**In Christ**

Q: What is the most common expression in the New Testament to describe a saved person? Christian? Disciple? Saved? No. It is “in Christ.”

In Christ, In Him, In the Lord 164 times in Paul alone.

We will talk about life in Christ, but first let us consider that, at one time, we were outside of Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath…

Dead Gratifying the flesh Objects of wrath.

Ephesians 2:12 Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Separate Excluded Foreigners Without hope and without God.

This was not good!

And this is the vast majority of everyone you know!!!

But I have good news if you have come into Christ!

So how do we get into Christ?

Gal 3:26-27, Rom 6:3-4

Do we believe into Christ? Do you pray into Christ? Do we confess into Christ? Do we repent into Christ?

Analogy of a house, where inside the house represents being in Christ. Maybe believing is the driveway to the house, confessing is the walkway to the door and repenting is opening the lock to the door. But baptism is when we go through the door.

Analogy of a marriage.

Matthew 22:15-22 Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22:11-13 But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He was not clothed with Christ!!! “How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?” The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, “Tie him, hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Consider all that we have in Christ:

**I. We are redeemed in Christ.**

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of his grace.

Coll 1:13-14 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins.

Redeemed: A religious word we do not use in ordinary conversation.

Wikipedia: the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt.

Analogy of a pawn shop. You were the property of Satan, but in Christ you were redeemed from slavery to Satan.

We were slaves in Egypt. We could not worship God (Exodus 7:16)

Pharaoh (Satan) owned us.

Jn 8:34-35 Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

We desperately needed to be redeemed.

John 8:36 If the Son sets you free (redeems you) you will be free indeed.

Illustration: Hosea and Gomer

Hosea 2:5 “She said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.” (Hosea 2:5).

She had completely destroyed the relationship with Hosea.

Logically, Hosea should have moved on to find a woman who would be faithful to him.

Yet, this is not what God did with us. No; instead he redeemed us—he bought us back.

Hosea 3:1-3 “Go show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” (Hosea 3:1)

He paid the prostitute’s price in order to redeem Gomer to himself.

God has purchased us back from our slave master and loved us even though we had prostituted ourselves.

1 Cor 6:20 You were bought at a price.

Q: If you are a baptized believer, do you feel redeemed?

Q: How do you feel about being redeemed?

Q: How do you feel about the one who redeemed you?

**II. We are Holy/Saints/Sanctified in Christ**

1 Cor 1:2 to those sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:1 Saints/Holy “To all God’s holy people (saints) **in Christ** Jesus at Philippi”

In our culture talking about holiness is like talking about walking on Mars.

Were you a saint outside of Christ?

Holy 200 times in NT godes

400 times in OT goddis (ex. The Saints will possess it forever Dan 7:18)

It means a thing set apart so that it can be used by God.

In Christ we are made holy, clean, pure, and useful to God.

I want to be useful to God!

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. (Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8)

Holiness is one of God’s qualities. In Christ we become like God!!!!

Illustration of woman who was a prostitute who was baptized.

The world sees holiness as of no value. In fact, they think of it as a negative thing.

Q: Do you feel holy/sanctified in Christ. What is the value to you of being sanctified?

**Already but not yet.**

Some of the things we are in Christ are also what we are becoming and what we will ultimately be.

It is “Already, but not yet.”

We were saved at baptism, we are being saved and we ultimately and finally be saved.

We have been redeemed. We are being redeemed. We will be redeemed.

We were made holy. We are being made holy and we will be holy.

Paul describes us as what we are becoming in Christ.

We need to emotionally accept as true what God has done to us in Christ.

We need to embrace how God is still making us these things in Christ.

We need to anticipate with great joy what God will finally make us in Christ at the end of time.

But… Let us be glad that God sees us as he will make us—as the final result.

**III You Are Righteous in Christ**

My experience: Most people want to be good.

Even Mafia dons want to be liked for being “good” to their people.

My experience in Buena Vista prison.

On campus: “I’m good.”

The problem is that, outside of Christ, we are not good.

Mark 10:17-19 No one is good.

Romans 3:9-12 No one is righteous; not even one.

Merrian Webster: “free from guilt or sin : morally right or justified.”

But in Christ….

