

“A Full Reality Christian”

Scripture: Colossians 2:6-19

Graphic: plants (live and fake)

Key Verses: 9 For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.

Theme: It's not until our lives are rooted (our Holy Spirit connection with Christ), established (in faith-soil), and supported (by the body of Christ) that our lives will be fully real as followers of Christ. In the world, we will be tested and tried, but our connection to Christ weathers all the storms.

1) Introduction

- a) In Genesis 1, the Bible tells us that on the third day, God created the trees and plants.
- b) Psalm 1 reminds us that, “1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”
- c) There's just something about a healthy, full, radiant tree that brings visions of grandeur and brings inspiration.
- d) Not so much for fake trees, right? Anyone ever have a fake tree in your house that you were so proud of that you showed your house guests that come over? “And THIS (!), THIS is my prize fake ficus tree!” Not so much, right?
- e) Fake trees can be nice...they only need to be dusted now and again...but fake plants, by definition, are not fully real – in fact, very little about them is REAL in the sense of living, growing, and producing fruit and oxygen.
- f) This morning, Paul will help us understand the difference between being a human being and being a human being who is a Full Reality Christian. And, not surprisingly, it has a lot to do with roots, soils, and support that also makes a full reality tree what it is...
- g) As we dive in, please open your Bibles with me to Colossians 2, starting in verse 6...
- h) Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Verses 6-7

- i) If you were here last week, you'll remember that we invite Jesus Christ to be part of our lives because HE is the firstborn of ALL creation. Through him, in him, and for him, ALL things were created. HE sacrificed himself to take away our sin so we could be assured of our salvation and serve him with our lives.
- ii) As Paul continues, now, in Chapter 2, verse 6, his assumption is that he is writing to those who have RECEIVED that grace (that gift) from God...that they have received Christ as their Lord and Savior. That may not be completely true, but Paul is casting a vision of the kingdom of God available to everyone.
- iii) My assumption this morning is that there may be some here that have not yet accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior...I don't know most of you very well yet. I would love for you to come to my office sometime, or call me on the phone, and tell me your story of how Jesus changed your life and you are walking with him – that He's your Lord and Savior. I LOVE testimonies!
- iv) But just as Paul is casting this vision, I am casting a vision this morning...and it's available to all people...
- v) And he encourages us to CONTINUE to live our lives in him...continue to live for Christ...to allow Christ to transform our minds to be like his...to use a theological term, to sanctify us.
- vi) Paul uses the metaphor of a tree – being ROOTED and BUILT UP in Him and be ESTABLISHED in the faith, just as we were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
- vii) Think of a tree for a minute...I used a tree this morning to illustrate to the kids that we have to be well-rooted and have good soil and have good support and care to grow...this is EXACTLY what Paul is getting at.
- viii) The roots Paul talks about is our Holy Spirit connection with Jesus Christ. Just before Christ ascended into heaven after having been raised from the dead, he PROMISED to send the Holy Spirit to be with us. And, on the Day of Pentecost...the apostles received his Holy Spirit and that same Holy Spirit is with us – CONNECTING US TO CHRIST.

- ix) That's our roots that sink into the soil for nourishment.
- x) But what's the soil? The soil is what we are rooted and built up in, and that's faith. Dirt that has no nutrients is just dirt, right? But rich, organic, dirt is called soil because it is good for the plants...for growth.
- xi) It takes FAITH in Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection...his redemption and freedom...to keep us growing in our discipleship – our desire to follow Christ and make him the center of our lives.
- xii) Finally, Paul talks about being established. Did you ever drive along the highway and see brand new trees planted by the highway crew? Each tree usually has one or two supports that hold the tree in place until it is established. And even after it's established, those supports help anchor the tree during wind storms or floods.
- xiii) This SUPPORT, as Christians, comes from the church – the body of Christ. We get support from being part of a church family both in the good times and the bad. And even though the church is, shall we say, 'less than perfected yet', it's still the instrument through which God is advancing his kingdom on earth.
- xiv) And it's not until the tree, the Christian, is ROOTED, SUPPORTED, and ESTABLISHED that it becomes a healthy, full, real tree... a healthy, full, real Christian.
- xv) And it isn't until we are rooted, supported, and established, that we can go out and boldly share the love of Jesus Christ with a broken and hurting and sin-filled world.
- xvi) But Paul has some cautions for us...

b) Verse 8

- i) When you put a plant out in the environment, especially if it's a young plant, or one that's been inside and sheltered, there are multiple things that can stress the plant...even destroy the plant or tree.
- ii) To the Colossians, Paul warns them not to be taken captive by philosophy and empty deceit – those things that come from humans and our minds – and not from Christ.

