

All Things New
Week 1: Jesus Only
Colossians 1:1-8

Happy New Year, everyone! I'm so glad you're here with us on this first Sunday of 2024, AND the first week of our series through Colossians called *All Things New*.

There is something invigorating about "new" isn't there? New house, new car and that new car smell. A new baby...and that new baby smell! A new relationship, new year. New is exciting. It's filled with all sorts of expectation and potential.

There are multiple reasons why we're starting the year with a 12 week series through the 4 chapters of Colossians. But one of the main reasons is because Colossians is all about the newness of life that is available to us in Christ. The Apostle Paul points to Jesus as the one who makes all things new. In fact, if I had to sum up Paul's letter to the Colossians in one sentence, it would be this: **When Jesus gives us a new identity, we find a new purpose and joy in life.**

When Jesus gives you a new identity...you no longer find your value or worth in the fleeting things of this world, but in Him, you will find a new sense of purpose and joy in your life. And, we see this played out right here in the opening words of Colossians. Look at it with me. Colossians 1, verses 1 and 2...**(READ Col. 1:1-2)**

Now, it might not seem like there's much going on here, but when you dig under the surface just a little, you find an incredible amount of life change represented in these two verses. They're filled with people who have been made new by the grace of God in their life through Jesus.

You have Paul, who was once a persecutor of Christians. He tried everything to stop this Jesus movement, until he had his own encounter with him that rewrote his story. Now he's writing this letter from a Roman prison cell because he wouldn't stop talking about Jesus. This persecutor of Christians is now a leader within the Church and being persecuted for his faith in Christ, because Jesus makes all things new.

Then you have Timothy. His father was Greek, his mother was Jewish, and he was confused. Growing up outside of Israel, he wasn't Jewish and his family didn't follow their customs, and so he was probably well versed in Greek society and practices. At some point, Timothy's mom and grandma come to faith in Christ and their influence in his life led him to find and follow Jesus, too. Even though he wasn't a part of the Jewish family of faith, he was adopted into God's family through faith in Jesus and is now a brother in Christ, because Jesus makes all things new.

And then you have this church in Colossae. We'll get to know this city and the people in the church as the series goes on, but I want us to at least have some geographical context...**(show pictures)**

Colossae had once been a prominent city, but their version of I-69 bypassed them and drove business and industry about 15 miles west to Laodicea. When Paul writes his letter to the Church, this once influential city is now considered insignificant in the Roman world. But that's not who the Colossae Christians are. They were once insignificant, but now, Paul says they are God's holy people. Set apart and loved by Him because Jesus makes all things new.

When Jesus gives you a new identity, you find a new sense of purpose and joy. And Paul's blessing over this Church in these opening words of his letter is that they experience what they've already received in Christ...God's grace and peace on their lives. Grace and peace that is theirs in Christ.

But, there's a reason why Paul is writing this letter to them. Some false teachers had crept into the Church and were trying to steal what belongs to them in Christ. They were creating confusion and chaos, telling them that Jesus was not enough. He was good, but they needed more. They needed to put their faith in something or someone else to rescue them, to give them what they're looking for. Hope and peace. Power and influence.

And so, Paul writes this letter to remind them of the fullness of what they've already received in Christ. The transformation that Jesus was already making in their lives. He's already made them new. They don't need to put their hope in anything or anyone else. They're already victorious in Christ. They don't need another savior to rescue them. And he points to the work that Christ is doing in them and others to prove that Jesus is all we need. Look at verse 3...(READ vs. 3-8)

Now, a quick note on Epaphras. You can't talk about the church in Colossae without talking about this guy. We don't know how Epaphras came to faith, all we know is that when Jesus got ahold of his life, he became a force to be reckoned with in the Kingdom of God. When Jesus gave him a new identity, he found a new sense of purpose and joy.

Epaphras is a hometown kid to the Colossians. He went through this region planting churches and telling people about Jesus. He probably led most of the people in this church to Christ and disciplined them. When Epaphras saw what was happening in the Churches in this region, Churches he helped start...how people were being led astray by slick-talking types who claimed to know Jesus, but were false prophets, he went to Paul and was like, "We've got a problem." So, from his prison cell in Rome, Paul writes this letter to the church and he starts by saying, "Hey! Remember WHO you are and WHOSE you are!"

He'll get pretty direct later on in the letter, but he starts by reminding them of who they are in Christ, **whose** they are as God's chosen people, and what Jesus has already done in their lives. And he says at the end of verse 6, all of this happened when they truly understood God's grace.

So, what does that mean? What does it mean to understand God's grace? Well, let's start with that part. What is God's grace? I think Paul gives us a really good definition a little later in chapter 1. He says in vs. 13...(READ vs. 13-14)

You see, in our sin, we are cut off from God. Apart from Him, we give into our flesh and natural desires that lead us away from the Father and into a life of spiritual darkness. And that causes so much physical and emotional pain in our lives. Sin causes brokenness in our life and the lives of others.