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that* ***in him we might become the righteousness*** *of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

God imparts to us righteousness

*What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.* (Philippians 3:8–9)

Outside of Christ you were not good.

What would you pay to be “good?”

Well, guess what, the price is paid.

Challenge: If God has made us righteous, If God has declared us righteous, then let us become what he has made us. Let us hate sin and life for righteousness.

**IV. You Are Alive in Christ**

[Eph 2:1-4 You were dead in your sins, but God made you alive.]

We were dead.

Q: What are dead people like?

Our spiritual respiration rate was zero.

Our spiritual pulse was flatlined.

We were unresponsive to spiritual stimulus.

We were dead men (or women) walking.

*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but* ***alive to God in Christ*** *Jesus.* (Romans 6:8–11)

We die with Christ, but we are resurrected with him.

We move from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive.

Which would you prefer, to be spiritually dead, or to be spiritually alive?

*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so* ***in Christ*** *all will be made alive.* (1 Corinthians 15:20–22)

If you are in Christ, then you have been given a second chance. What would you pay for that? What are you going to do with this second chance?

**V You Are a New Creation in Christ**

Have you done something you deeply regret?

Someone you betrayed. A hateful word you said. Did you steal the innocence from someone? Do you wish you could take it back?

If only we could start over….

If only we could get a “mulligan”

*Therefore, if anyone is* ***in Christ****, there is a* ***new creation****; old things have passed away and look, new things have come. Everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: That is, in Christ, God was reconciling to the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.* (2 Corinthians 5:17–19 HCSB)

The lies: gone!

The lost innocence: gone!

It is already, but not yet.

We have been made new

We are being made new

We will be made new. We will be given a new body.

*“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”* (Ezekiel 36:24–26)

*“Forget the former things;*

*do not dwell on the past.*

*See, I am doing a new thing!*

*Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*

*I am making a way in the wilderness*

*and streams in the wasteland.”* (Isaiah 43:18–19)

You have been given a second chance.

We have heard about people who were miraculously saved from death. They are motivated to do something different.

Challenge: What will you do with your new life? Do not let it go to waste.

*Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* (Ephesians 4:22–24)

**VI There is No Condemnation for those who are in Christ**

Romans 8:1 no condemnation. “Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**.

What would it be like living on death row? Not a good place. No hope. Nothing to live for. Waiting for death. That is the worst part.

Why? Because the wages of sin are death (Romans 6:23)

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death*. (Romans 8:1–2)

The law of sin and death is pretty straightforward.

Out spiritual death sentence has been commuted.

People released from death row are not bitter or vengeful, they are joyful at their new-found freedom.

We have not been found “innocent” for lack of sufficient evidence. No!!!

You have been exonerated.

God says about us “Take off his/her filthy clothes.

*“Come now, let us settle the matter,”*

*says the Lord.*

*“Though your sins are like scarlet,*

*they shall be white as snow;*

*though they are red with crimson,*

*they shall be like wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

Challenge: Now that you have been exonerated, what will you do with the new life you have regained?

Let us say it again, and let us shout it from the rooftops: There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. No condemnation. Zero, zip, nada. The verdict is in. Not guilty.

**VII In Christ You Are Chosen by God**

It’s been 50 years, but…

Not being chosen in PE class for baseball…

Even worse, girls in square dancing.

All of us want to be chosen. We want to be noticed, and not for our deficiencies.

Kid: Look, mom! Look, mom! Look, mom!

God made us this way—to want to be treasured.

Women who stay with abusive men. Why? They need to feel special.

Guess what. In Christ, we are chosen by God. We are treasured by him.

*For he* ***chose us in him*** *before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.* (Ephesians 1:4)

God wants you on his team!

God was looking at all the possible teammates, and he chose you.

He wants to be your square dance partner.

GOD CHOSE YOU to be in Christ.

You are chosen, not frozen.

He created the universe for you. He chose you before you were born.

***In him*** *we were also* ***chosen****, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you were also included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.* (Ephesians 1:11-13)

You were included in Christ

In Christ you are God’s MVP

Consider this: God looked out on the dance floor, on the baseball field and he said I want Louie I want Cecelia I want \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Eph 2:10 We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which he prepared in advance for us to do.

He has a role for you on his team.

Even when we were not in Christ, he still valued us.