- iii) When we go out into the world, or simply, really, even just exist in this world, we are subjected to a vast array of ideas and philosophies that go directly against the authority of Jesus Christ.
- iv) And we, as humans, love to join in with coming up with brilliant solutions to the world's problems...we love to invent ways to impress ourselves. Oil in the Gulf...politics and diplomacy...our pursuit of money and fame and status...these are the empty deceits that Paul talks about.
- v) They are NOT the goal, according to Christ. They are part of the human condition that Jesus came to free us from. They are part of the New Age movement at Lilydale...they are part of the danger involved with fortune-telling and taro cards...they are our endless pursuit of wealth.
- vi) The God who created all things, and through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ, all things were created, wants us to focus on Christ and not the vain and empty deceits of this world.
- vii) And from the rootedness, the support, and the establishment of CHRIST, we are to go into the world to serve for HIS good and not our own.
- viii) Because, as we read last, and Paul says again in verse 9...

c) Verses 9-10

- i) A full reality Christian is someone who understands that, in Jesus, the fullness of God dwells in bodily form and who bows to the authority of Christ in their lives. In response, as we read in verse 7 – there is a life abounding in thanksgiving, and vocation to serve Christ in what we do.
- ii) Without that, our desire to follow the empty deceits of this world in order to find the fullness that only comes through Christ, will leave us bitter, broken, and lost.
- iii) It's sort of like this fake plant over here...the real plant has roots, needs water, produces fruit and flowers and oxygen, it's established in the soil and is supported as it grows.
- iv) This fake plant is rooted in plastic and grounded in fake grass. It has some newspaper to hold it up...pretty sad.

v) Without Christ, this is who we are. Rooted in the plastic glimmer of this world, never to dynamically grow. Supported by newspapers that promise things that life can't deliver when left to itself. With not real purpose but to look good and require nothing of anyone, except a dusting job every six months.

vi) God has called you by name...

d) Verses 11-15

i) See, historically, circumcision in the Jewish culture was a permanent mark acknowledging the covenant that God made with His people. When a young boy became of age to accept the covenant that God made to always be their God, that boy was circumcised.

ii) The problem with that, was our sinful natures prevented US HUMANS from holding up our end of the deal...and the deal was, the humans would keep the law, make the animals sacrifices, etc., and God would provide, forgive, and protect. Well, God was always trying to get His people to do the right thing and was having a hard time offering forgiveness to a people that didn't care about God. The plan just wasn't working.

iii) And so Paul tells the Colossians in verse 11, that a new mark, a new acknowledgement of the covenant has come...and instead of cutting the flesh to be marked, God came into our hearts in the form of Jesus Christ. God claimed us and named us FULL REALITY CHRISTIANS through Jesus Christ...

iv) When we were buried with him at baptism...and raised with him through faith in the power of God.

v) I'm saddened sometimes when I see baptism become something that the pastor just "does" to kids or adults. The whole point of baptism is going down into the water, dying, and being raised from the dead – just like Jesus. It's what GOD does that's important, really. When we sprinkle a teaspoon of water on someone's head – it loses something. God still works, but as a pastor, I will tell you my favorite form of baptism is full immersion. Infants, youth, adults...come to the water and be BAPTISED, but let's get wet so we KNOW what that means.

- vi) Jesus died to take away our sins and so we could be fully real – like that plant in the soil. Jesus died to erase the record that stands between us and God.
- vii) And, here’s my favorite verse in this passage...He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. (PAUSE). He set aside our sin...he set aside our fake, empty, carnal deceits...he set aside our rejection of him...he set aside all that trash in our lives...and allowed Jesus to be nailed to the cross, so we could be fully real right here, right now.
- viii) He triumphed over the very ones who wanted to destroy him by allowing them to do that very thing. And THAT is why we can be Full Reality Christians.
- ix) Therefore...and here the take-away message for this morning...

3) Application – Verse 16-19

- i) When you are walking with Christ, you are a Full Reality Christian.
- ii) Do not let anyone condemn you for the freedom that comes in Christ. Paul says, don’t let anyone tell you what to eat or drink, or tell you what festival to celebrate (yearly, monthly, or daily).
- iii) Now, be careful, here. Does that mean I can drink lots of alcohol, and party and do whatever I want? Not if you’re walking with the Lord. Can swear like a sailor and say mean things to people? Not even close. The WHOLE of scripture is sufficient for salvation. And we are to be humble like Christ. We are to be loving, like Christ. We are to NEVER lead others into sin...or take God’s name in vain. We have freedom, YES!, but the FULL REALITY CHRISTIAN is constrained – AND LIKES IT THAT WAY.
- iv) The Christian lifestyle is an extremely functional lifestyle because you always looking for the next right thing.
- v) Paul goes on to say – don’t let people disqualify you. Just because you’re a sinner doesn’t mean you have no worth in God’s eyes. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God...but we are also his children and sheep of his pasture. He cares for you and wants you to walk with Him.
- vi) No one is disqualified from the grace of God and his forgiveness...but you have to accept it.

4) Conclusion

- a) Finally, Paul tells us to hold fast to the head, Jesus Christ, and when we are connected to Him, we GROW! Grow in faith...grow in love...grow in servanthood...grow in humility...grow!
- b) Our soil is faith...our roots that go into the soil are the connections we having through the Holy Spirit...and our support comes from the body of Christ, the church.
- c) A FULL REALITY CHRISTIAN cultivates the soil of faith...strengthens the Holy Spirits work in life through prayer, reading of scripture, the sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism, and stays connected to the body through mission, discipleship, and worship.
- d) These two plants tell a pretty bold story of our journey in life...one is lifeless, fake, plastic, only for show...the other is growing, seeking, expanding, producing, and full reality.
- e) Are you a Full Reality Christian? Are you growing in faith, seeking deeper levels of holiness, expanding your territory, and producing spiritual fruit? God has called you by name today...
- f) Let's pray...