



WEEK FIVE

COLOSSIANS:



JESUS at the
CENTRE

..... of Our Desires

Whitehill Church of Christ

July - Sept 2016

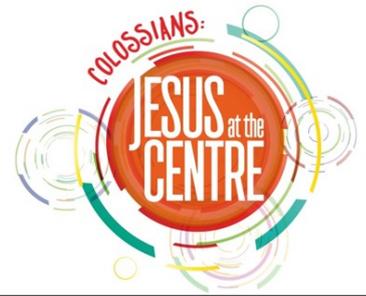
JESUS - The Centre of our Desires

Whitehill Church of Christ

Pastor Paul Hicks

Sunday 28th August 2016

Sermon Notes



Disease Affecting us Identity Amnesia

I am in Christ therefore I am important, accepted, valued and loved.

“Self is what enables us to refuse to settle down, in love with the mediocre, satisfied with the banal, because the self is always on its way to somewhere else. Self is the seeker within. We get one thing we want — and find that we want something more. We achieve what we set out to do — and find that we begin to look almost immediately for some other hill to climb.”

Joan Chittister

One of the insidious places you can look for your identity is in your

Religious Performance

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. ¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Colossians 2: 8-19 (English Standard Version)

Legalists' were coming into the church at Colossian's and saying to be a good Christian.

- 1) You need to follow the rules
- 2) You need to practice good piety
- 3) You need to have spiritual experience

Henri Nouwen Society

"I don't often 'feel' like a beloved child of God. But I know that is my most primal identity and I know that I must choose it above and beyond my hesitations. Strong emotions, self-rejection, and even self-hatred justifiably toss you about, but you are free to respond as you will. You are not what others, or even you, think about yourself. You are not what you do. You are not what you have. You are a full member of the human family, having been known before you were conceived and molded in your mother's womb. In times when you feel bad about yourself, try to choose to remain true to the truth of who you really are. Look in the mirror each day and claim your true identity. Act ahead of your feelings and trust that one day your feelings will match your convictions. Choose now and continue to choose this incredible truth. As a spiritual practice claim and reclaim your primal identity as beloved daughter or son of a personal Creator." conceived and molded in your mother's womb

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority..
Colossians 2: 9:10

The Christian life is from fullness, not from emptiness.

3 aspects of our identity in Christ that allows us to keep Jesus at the centre of our identity

- 1) You are God's child, therefore you are significant
- 2) You are forgiven and accepted by God
- 3) We stand in the victory of Christ



BIBLE STUDY NOTES

(Home or Personal)

INTRODUCTION:

How many TV Shows or Movies have you seen that use the idea of someone having amnesia.

What happens in the story?

How many times have you seen that happen in real life?

OPEN:

Today we will look at this idea that Identity Amnesia is when we forget who Jesus really is and therefore we forget who we are "In Christ"

SERMON RECAP:

Go through the sermon notes once again.

Which parts or points stood out for you the most?

BIBLE STUDY:

Read Colossians 2:8-19

What happens if we accept an empty philosophy that treats Jesus as not enough? Vs 8

What is Jesus identity according to vs 9?

How are the Colossians described in vs 10?

How are they described in the first part of vs 13? What did God do for us according to vs 13-15

What sort of things were the Colossians judged on or condemned about according to verses 16-18?

How does Paul describe these things in vs 17?

DISCUSSION

In Craig's sermon he talked about how, when we meet new people, we tend to ask very quickly about their job – "what do you do?" Occupation is tied up with our identity; who we are. Identity might also be linked to a range of other things – age, stage of life, interests etc. Describe yourself according to these things.

What is the danger of taking our identity first and foremost from these things rather than from our relationship with Jesus?



As we have been saying, the major issue for the Colossians seems to be that other people were coming in and suggesting that there is something else, more than Jesus, that they need to do to be complete.

What Paul says in 2:9 is similar to what he writes in 1:19. He is spelling it out and giving the implications of it. Jesus is not just fully human although He is. Jesus is not just full of God although He is. Jesus was and is the bodily form taken by God Himself. How can anything be bigger, better or more than that?

Yet the issue for Colossae seemed to be that the teachers had another list of rules, experiences and revelations that they needed to do or participate in before they were “complete” or “good” Christians.

Today or in earlier days, the church had a list of its own rules – no jeans, no drums or guitars, etc. What rules have you seen over the years?

What is good about some rules?

What are the dangers?

Read this quote from Henry Nouwen. In what ways can you relate to it.

"I don't often 'feel' like a beloved child of God. But I know that is my most primal identity and I know that I must choose it above and beyond my hesitations. Strong emotions, self-rejection, and even self-hatred justifiably toss you about, but you are free to respond as you will. You are not what others, or even you, think about yourself. You are not what you do. You are not what you have. You are a full member of the human family, having been known before you were even molded in your mother's womb. In times when you feel bad about yourself, try to choose to remain true to the truth of who you really are. Look in the mirror each day and claim your true identity. Act ahead of your feelings and trust that one day your feelings will match your convictions. Choose now and continue to choose this incredible truth. As a spiritual practice claim and reclaim your primal identity as beloved daughter or son of a personal Creator." conceived and molded in your mother's womb. **Henri Nouwen**

PRAYER

Pray for each other that we can keep Jesus at the Centre of our Desires (in our identity).

Pray that we continue to find our identity in Christ, that Christ is enough and that our action will not alter the fact that we are secure in Christ. And because we are secure in Christ we are loved, valued and accepted by God.

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Desires

Day 1

Colossians 2:9-11 (The Message)

“Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. [10] When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything. [11] Entering into this fullness is not something you figure out or achieve. It's not a matter of being circumcised or keeping a long list of laws. No, you're already in—insiders—not through some secretive initiation rite but rather through what Christ has already gone through for you, destroying the power of sin. “

MORE!?