Ex: The lost Son Luke 15:11-32 The lost son walked away from his father and wasted all of his gifts. He would up in the pig pen. Surely my father will be angry at me and never take me back into his graces. But the father still longed for his son. He ran after him. Amazingly, he had lost no value to his father.

If you are outside of Christ, if you are in the pig pen, God is waiting for you so that he can choose you.

This is what the Lord says: “What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.” (Jeremiah 2:5)

Even outside of Christ we are of great value to him, but we can make ourselves worthless in that he is not able use us to glorify him.

Challenge:

If you have been straying, Return to him and let him choose you again. God wants to say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

To the faithful:

Revel in the fact that God has chosen you and live a chosen life—one dedicated to pleasing his/her master.

**VIII We Are All Children of God in Christ**

**Q: What human loves you the most—would make the greatest sacrifice for you? Whose love for you is unconditional or nearly so?**

**Probably it is your parents.**

**There are different kinds of love:**

**Romantic, love of country, love of poetry, of a pet, of child for parent, of pizza, friendship, love of self.**

**But the kind of love which is the best model for God’s love for us is that of a parent for a child. Arguably, maternal is even greater than paternal love.**

**This love times ten is what he have in Christ.**

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26)

In Christ God sees you as a proud father/mother. One he wants to lavish favor on.

When we come into Christ, we come into God’s family—not as a cousin or a niece. No, we are children. We are the most highly favored one.

Your mom or dad loved, you, but God is a perfect parent.

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! (Isaiah 49:15)

Rhetorical question: Could a mother forget her nursing baby?

Impossible!!!!!

Luke 15:31 My son, everything I have is yours.

This is what God says to us.

Well, what does God have? It is yours!!!! (his Son, his Spirit)

Let’s take this one step deeper.

Which is greater, the love of a parent for a natural-born child or for an adopted child?

The adopted child is chosen.

My parents did not choose me. I am an 50/50 accidental mixture.

Our first child was an “accident.”

God chose you. He adopted you. He said, “I want that one.”

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Ephesians 1:4-6)

Ephesians 2:11-13;

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision”… remember that at one time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And in Ephesians 2:19 we learn;

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household.

Outside of Christ you were foreign. You were other. You were estranged and an alien. But God chose you!!!

 “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:16-17) We get the house and everything in the house.

Your future is established. Your inheritance is assured. You are God’s chosen one—his child.

Challenge: Being part of a family has his privileges, but it also has its obligations. Are you taking on the obligations as well as the privileges that come with being part of God’s family?

**IX You Have Secure Love in Christ**

Illustration: Josh has been doing a series on the “bare necessities” of life. Food, shelter, friendship, clothing, water.

One of those bare necessities is security. We cannot live and thrive unless we live in security from harm.

Fear paralyzes us. We cannot have real life in war-torn areas. In war-torn areas of the world, people learn that security as literally as great a need as food and shelter.

Those of us who are in Christ have the greatest kind of security possible. We have security based on the assured love of our Creator.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Where is the love of God found? It is found in Christ. This is the greatest and most secure source of love available to us, by far!

Jesus is the prince of peace. We can live in absolute security with him.

Even death cannot take us away from the loving arms of God!!!!

What terrifies us?

We fear death. This is a visceral fear.

God has death covered by his love. It cannot separate us from Him.

We fear demons—the unknown and unknowable forces of evil in this world.

But we have a secure love in Christ.

We fear the past because we feel we cannot escape our past. We have spiritual PTSD. Our mistakes, our failures.

But we have a secure love in Christ.

We fear the future. The unknown causes us to fear. That is why we fear the darkness. We are in a room, we hear a noise. We are scared to death. Then we turn on the light and feel silly.

In Christ there is literally no reason to fear the future because God owns the future.

Our distant future is a shoe-in.

Phil 1:21-26. Notice Paul’s attitude here. Whether I live or I die it is all the same to me.

(aside: earlier in the chapter I am in prison, but that is cool too, because I get to share my faith. People are preaching out of jealousy and bad motives, that is all good as well…)

What keeps us going in life? It is the sure knowledge that someone loves us—that someone believes in us. Our dad would take out the bullies at school. Who will love us no matter what? Simply for what we are. Well guess what! God is that person times ten.

