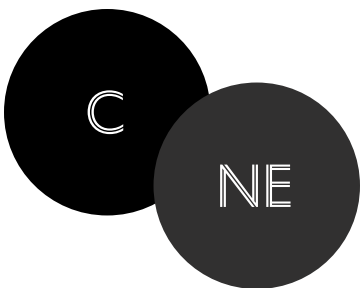
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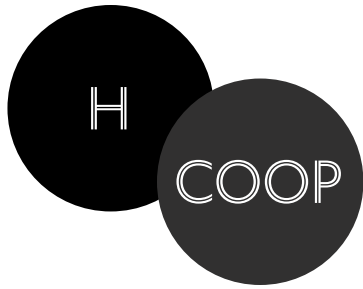
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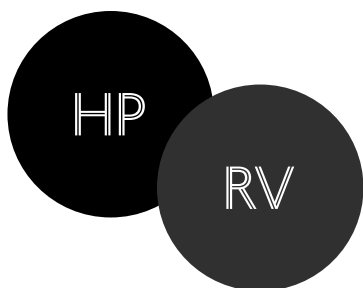
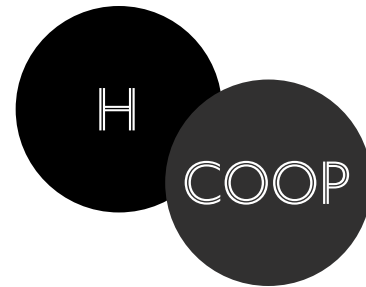
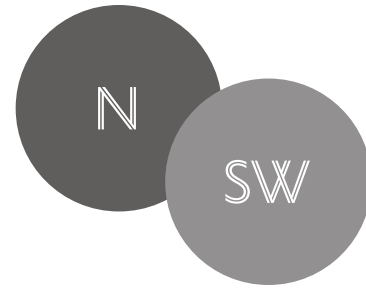
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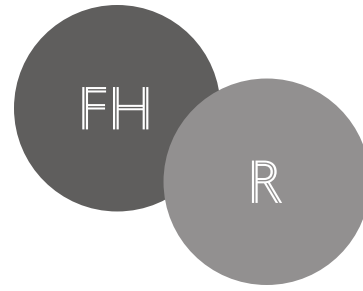
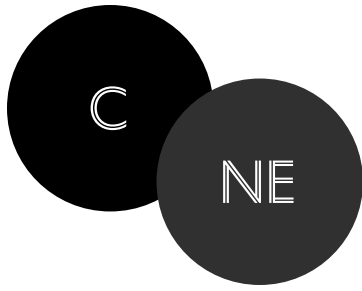
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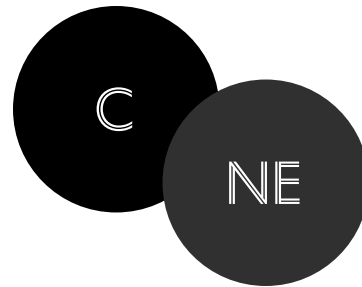
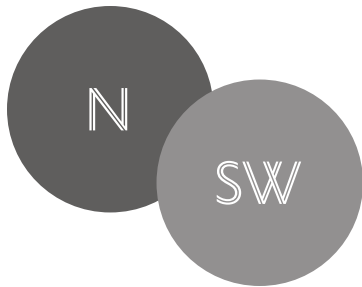
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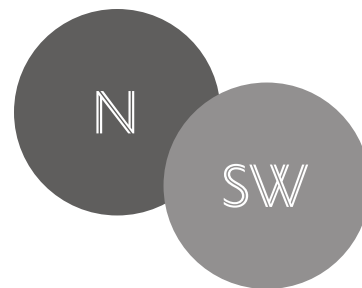
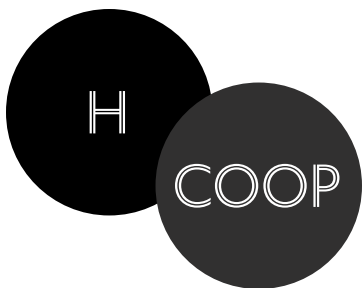
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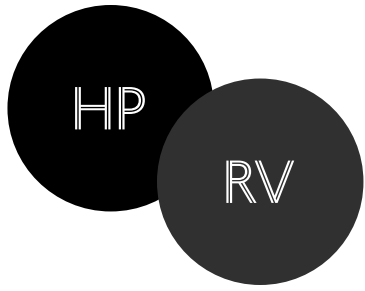
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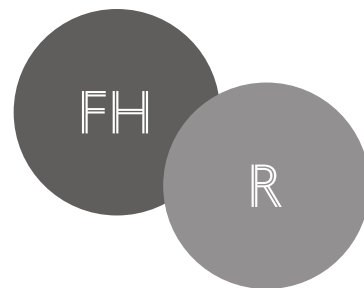
