

November 20, 2022

Colossians 1:11-20

“Marching Orders: Embrace Your Inheritance”

How many of you can tell me the address of the home you lived in as a toddler? I would be willing to bet your family drilled you on your address – mine certainly did. And long after I had any use for “6814 Fox Point Road,” I carried it with me.

We have *any number of markers that tell us who we are and where we belong*. We grow up on the look out for *the things we will claim and the things we will let claim us*. We need to be careful, however, because *not all markers of identity are created equally*. Some help build us up – and others steal life from us.

National or ethnic identity can give us positive direction, or it can be the source of dismissing those who are not like us. Our pursuit of life with God can be positively transformative or it can mislead us into making God into our own image.

This was the case with the people addressed by our letter which we heard from this morning. There is a fair amount of speculation about who exactly the people upsetting the church and leading them down the primrose path were – but no matter who they were – they *were tapping into the desire to grasp our identity as God’s children*. And, according to the author, there was a whole lot of bait and switch going on. Flash – but no substance. *The appearance of faithfulness wrapped in highly directive religious practice*.

We are encouraged to make sure our desire is *not* to be more religious – but *more connected* to Christ – who is the one who counts. There is a connection here with Moses who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land. *Jesus is the one who brings us out of slavery and into God’s life...it is not something we create* by hitting upon the perfect religious practice. Our practice of faith *is focused on Jesus* through whom all of life, including ours, was created.

This is a passage we are meant to feel as much as think about. It is a passage which soars in its descriptions. The last part of our passage is *poetry* which may have been sung in the early days of the church.

Passages like this pop up from time to time because when we reflect on God we are *driven to the edges of language and expression*: and poetry and music express what might otherwise be lost. Another reason is the context in which everyone was living at the time.

*The preeminent power of the time was Rome. And the leader of Rome was Caesar. The most common way Caesar was referred to at the time was the saying, "Caesar is Lord." So, when the early church said, "Jesus is Lord." it was not in a vacuum. It was to say, **the one who matters most isn't the one who runs the empire – but the one who runs all of creation.** It was to claim an identity which was beyond the ties of empire and clan. It is something we want to do as well.*

The part of the book we read today has, as its theme, *reasons for thanksgiving*. Which is kind of cool since we are on our way to a national observance of thanksgiving. When we gather – when we give thanks – we will do well to remember we stand before the divine mystery – and **the more we are open to the wonder of God - the more we discover who we are meant to be.**

The most important marker of who we are is not the sum of our surroundings and circumstance. We live with a *cosmic and universal scope*. *We need to broaden our vision; we need poetic discourse...seeing more than **simply ourselves and how we manage- opening ourselves to the wonder of life and how God manages us.***

It is important to know who we are. All the great spiritual guides say so. And today we are reminded *our efforts to be top dog are misguided* because there is only one who above all things: The one who spilled his blood to bring us peace with God. The irony is, *we gain more self-understanding and more genuine self when we embrace our inheritance in Christ*. When we stop trying to earn God's love and presence and *stand in wonder and awe* before the glory of the only son who makes us like himself more and more all the time.

Let us be genuinely grateful this week because the only one who can really mold us into the image of Christ so we will know who we are and where we belong – this one offers us the grace and love we need to discover our God given reality – to become those who embody the inheritance of Christ. And that's something to be thankful for.