Challenge: What are you doing in your life which is “risky” because you have a secure love in Christ. What is your security in Christ allowing you to do that you would not otherwise have done?

If the answer is “nothing in particular” then choose today what you will do because of the secure love we have in Christ.

**X We have eternal life in Christ Jesus**

We were dead in our sins and in the uncircumcision of our flesh (Coll 2:13)

*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:22–23)

Where is this gift of eternal life found? In Christ.

1 John 5:11-12 *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

This is something we possess right now!

[If time: 1 Cor 15:50-57]

John 10:7-10 Jesus came that we might have life, and have it to the full

Eternal life is a good example of “already, but not yet.”

What is this full life we have like?

Fruitful labor and service to God (Philippians 1:21-22). There is also fulfilling work as an ambassador for Christ—as a minister of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20), helping people to have the abundant life that we have found.

Those who are in Christ have a hundredfold blessing to replace the things that we gave up to come to Christ (Mark 10:29–30).

But what will eternal life in Christ be like?

Rev 21:3 “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

Rev 22:1-5 No more curse, no more night.

Challenge: Let us embrace the full life we have now as a foreshadow of the eternal life we will have in heaven.

Let us do so by embracing the “fruitful labor and service” and acting as a minister of reconciliation.

**XI Peace With God in Christ Jesus**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6–7)

What is the peace that we have in Christ like? Paul puts it this way in Philippians 4:7: his peace “transcends all understanding.”

It is mind-blowing.

Where do we find peace with God? In Christ!!!!

v. 6 It comes with prayer. It comes because we can present prayers and petitions. God hears you!!!!

Our peace comes from knowing that we have the ear of the one who created the universe and who cares about us personally.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Justified = aligned. If our car is out of alignment, friction ensues. (my car last week) In Christ we are aligned with God and things run smoothly. We are not constantly generating friction and sparks. To be justified with a thing is to be perfectly aligned with that thing. If our car is out of alignment much friction ensues. When our car is in alignment, everything runs smoothly. In Christ we are aligned with God. We are not constantly generating friction and sparks in our relationship with him.

We are home. We are where we belong.

Peace = lack of conflict

*The wolf will live with the lamb,*

*the leopard will lie down with the goat,*

*the calf and the lion and the yearling together;*

*and a little child will lead them.*

*The cow will feed with the bear,*

*their young will lie down together,*

*and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

*The infant will play near the cobra’s den,*

*and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.*

*They will neither harm nor destroy*

*on all my holy mountain,*

*for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord*

*as the waters cover the sea.* (Isaiah 11:6–9)

In Christ, the Samaritan will be friend with the Jew.

The old will be friends with the young.

The political conservative will have peace with the progressive.

How? Because we have the most important thing in common.

Peace = lack of fear.

Jesus said, “Do not worry about your life” (Matthew 6:25). A more literal translation of this scripture would be, “Do not give a single thought to your life.”

Worry is like a negative feedback loop.

In Christ we can have peace, because he has already overcome the only adversaries that had any power over us. He also said,

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

This peace we have in Christ is a good example of “already but not yet.”

It is something we have, but something we grow into.

In heaven we will have peace because of where we find ourselves.

In this life we have peace in spite of where we find ourselves.

But “take heart, for I have overcome the world.”

Challenge: Let us embrace the peace of God by prayer and by “not giving a thought to our lives.”

**XII Fullness of God in Christ Jesus**

For in Christ all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. (Colossians 2:9–10)

Point #1 in this passage is that Christ is the fullness of deity. He is God-in-the-flesh.

Point #2 of this passage: In Christ were are made Christ-like. We are brought to fullness.

What do you see yourself becoming?

What is the best version of “you” that you can imagine in your wildest dreams?

As children we were idealists.

We were a beautiful princess, carried off by the handsome prince.

We were going to join the peace corps.

We were going to hit the game-winning home run.

We were the veterinarian, making all the animals happy.

But then reality hit…..

The world forced us to be realists.

We are actually pretty “normal.”

What is the best version of “you” you can imagine?

What about becoming like God?

This beats riding the fire engine in and saving the day (like Bella)

Western Christianity talks about salvation.

Eastern Christianity talks about deification. Christianity is a process of becoming what God is making us—god-like!

