

CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

February 21, 2010



Series: A New Allegiance The Fullness of Christ

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

Last week many of us watched as Tiger Woods issued a mea culpa for his years of indiscretion. Woods seemed to realize that his former approach in life left him feeling empty, a major theme in Paul’s letter to the Colossians. In Colossians 2:6-15 Paul is not merely pointing out the hollow philosophies of this world, but furthermore points us toward the only way to achieve fulfillment, life with Christ. In doing so Paul shows us the problem of emptiness and the joy of fullness in Christ.

Paul begins to show us the problem of emptiness in verse 8 where he targets “empty and hollow philosophies”.

While many such philosophies existed in the ancient Roman world, Paul critically brings them together forming a blanket

statement about their inability to deliver on their promises. A surefire plan for success doesn’t stave off failure, a philosophy of relationships promises us love but crushes our hearts instead; a philosophy of entitlement promises us unbridled freedom but makes us self-centered, destroying relationships. Such is the nature of idolatry (anything we look to other than God to give us life, worth, value, and security). Idols moreover operate through our desire to control the world and in the ancient world you had to build an alliance of many gods and hope you didn’t disappoint them if you were to have a successful life. Although separated by millennia, not much has changed between our world and Rome’s. Such a life is an exhausting endeavor of fear. The modern temples are the workplace, gym, and home though the sacrifices are the same; peace, joy, and purpose. We

believe idols work for us but in the final calculation we work for them.

But ultimately Paul says that the way to know the fullness of life is to know the fullness of Christ. Neither the capricious gods of the pantheon nor the Caesars of this world truly care for the citizens. Yet in Christ all the fullness of God dwelt revealing the great love of God for his people. It’s because of the great reach of God that he fills us and brings about transformation in our lives. Believing in the work of Christ for our salvation causes us to abandon personal agendas and embrace God’s. In the final verses of this section Paul shows us that if we embrace God’s agenda we are made alive in Christ, set free from the power of idolatry, and liberated from fear. Uniquely the Gospel story is the only story which conquers evil through weakness, defeating evil by draining it of its power at the cross. Go in peace!

Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

Application Questions: Colossians 2:6-15

1. In this passage Paul warns us about “hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” In our contemporary context what comes to mind as you read this warning? Describe your answer in detail.
2. Our modern sensibilities tell us that idols are not real. Why could one say that we haven’t moved much beyond the dynamics of the Roman pantheon? Where are our temples?
3. Scripture shows us that the nature of idolatry is that we give power to something that’s powerless which in turn fosters a life of fear. What’s an example of this relationship from your own life and how does it play itself out?
4. Why can we say that religion and irreligion are practically the same thing? How is the gospel different from both?
5. Discuss how the God of Scripture is different from the various Caesar’s of this world. What is the difference in their respective agenda’s and how does this either led to enslavement or freedom?
6. How have you seen God move from just a concept to a reality in your own life?
7. How does an acknowledgement of sin help to actually foster dignity?
8. How was it that on the cross Christ “disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”? What impact does this have on your daily life?



Lent personified at a [Carnival](#) celebration. Detail of 1559 painting "The Battle between Carnival and Lent" by [Pieter Bruegel the Elder](#).

Living in Lent

Some of us find ourselves new to the faith and the seasons of the church calendar, but as spring rolls around we have probably heard the terms Easter, Lent, and even Ash Wednesday. Perhaps in school you had a friend that gave up chocolate for Lent and you question his/her sensibility. Lent can be defined as the period preceding Easter that is devoted to worshipping God in various ways that recall Jesus’ forty day fast in the wilderness. The Lenten season is marked by the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter and it’s during this time period that we reflect on the work of Christ as well as our own life. This time of reflection reaches its climax during the week before Easter, known as the Passion Week in the life of Christ. Our reflection turns to jubilation on Easter as we celebrate the risen Lord Jesus whom death could not hold.

Three concepts have traditionally guided the church during the Lenten season; prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (helping others using time, talent, and treasure). These three practices correspond with the robust nature of the gospel and subsequently even our own vision statement for the church. Prayer is the practice of coming before God recognizing him as the authority in our life and our normative influence. Fasting is the practice of abstaining from food recognizing that the self cannot “live by bread alone, but by every word from God.” Almsgiving is the practice of moving out into our daily situations, the places where we live, work, and play, utilizing personal resources for the benefit of others.

These practices are not intended to move us into religion whereby we somehow please God or garner his approval. Such work has already been completed by Christ and it’s his work that influences our approach to these spiritual disciplines. The practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are not for the benefit of God, but rather are a means of grace for our lives. God has designed our heart know his love, affection, approval, and power. Yet we find it very difficult to see him as the source. We sin when we attempt to empower our design utilizing the resources of this world. The practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving provide the opportunity for us to step into reality, to check ourselves. We realize through these practices that God alone is sufficient for our every need, worthy of worship, and able to empower us for service unto others. Over the next few weeks, we’ll examine these practices with greater depth praying that God would lead us in a fruitful Lenten season.

What went wrong then? Why are the powers so threatening? What went wrong was that human beings gave up their responsibility for God’s world and handed their power over to the powers. When humans refuse to use God’s gift of sexuality responsibly, they are handing over power to Aphrodite, and she will take control, when humans refuse to use God’s gift of money responsibly, they are handing over their power to Mammon and he will take control. And so on. And when the powers take over, human beings get crushed.

N.T. Wright