But, by grace, God rescued us from that darkness. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, the price for our redemption was paid in full. When we put our faith in him, we are no longer slaves to our sin. We are brought back into a relationship with our Father who forgives us and sets us free. In Christ, we have been rescued and redeemed out of the darkness and into the light of God's Kingdom.

The beautiful message of God's grace is that Jesus carried the weight of our sin to the cross, and now God **lavishes** his love on us, even though we don't deserve it. That's grace, but what does it mean to understand it? Understanding grace doesn't mean you're just able to recite what God has done or some of what I just shared.

The word Paul uses for "understood" in verse 6, it's more than just comprehending something. The word means to know fully, in a completed sense. It's the way a husband and wife know each other. There's an intimate knowledge expressed in this word, not just a head knowledge. And, it's not just knowing, but actually acting on what you know and understand.

Amber and I celebrated our 21st anniversary on Thursday. [\(Show picture\)](#) We got to celebrate with 8,000 of our friends watching the IU women whoop up on Michigan! Side note...I love Adalyn's face in this picture [\(Show close-up\)](#)

After 21 years, Amber and I know each other pretty well. I joked with her that our marriage is drinking age and I've probably made her want to drink from time to time! But, there's an intimacy in our marriage today that wasn't there 21 years ago. I don't just know things about my wife. I know what she values, what she cares about. I know what makes her smile and I know what makes her cry. I hope that this understanding of my wife is experienced in the way I love her. That what I feel on the inside is expressed on the outside.

I think that's what it means to understand God's grace. It has an effect on you. It begins to do something IN you that starts to come OUT of you. Think about the analogies Paul uses in these verses. He talks about their faith and love **springing** from the hope stored up in them. Springs are those places where water moving underground finds an opening and emerges to the surface, providing refreshment to those who drink from it.

He says that the gospel is bearing fruit in their lives. Fruit is a plant whose seed is inside of itself. When the gospel seed was planted in their hearts, it started growing fruit that now they, and others, get to enjoy.

I think what Paul is driving at is that **There's an interworking of God grace that leads to an outward expression of that grace in our lives.** What's happening inside of us is springing up to the surface, it's bearing fruit, to provide refreshment and nourishment to us and others.

Paul's message to the Colossians is basically, "Listen, people are saying you need this and you need that...but you already have ALL you need in Jesus. You don't need anything or anyone else to experience the riches of Christ that are already ours by the grace of God. The new life he's given you in Christ is already springing up and flowing out of you. It's already bearing fruit in your life."

And, I believe Paul's message to the Colossians is his message to us...**You don't need Jesus AND, you just need Jesus ONLY!** (leave on screen)

Can I peel back the curtain and share my heart for a little bit? The reason we're starting the new year off in Colossians...and not just any new year, but THIS new year and all 2024 is going to bring...is because I believe the Lord wants us to know this...you don't need Jesus AND, you just need Jesus only.

There's going to be a lot of people over the next several months telling us that we need them to rescue us. We need them to rescue us from the other side that's going to take away all our rights. We need them to rescue us from *those* people. We need them to rescue us from the impending doom of whatever advocacy group backs them.

But listen, as followers of Jesus, we don't need someone to rescue us. That jobs already been done by Jesus. HE alone has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into His Kingdom. HE alone has bought our redemption and the forgiveness of our sin. We don't need another Savior. That position is already filled in Jesus.

There's going to be a lot of temptation this year to fight and claw for power. To believe that we need Jesus AND our person in office to rescue us. But Church, as your pastor, can I challenge you to rise above that?

Don't let anything or anyone steal what is yours in Christ Jesus. Don't let them rob you of your peace, your faith, your hope, or your love. Remember WHO you are and WHOSE you are. Let the grace of God springing up and growing in you flow out in the way you walk in the grace and peace given to you from God our Father.

The church in Colossae was filled with people trying to steal that grace and peace from followers of Jesus. And, as we look into this new year, I image we can all think of things that want to rob us of God's grace and peace in our life, too. But, Jesus gives us new life and a new identity, and in Him, we find a new purpose and joy in life that cannot be taken away.

And so, as we close out today, I want to invite us into a time of prayer...(set up)

1) As you look ahead into 2024, is there anything or anyone that wants to steal the grace and peace that Jesus brings into your life?

- Year of transition for you. Uncertain about the future.
- Conflicts happening around the world. What's next?
- Caring for aging parents or adult children.
- Decision you need to make?

2) Spend some time remembering who you are and whose you are.

- Jesus has transformed and changed you. Made new in him and give a new purpose and joy. Thank him for that and ask for the courage to live in it.
- For those in here who are not followers of Jesus, I just invite you to reflect on your life, what are you putting your hope in? Where do you turn when things feel out of your control? Reflect on how that's going for you and if maybe Jesus wants to offer you something more.

We are God's children, set apart and loved by Him. We have already received his grace and peace. Now, faith and hope and love spring up in our lives from Him. Live like it and don't let anything or anyone steal it from you!

(Response Time)