If you think about it, this idea of becoming like God was introduced very early in the Bible. “God said, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness… So God made mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26–27).

*God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world.* (1 John 4:16–17 CSB)

Theresa of Avila (1515–1582) put it:

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which He looks

Compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are His body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. (2 Corinthians 2:15)

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. (2 Corinthians 4:10–11)

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

And my favorite:

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away… But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:12–13, 16–18)

This is the fullness we gain in Christ. We become like Christ and therefore we begin to “smell” like Christ. Our very lives are the tablets on which Christ is revealed as we are made into his image. In other words, the life of Christ is publicized in our lives. We are renewed over time, but also day by day. This is a good reason for us not to lose heart.

Who, me?

Yes, you.

Challenge. Let us present our bodies as living sacrifices so that God can transform us by the renewing of our mind.

**XIII We Have Surpassing Worth in Christ**

The world can make us feel insignificant.

You are 0.0000000012% of all humanity 1/eight billion

Science: you are worth about $3.50

1972 Ford Pinto $200,000/life

What is valuable? What is the value of things?

What would they have to pay you to take your right arm? What about your left arm?

What would they have to pay you to rob a bank? To steal a pack of gum?

“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” (Luke 9:25).

What is your child worth to you? David gave a kidney for his son, but would not sell it for ten billion $.

Phil 3:5-11 The worth of being in Christ Jesus.

*But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ*

Paul “had it made.” Right pedigree Cream of the crop.

Right “life”

What was it worth compared to being in Christ?

Less than nothing. “a loss”

What did he gain to replace these things? Phillips translation: “overwhelming gain”

Lotte Tower 123 stories. tall, but not “overwhelmingly tall”

The world is like “garbage” by comparison.

Your house? Garbage Your degree? Garbage. Less than nothing in comparison.

Your “goodness” (religiousness) a dung-heap.

Not only is life in Christ of great worth, we gain great worth in Christ.

Christ’s ambassadors 2 Cor 5:20

We inherit all things in Christ Rev 21:7

We will judge angels 1 Cor 6:3

We have great worth for others as well, as we offer them salvation.

Most valuable of all: We become precious to God.

Isaiah 49:16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

Exodus 19:5 Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. The whole earth is mine.

Jesus said concerning those who belong to him:

Matthew 10:29-31

*“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

1 John 3:1

John says about those who are in Christ, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”

Challenge:

Let us treat our bodies, our time, our energy, our purity, etc. as being of surpassing worth.

**XIV We Are All One in Christ**

With technology, social media and globalization, one would think the world would become more united.

Talk to anyone in a microsecond.

Get anywhere in 1-2 days

Form a relationship with a person in Mumbai, Melbourne or Minneapolis

But divisions have increased:

Black vs white

Conservative vs liberal

Young vs old

Male vs female

Poor vs wealthy

Environmentalist vs business interests

Sunni vs Shia

Global South vs Global North

Outside of Christ division is an incurable human disease.

But this is different in Christ

Gal 3:26-29

*So in Christ you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew or Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs together according to the promise.*

In Christ the dividing lines are erased in an instant.

Rich and poor equal

Male and female equal

Black, white, brown equal

Even republican and democrat does not matter.

We talked about this in James. No favoritism!!!!!!

My paper: 42% latino/Hispanic 40% white 13% African American/black 4% Asian

Census: 50% latino/Hispanic 31% White 7% African American/black 7% Asian 3% other/mixed race

Age 20% 20-30 43% 30-50 37% 50 and up.

And we have a ton of teens, but we need to get them baptized!

How can we have this unity?

Because we have one overwhelming thing in common: Christ!

In the US sports have created a surprising unity.

Why? Same goal and same uniform.

Us: We have the same goal and the same “uniform”

We have “clothed ourselves with Christ.”

Blaine and I have relatively little in common….

Josh and I have little in common….

Joelle and Dar and Jan have little in common….

But we have Christ in common!!!!!

“What the world needs now, is love, sweet love.”

But of course, this is “already but not yet.”

God has declared it true—null and void—and it is our responsibility to make it true.

Ex: young vs old. We are DETERMINED to put campus students into families!!!

We are DETERMINED to let Latino/Hispanic voices be heard around here.

We are DETERMINED to listen to the voices of our women!

