



All in All – Touchpoint for July 27, 2022

Colossians 3 (The Message/MSG) He Is Your Life¹⁻² So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.

³⁻⁴ Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.

⁵⁻⁸ And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.

⁹⁻¹¹ Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.

Grace and Peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

Eugene Peterson puts it this way in “The Message”:

*“From now on everyone is defined by Christ,
everyone is included in Christ.”*

The Revised Standard Version has it like this:

“For Christ is all and in all.”

I have discussed before that we refer to our bible readings here on Wednesdays as bible passages. And I do that because a passage is something that takes you from one place to another. A passage is something that makes you end up in a different place or location.

I don't know if there is a bible passage that has taken me to a more different location or place than these words in recent years:

“For Christ is all and in all.”

For St. Paul, this is the end result of dying and rising in Christ. This is the end viewpoint. This is how one sees the world and others.

For Christ is all and in all.

It is the end result of dying and rising in Christ. It is also the beginning of life in Christ. It is the alpha and the omega of life in Christ.

Christ is all and in all.

It isn't that I never felt this way. My experience of going to Japan as an English teaching missionary in my early 20's was an encounter with this passage.

I had gone over to Japan thinking I was going to share Christ with the god-forsaken people of Japan ... and they ended up sharing Christ with me.

I had gone over to Japan thinking I was going to show Christ to the god-forsaken people of Japan ... and they ended up showing Christ to me.

I had gone over to Japan thinking I was going to take God to the god-forsaken land of Japan ... and guess who I discovered was already there before I got there? ... GOD!!!

Imagine my surprise when I realized God was already somewhere I wasn't.

Imagine my chagrin when I realized God was doing quite nicely in the world without my presence.

For Christ is all and in all.

For Christ is all and in all.

It is quite a shock to the system when you think about it.

I can't tell you the number of church programs I've attended – some quite popular – that are centered around the theme, “God is depending on YOU!”

And while that title serves my narcissistic spirituality quite well, thank you, and might even cause me to put a bumper sticker on my car that reads, “God is MY co-pilot,” ... it all leads to a crash landing when confronted with the passage, “*Christ is all and in all.*”

Christ is all and in all.

I was basically raised in a Christian system that said, almost universally, that we only have two approaches to non-Christians – CONVERT or CONDEMN.

But here's my question: If Christ is all and in all, then who is a Christian and who is a non-Christian? It becomes difficult to make that distinction, doesn't it?

Isn't this what Paul is trying to get at when he says that in Christ there is no “Gentile or Jew” split in the world? Or do we simply think he is trying to say we have a new way to split people apart – Christian vs. Non-Christian – as opposed to Gentile or Jew? Somehow I don't think he's introducing a new way to separate people. Kind of hard to do that when you conclude that “*Christ is all and in all.*”

Do you see what I mean by saying “a passage takes us from one place to another”?

And sometimes, maybe even most of the time, I'm not sure I even want to go there.

If Christ is all and in all, what does that mean for our political, cultural and nationalistic discourse?

If Christ is all and in all, what does that mean for our stance towards the least, the forgotten, the refugees on our border?

If Christ is all and in all, what does that mean as I drive by that person on the street corner?

So maybe there is another “C” the church should be involved in other than Converting or Condemning. Maybe the church should be involved in Celebrating. Celebrating the Christ that is present in you and me and all people and things.

Do you see what I mean by saying “a passage takes us from one place to another”?

And sometimes, maybe even most of the time, I’m not sure I even want to go there.

It was interesting as I looked up commentaries on this passage. The vast majority of people didn’t go there but wanted to comment on verses 5 and 6 – especially 6:

“⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.”

That is where most of the commentators wanted to stay. This wasn’t going to be a ‘passage.’ This was going to be a confirmation.

Now I have two perceptions of those people who commented on these two verses. First, they were a little heavy on the fornication and impurity, and more than a little light on the greed. Second, they spoke with such anger and wrath against THOSE SINNERS that it made me wonder if they had read verse 8:

“⁸ But now you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive language from your mouth.”

In other words, they were acting the same way I am right now... OOPS! Preacher heal thyself!

For Christ is all and in all. Even those who don’t see Christ as all and in all. Which must mean that Christ is even in me, when I can’t see him in those I most disagree with.

Paul writes, “... you have died... and you have been raised with Christ... and in that renewal... Christ is all and in all.”

I think of all the things I have to die to for me to be renewed in the reality that “Christ is all and in all”:

- Die to the idea that I either convert or condemn those who believe differently from me.
- Die to the idea that only I can take Christ to others.
- Die to the idea that “I Have Christ and You Don’t.”

All those must die so that I can:

- Be renewed in the reality that Christ is in those different from me.
- Be renewed in the reality that others are being the Christ to me.
- Be renewed in the reality that “Others have Christ in them” as well.

And the only way to die and to be renewed, is to simply have these words spoken over me:

“Christ is all and in all.”

“Well...,” I can imagine you saying, “... if Christ is present in others, you might as well say he is present in a piece of processed, bleached, tasteless white bread, or flat, unleavened cardboard bread, or maybe even some grape juice, fermented or otherwise.”

“Well, yes.” I think I will go ahead and say that.

Of course, there are those who will say that the bread and wine only become the presence of Christ after we convert them with some magical words. Either WE convert it to something special or WE condemn it to ordinariness.

Ahh, yesssss, we keep wanting it to all depend on us!

My Goodness, the absurdity of it all.

“For Christ is all and in all.”

Before we do anything. After we do anything. While we are doing anything.

“For Christ is all and in all.”

It is a passage from death to life...

From death to all of our political, cultural, tribal and religious systems and beliefs, to a renewed life in Christ... who is all and in all.

So there is both death and life in these words...

But all in all...

Christ is All and in All.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Come, Drink of Living Water

(The London Fox Taize Choir)

Come drink of living water, never thirst again.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Come, Bring Your Burdens to God (Woza Nomthwalo Wakho)

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Swahili:

Woza nomthwalo wakho,

Woza nomthwalo wakho,

Woza nomthwalo wakho,

Uyes' akasozathi hayi.

Come, bring your burdens to God,
come, bring your burdens to God,
Come, bring your burdens to God
for Jesus will never say no.

The Meal

Our Father (The Lord's Prayer)

(The London Fox Taize Choir)

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

(Peter Christian Lutkin, Messiah College Concert Choir, Linda L. Tedford)

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you.

And give you peace (repeat)

The Lord makes his face to shine upon you and be gracious, and be gracious unto you.

And be gracious. The Lord be gracious. Gracious unto you. Amen.