

# Christ In You

The Rev. David  
Jordan-Haas

Colossians 1:24-29

**Sermon Series:**  
**Journey of Transform-**  
**ation**

*...the only  
thing in this  
world for  
everyone and  
for all is Christ  
Himself!*

Colossians 1:24-29:

*I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to God's saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is Christ whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that Jesus Christ powerfully inspires within me.*

This is one of Paul's greatest contributions to the Christian faith: Paul proclaiming Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Without Paul's prolific efforts, perhaps, this 1st Century, revolutionary "Jesus-Movement" might have only become a kind of "new Judaism." You and I, then, would not be here, mostly Gentiles, together, in this place of Christian worship. As Paul declares in Galatians, whether you are "male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile," Christ is In You, you belong to Christ (Galatians 3:28).

This morning, the glorious fact of the matter, thanks to Paul, is

this: namely, the only thing in this world for everyone and for all is Christ Himself! The ONLY thing that is for all. Certain practical and spiritual giftings are not given to everyone. Not every person can master every craft, or skill, or athletic movement. Not every person is an intelligent thinker, right? As my younger brother told me one night in our adolescence, when we were arguing about something, "David, you have the mind of a reptile!" Not every person can be a writer, an engineer, a builder, a teacher (a lobbyist!). There are gifts you and I will never possess. There are privileges and pleasures you and I will never enjoy. There are world achievements you and I will never attain. BUT, however, there is this only thing in the world for everyone and for all: Christ Himself, In You, in all God's people (Barclay). Why? Because God loves you and God wants to fill your life with Himself! Why? Because God loves you and wants Christ to be "in you." Just a few verses earlier, Paul describes who Christ is. In Him is the "image of the invisible God; in Him is the firstborn of all creation; in Him all things in heaven and on earth are created. He Himself is before all things, and IN HIM all things hold together"(v.15-17). And, my favorite: "IN HIM all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell"(v.19).

***“True religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the very image of God within the soul (as Christ is being formed in us).”***

- John Stott

One hundred and sixty-four times throughout his letters, Paul uses this “IN” preposition, “In Him.” Paul wants to be clear who he works for, suffers for, who he rejoices in! Jesus Christ, the “In Him,” in all His majesty and power and beauty! Then look what Paul does in verse 27. The In HIM—namely, Christ in all Living Color is IN YOU! The In-Him is In-You!

Two Sundays ago, Pastor Pete showed us some of the “logos, images, icons” of the culture. Pepsi, FireFox, Colonel Saunders, the Nike swoosh, and some others. Well, here is the “In Him,” the beginning and the end, the first-born from the dead, the first place in everything, HERE are some of the logos, icons, images of God. FACES OF JESUS on Power Point.

The English pastor and theologian, John Stott, has a marvelous way of explaining this preposition, “IN,” as in “Christ-In-You.” It is not used here “spatially;” rather, it is used by Paul “relationally.” Stott writes, “To be ‘in’ Christ does not mean to be ‘inside’ Christ, (contained) like a family is in the house spending an evening together.” No. It is not like clothes kept IN a drawer or closet, or like tools IN a box. “No, to be ‘in’ Christ is not to be located inside Him or to be locked up in Him for safety (or security). Rather, (the ‘IN’ means) to be UNITED to him in a very close intimate relationship” (John Stott’s Life In Christ). Jesus says, “Remain in me, and I will remain

in you....I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me, as I abide in you”(John 15:1-5). It is this kind of blessed union—organic, fluid, alive. ( IF you want to experience more of this blessed union, sign up and join us for our Sacred Rhythms Weekend with Ruth Haley Barton in March!)

In the 17th century, Henry Scougal was a Professor of Divinity at King’s College in Aberdeen, Scotland. (A good Presbyterian!). At the young age of 28, Dr. Scougal wrote a little book called *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. In it, he laments how so few people seem to understand what “true religion” means. It is not ultimately about orthodox opinions, moral duties, intellectual affections, or rapturous hearts, he writes. Instead, Dr. Scougal writes, “True religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the very image of God within the soul (as Christ is being formed in us).” And, he continues, saying the primary branches growing out of this union with God are “a love for God, and purity, humility, and charity [mercy] towards humanity.”