We are going to celebrate and embrace our cultural differences.

(and we are going to stay out of politics. No posting strong political opinions on facebook!)

What Paul declared in Gal 3:28 actually happened in the NT church.

Slave = free

Male = female (Pricilla Lydia etc….)

Jesus associated with women… It was a scandal!!!

Jew = Gentile = Barbarian = Roman

And they even married one another.

(and it was not without some struggle Acts 6 Galatians…)

This was remarkable. It was astounding

And the “world” did not always appreciate this, although they marveled at it.

The wealthy and privileged especially….

Matthew 5:14-16 We are a city on a hill.

All this was prophesied. Micah 4:1-3

*In the last days*

*the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established*

*as the highest of the mountains;*

*it will be exalted above the hills,*

*and peoples will stream to it.*

*Many nations will come and say,*

*“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,*

*to the temple of the God of Jacob.*

*He will teach us his ways,*

*so that we may walk in his paths.”*

*The law will go out from Zion,*

*the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

*He will judge between many peoples*

*and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.*

*They will beat their swords into plowshares*

*and their spears into pruning hooks.*

*Nation will not take up sword against nation,*

*nor will they train for war anymore.* (Micah 4:1–3)

This “Mountain” is the Church of Christ.

Zechariah 8:23 “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you’” (Zechariah 8:23).

I have experienced this:

Russians and Latvians

Ukranians and Russians

Whites and Blacks in South Africa

Lack of anti-American feeling in Viet Nam. Ex Quoc Hung’s hospital.

Peggy and John Hurkman

Psalm 133

How good and pleasing it is when God’s people live together in unity!

This was Jesus’ prayer:

John 17:23 “I in them and you in me—may they be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them, even as you have loved me.

But remember, it is “already but not yet.” This must be maintained and built upon.

But there are people not represented well among us.

South Asians

Middle Easterners

What are we going to do about this?

The poor (and the rich!) need to feel welcomed among us.

1 Cor 12:21-26 Those the world would not honor must be specially honored among us.

Challenge:

Let us celebrate and build on the unity of culture, race and age we have.

Let us build stronger bridges between generations and welcome those cultures we have not yet reached for Christ.

**XV All the Promises of God Find Their ‘Yes’ in Christ**

Heb 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.

Gen 15:18-21 Abraham was promised, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kennizites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites”

Abraham received a postage-stamp sized piece of this promise. The cave of Machpelah near Mamre, which he bought from the Hittites. (Gen 23:7-20)

In Christ we have so much more right in our laps.

2 Cor 1:18-20a

*But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not “Yes” and “No.” For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not “Yes” and “No,” but in him it has always been “Yes.” For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ.* (2 Corinthians 1:18–20a)

Q: How many promises?

Q: Where?

Similarly, Peter tells us,

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.* (2 Peter 1:3–4)

Let us consider just a few of them.

“You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Checkmark on that one!

“I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). Got that one covered.

“I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). That one is good to go as well.

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean... I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:25–27).

Outside of Christ we had none of those things—not a single one—yet all are “Yes” in Christ. Please take a moment right now to add to this list. What are some of the promises of God you can think of that are made “Yes” in Christ? It will include a great number of promises found in the New as well as in the Old Testament.

Here are a few more:

Heb 13:5, Deut 31:6 “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Matthew 28:20 Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

John 11:25-26

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

Isaiah 54:10

“Though the mountains be shaken

and the hills be removed,

yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken

nor my covenant of peace be removed.” (Isaiah 54:10)

James 1:5

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

Mark 11:24

*“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.”* (Mark 11:24)

Abraham believed God’s promises. To us who believe in Christ, all of God’s promises are “Yes” in him. The way Paul put it concerning Abraham’s faith:

Romans 4:18-22 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Those of us who inherit the faith of Abraham also receive all the promises given to Abraham (although he did not)

To some extent these promises are received already, but not yet.

All his promises are yes in Christ, but the extent to which we realize them depends on our faith.

Challenge: Let us believe God’s promises without wavering in unbelief so that God can deliver on his promises.

How do we do this? We live in such a way that shows we do in fact believe his promises.

We live as if we believe that God will provide all we need.

We live as if we believe that God has overcome the world.