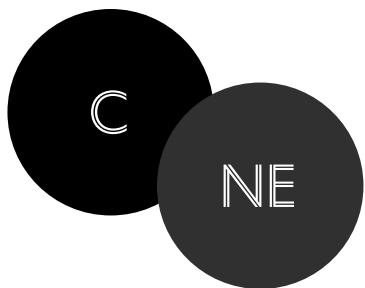
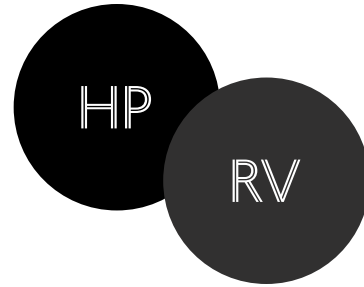
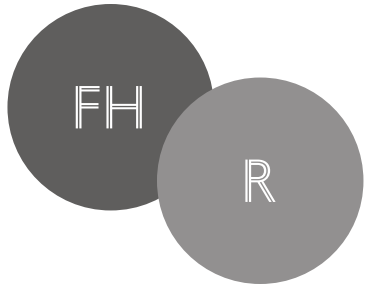
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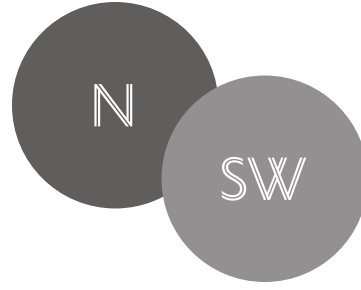
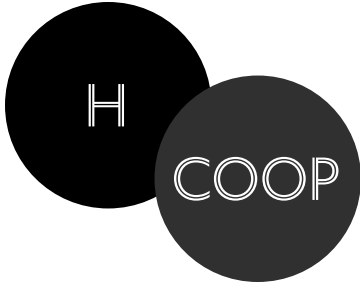
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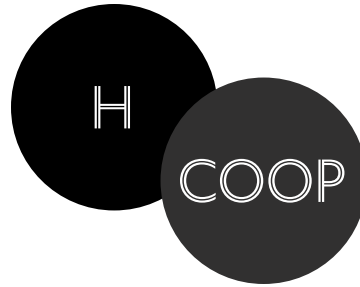
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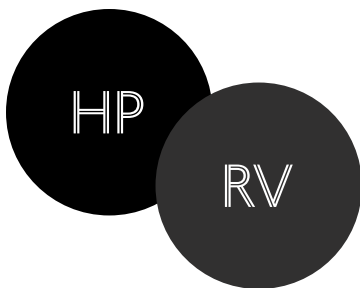
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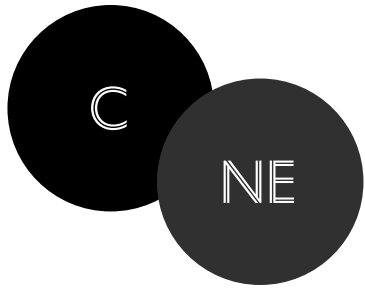
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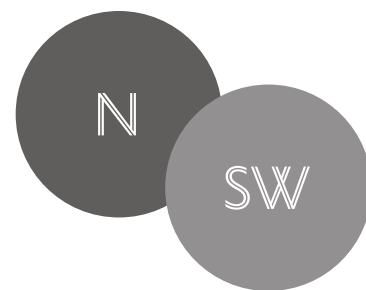
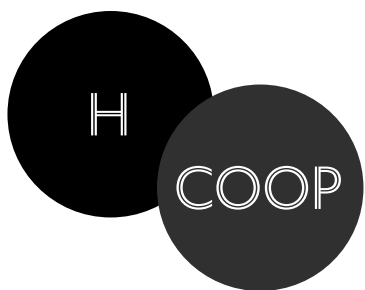
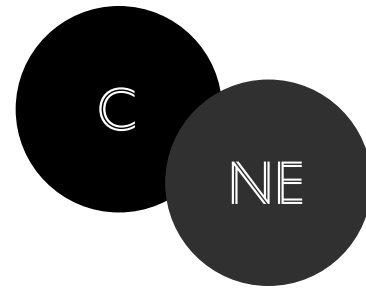
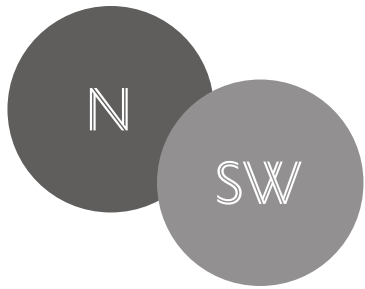
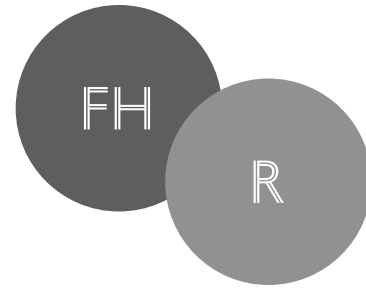
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Apr 17



Apr 24







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