In other words, the proof of Christ-In-You is your inner purity and humility displayed outwardly. The proof of Christ-In-You is living your love for God by showing and giving loving kindness to others. The world ultimately will NOT believe in Christ because of our sound theology OR our correct creeds. Instead, the world will believe when it sees your health and holiness because of the distinctive Christ-In-You! Our neighbors will believe when they see the distinctive

***To his beloved disciples, Jesus shows that the purpose of the Christian life, at the depths of our being, is a life in union with God—GOD BREATHING LIFE INTO US, so that we can be Christ’s LIFE to the world!***

Christ-In-You lived out in their midst, in your family, place of work, the marketplace, out into your neighborhoods!

Our Ministries of Mercy here are doing and being the Christ-In-You. They are really participating in the very image of God WITHIN: N2N (Neighbor-to-Neighbor), Deacons, Stephen Ministers, Passages, GriefShare, New Spring, Jobs Transitions, our local missions opportunities!

Look at this cartoon: Husband and Wife in Car; husband driving, he’s texting while driving. Wife says to him, “Honk if you love Jesus...text while driving if you’d like to meet him!”

This “Christ In You-ness” is serious, wonderful business. There isn’t anything better than our soulful union with Jesus. Loving Jesus NOW and meeting Jesus Later—as the CARTOON suggests—there isn’t anything better! BUT something holds us back from this. Something distracts us and holds us back from this intimate union. This is nothing new. The Colossian Christians had accepted a “Christian-Lite” version of living. They had chosen a kind of “decaffeinated” Christianity over a richer, full-bodied faith.

We are very similar. You and I, up against culture, WE persist in refusing to give Jesus Christ preeminence and superiority over our lives. In fact, I bet a lot of us (even right now) are thinking about who (in all the heavens and on earth) will have preeminence and superiority later tonight. And it’s not going to be Jesus; it’s

going to be either the Colts or the Saints! We know who Paul is rooting for! Thirty times in all his letters, he calls his friends and fellow Jesus-followers, “SAINTS.” (Jesus mentions “COLT” twice, in Mark’s gospel and again in Luke’s, on the eve of his entry into Jerusalem)

Along with a kind of Jewish legalism and Gnostic spiritual-snobbery, there is this element of a kind of pseudo-Christianism in the Colossae community...and it’s in us, too. It’s a belief, a practice that doesn’t fully DENY Christ, but it DETHRONES Him, nonetheless. It is a culture where we give Christ a place in our lives, but not the supreme place. I get it (Expositor’s Commentary).

Robert Mulholland, in his book, *The Deeper Journey*, has this image of our lite, decaffeinated Christian life. Mulholland writes, I am “a mud pie with a thin layer of Christian frosting trying to pass myself off as an angel food cake. But the mud keeps seeping through (the frosting). I need God,” he writes, “to take the mud and breathe into it the breath of life.” Jesus prays, “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (John 17:20-23). To his beloved disciples, Jesus shows that the purpose of the Christian life, at the depths of our being, is a life in union with God—GOD BREATHING LIFE INTO US, so that we can be Christ’s LIFE to the world!

There is so much within us, not just the culture around us, that stands in the way of this true union with Christ. They are all the many

***God's love for us is in giving "Christ In Us" to cleanse us, to make us righteous, to restore us to our "true selves" in union with God.***

and varied ingredients, from inside and out, that go into the messy "MUD-PIE" that is ME, that is you. Because of God's undying love for us, God's purpose is not simply to forgive our sins through Jesus. God's purpose is ALSO to transform us in Jesus! God's love for us is in giving "Christ In Us" to cleanse us, to make us righteous, to restore us to our "true selves" in union with God.

This "true self" in Christ, Dallas Willard points out, is Christ interested in me, my life, and the very existence that is me. And NOT in a self-centered, self-absorbed, self-possessed way. Rather, my "true self," YOUR "true self," is "learning from Jesus how to live your life as Jesus would live your life, if He were you"(Divine Conspiracy, p.283). My true self, your true self, is when, like Paul, we proclaim "... it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives IN me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved (loves) me and gave (gives) Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).