*It is written, “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.* (2 Corinthians 4:13–14)

So, let us not waver in our faith. Let us believe and speak, and let us watch God fulfill all his promises in Christ.

**XVI You Have Every Spiritual Blessing in Christ**

Eph 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Where are all the spiritual blessings found? You guessed it! In Christ.

God really wants to bless us as a father wants to see his children blessed.

But this is no “prosperity gospel.”

It is based on *hesed*. Translated as love, but not primarily a feeling.

as lovingkindness, mercy, loyalty or faithfulness.

Covenant love. Loyal love, in which everyone involved looks out for the best interest of the others, not self.

The love Ruth had for Naomi.

The love God has for us.

Ex: Malachi.

This is what God wants from us.

Because he did not get it from Israel (in Malachi) he could not bless them.

Notice: Every spiritual blessing.

*This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may life and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”* (Deuteronomy 30:19–20)

*Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors.* (Deuteronomy 30:9)

*OT:* primarily physical blessings.

Our blessings are primarily spiritual ones.

Outside of Christ we had some physical blessings, but no spiritual blessings.

How many? However many there are. Every one of them!

Phil 4:19

*And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*

Those needs are primarily spiritual ones.

We don’t get all we want, but we get all we need.

Deep-felt needs.

Here is a good list:

1. Value

2. Purpose

3. Security

4. Love, intimacy

5. Hope

**Value:**

We already talked last week about the surpassing worth we gain in Christ.

**Purpose:**

Illustration: That doctor lady in Boulder. Did not like vacations.

 “Why?” I asked. “Because when I stop working, I think about how meaningless life is and it gets me depressed.”

How demoralizing.

It is not that in the world we had no purpose. This doctor found purpose in her work.

But, when she stopped to think about it… It all vanished in view of eternity.

Like Solomon who said “Meaningless, meaningless…

A purpose with eternal consequences.

We are building something here in Bakersfield that he eternal meaning.

This is greater than any physical blessing

And it gives the physical blessings greater meaning as well.

As Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

**Security.**

It is impossible to live a blessed life without security.

In places like Syria, Afghanistan, Central Africa the principle thing they seek, even before food, is security. We cannot function without this basic need met.

Take heart, I have overcome the world.

 “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?” (Romans 8:31–32).

As a Christian I cannot be blackmailed.

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

The things we value most cannot be taken from us.

‘“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5–6).

“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:2).

Our eternal home is already being prepared for us. We can take risks to serve God.

**Intimate, loving relationships.**

We had love outside of Christ, but…

In Christ we have the most important thing in common.

We confess our sins to one another

We look, not only to our own interest but also to the interests of each other (paraphrasing Philippians 2:3–4)

We have greater breadth and depth of love.

**Hope**

Outside of Christ, what did we have to hope in?

The reality of death puts the things we value into perspective

We have a nice vacation, but what does it matter in the face of death?

Illustration: Harold Abrams in 1924 Olympics. Eric Liddle gave up his place in the 100 meter.

Abrams won, but Liddle found him in a bar, depressed. He had reached his life’s goal. So, what next?

He realized that, despite his victory, he had no hope.

In Christ we have hope.

An enduring and confident expectation of eternal life.

Jesus said to Martha about the death of her brother Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life. the one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25–26).

That is the definition of hope.

Truly we have every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Challenge: Let us embrace hesed. Let us have a loyal covenant-love for God so that he can do what he wants as our father—to give us an abundant life and every blessing in Christ.

**XVII The Mystery of God Is Revealed in Christ**

Pontius Pilate “What is truth?” (John 18:38).

Modernists and postmodernists still debate this question today.

Life has many great mysteries.

What is the meaning of life?

Does history have a purpose and a direction, or is everything random?

Why is the avocado pit so large?

Where is truth to be found?

Who holds the keys to the great mysteries of life?

We have shows like X-files. Unsolved Mysteries. Twilight Zone

Old Testament “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

Everyone likes a good mystery

In the Old Testament, much was revealed but much was left as a mystery.

Kingdom of God hinted in Old Testament.

Clues as to timing of arrival.

Prophecies of Messiah.

1 Pet 1:10-12

Concerning this salvation (that which is in Christ), the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with greatest care, trying to find out the time and the circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow… Even angels long to look into these things.

Much mystery

Unanswered questions

Guess what! In Christ, all is revealed.

The Mystery of ages is uncovered.

Colossians 1:25-27

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. To them God has chosen to make know among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

What do we have in Christ? We have Christ in us!

The mystery is Christ in us.

Paul continues with this idea:

Colossians 2:2-3

My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in who are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The mystery *is* Christ.

Not only does he give us the answer. He ***IS*** the answer.

Every important answer is found in him.

What is my purpose? To become like him and to give him glory. We created to do good works, prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:1)

What is the meaning of life? Paul: For me to live is Christ.

What is my value? Infinite.

Where am I going/What happens when I die? Thanks to Jesus, to eternal life with God in his kingdom.

What is God’s will? That all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

Who am I? You are a child of God—created in his image.

What is the underlying nature of reality?

The secret of the kingdom of God is revealed in Christ

Mark 4:11 The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside, everything is said in parables.

What is the “secret” of the kingdom of God?

Ephesians 3:3-6

*Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 3:8-9

Paul’s goal was “to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God”

The mystery revealed is the means of salvation, first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles. All will inherit the promise together. Who would have thought of that idea?

We do not need the Freemasons and their secret handshakes.

Every important mystery is revealed.

Origin of the universe? Christ! (by him and through him all things were created Coll 1:16)

Is there meaning to history? Yes! Christ is the predestined one. All world events point to Jesus. He is the reason for the pax Romana. He is the one born at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia.

His birth/incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and return are the focal points of all history.

Why the avocado pit is so large? Sorry….

Christ is the answer to all of the great mysteries of life.

Challenge: That is an easy one.

Make Christ and his mystery known to the world.

Q: Who will you reveal the mystery of Christ to this week?

Let us, as ambassadors, make this mystery known to as many as possible, which is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

**XVIII The Reality of God Is Found in Christ**

This topic is related, plus I introduced the idea last summer.

The Old Testament is a shadow. It is a mere diorama. It is a symbol. The real thing is found in Christ.

Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These things are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

In a dim room things are less clear. Fuzzy. Our pupils dilate. We can only see black, white and shades of grey.

In Christ, all is made clear.

Shadows are indistinct (because the sun is not a point of light)

This is life outside of Christ. Meaning does not come into focus. We see truth, but only dimly. We needed to come into Christ.

We say “Let’s get real.” In Christ, things get real.

Hebrews 8:3-6 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

Copy = *hupodeigma* Like a sketch-plan. Like a diorama.

This is religion without Christ. Like the Holyland Model in Jerusalem.

Which would you like to worship at?

Shadow = *skia*

Heb 10:1 “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves”

Imagine someone talking to your shadow. Hey! I am right here!

The tabernacle was only a shadow of Jesus serving as high priest in heaven.

Moses lifting up the snake in the wilderness to save them from the snakebite is a shadow of Christ being lifted up.

Moses leading the people out of slavery in Egypt is a shadow of Christ leading us out of spiritual slavery.

Moses giving the people bread is a shadow of Jesus, who is the bread.

Abraham offering his one and only son at Mt. Moriah is a shadow of God offering his one and only son on the same mountain.

Challenge: Let us go for the real thing. Let us throw of being religious and embrace the reality of life in Christ with all that entails.

**XIX You Have the Promised Holy Spirit in Christ**

Joel 2:28–29 we learn that in the last days, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people… Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

Ezekiel 36:27 “I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

Ezekiel 37:14 “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord”

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was around. David begged God in Psalm 51:11 “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me”

Here is the big difference: John 14:17 “he lives *with* you and he will be *in* you”

In Christ, God comes and makes his home in our bodies. He lives in us.

Ephesians 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirt, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

We have God’s indelible seal of approval in Christ.

It guarantees our salvation.

What guarantee did we have outside of Christ?

When did we receive this seal?

Acts 2:38-39

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

He convicts us of sin (John 16:8–9).

He helps us to stop sinning (Romans 8:5–11).

He helps us in our prayers, communicating things that words cannot even express (Romans 8:26–27).

Outside of Christ we were alone; we were desolate and without hope.

In Christ, Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit.

Actually, this IS the mystery. Let’s go back:

Coll 1:27 To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Challenge:

Let us live holy lives and not quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19)

Let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25)