In one of the most well known scenes in the musical Oliver, the orphan, not content with his portion size asks the workhouse boss Mr. Bumble for an extra serving. Oliver himself says *“Please Sir. I want some more”* Mr. Bumble can't believe it. *“More? MORE!”* (Think Harry Secombe in that role)

Earlier on in this Chapter the Apostle Paul has been warning the Colossians not to get deceived by this a philosophy that lessens the importance of Christ. He doesn't identify the fine details of this belief system directly, but it is basically saying that Jesus is OK as far as he goes but there is more. It is saying that through different knowledge, greater wisdom or spiritual enlightenment, something else apart from Jesus they can have more of what they need to be complete people.

In answering that philosophy, I can hear Paul doing his best Mr. Bumble impersonation. *“more? MORE?”* How much more do you need? God's fullness is in Jesus Christ. There is no wisdom, understanding or enlightenment that can come close to what He is already. How can you think that you need more when HE already is the MOST!

Other translations talk about the FULLNESS of God living in bodily form in Jesus. (verse 9) The Message here uses very vivid language to get across the idea that the sciences or even astrology don't come close to helping us understand the ultimate meaning in universe. God's fullness is in Jesus. Without Him anything else that tries to explain meaning is empty.

And before the Colossians think that they are second rate Christians or third class in order of spirituality, Paul has a great statement in verse 10. If you are in Christ this fullness extends to you as well. Have you been told that you need to do something more or know something more? Paul is saying that you have all you need in Jesus. And because we are in union with Him, everything we need to be complete, full and fulfilled is in Jesus and in Jesus alone.

Beware of any idea, belief or philosophy from any book or person that suggests that Jesus is not Sovereign and Supreme and worthy of our absolute devotion and adoration.

You want more? You've already got it! In the Lord Jesus Christ.



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Desires

Day 2

Colossians 2:10-13 (NLT)

“.. and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe. [11]When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away of your sinful nature. [12] For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. [13] You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins.”

GLORIOUS TRUTH – GRUESOME TALK

The Apostle Paul was a lot of things. Delicate and polite he wasn't. Maybe it was more common in those days to bring up topics like circumcision. However, we had better not try it in conversation today.

One of the things these false teachers in Colossae were saying was the Colossian Christians who weren't Jews had to be circumcised if they were to be true Christians.

Paul brings up the subject to remind the Colossians of the importance of what happened at their baptism where they first came into union with Christ. He is saying that they don't have to be circumcised because at baptism the real spiritual meaning of this act took place. The circumcision that they underwent wasn't a physical act so much as a spiritual one.

In male circumcision a part of the flesh was cut off. In baptism our flesh (sinful nature) was likewise cut away from us. Circumcision was the sign of the old covenant. Baptism is the sign of the new covenant. (All the males out there - let's hear it for the NEW Covenant!) But it was much more than that as well.

Circumcision had no faith element for the 8 day old boy. Baptism and faith go hand in hand. Baptism is a physical act where we go through spiritually our own death burial and resurrection. It is the union of Christ with us so that His death burial and resurrection become part of our life as well.

Verse 12 says that they actually trusted in the power of God. It is one thing to believe that God wants to do something. It is another thing to believe that God is ABLE to do something. We need to know that God's power is capable of anything. In our baptism, that trust results in us rising to a new life.

We don't need to add anything to what Christ has already done. God can do nothing more and nothing greater for us than He has already done for us now that we are "in Christ."

If you have been baptised, think back to that time you were buried and raised with Christ. You have had a good start – keep going.



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Desires

Day 3

Colossians 2:13-15 (NIV)

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, [14] having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. [15] And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

SINS - SPONGED NAILED and PARADED

The Public Notices and Announcements section of a newspaper is an “interesting” read. They are usually for notices of a legal nature, generally placed to satisfy legal requirements. Some ads are placed by government agencies that are legally required to convey information to the general public. Some are about road closures. Some announce prize winners of various competitions. Some talk about who will and won't be responsible for debts incurred in someone's name. Have a read of them sometime.

The ancients had a similar idea to public notices. They didn't print newspapers but did have a system of making public, issues regarding debts. This is what is referred to in verse 14.

Continuing this idea that God cannot do any more for us than he has already done in Christ, Paul talks about cancelling the written code. Most likely this referred to a handwritten IOU. In Bible times, it was common to write out what was owed to whom, how often it would be paid and what penalties incurred for non payment.

When this “IOU” was written on animal skins, it could be wiped off the ‘page’ by a sponge dipped in liquid. This is the idea when Paul says our sins were forgiven and the written code cancelled. Christ has sponged our debt away with His own blood.

Paul then uses another word picture. He nailed it to the cross. In ancient times the other way of finishing an IOU was to nail it to a public notice board. Everyone could then see that the payments had been made and the matter was settled to the satisfaction of both parties. It was signed off and finished. This was the ancient equivalent of Public Notices.

Jesus took the debt we owe because of our sin and nailed it to the most public place – the cross. Jesus said it is finished when He died. Not only was His life and work finished, but our debt cancellation was done. The cancelled IOU hangs on the cross for the entire world to see.

But there is one more illustration Paul uses to convey the victory that is ours. The triumphal procession is something that he also refers to in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. After a conquest in Roman times, the triumphant army would parade the prisoners of war through the streets tied to chariots. It was wonderfully liberating for the victors and the people of the area knowing that they are safe. But it was humiliating for the defeated.

Paul says that Satan and his forces have been defeated. Now we don't need to fear the power Satan once had over us. What power he exercises is because we let him have his way. But effectively they have been disarmed. We have the victory through Christ. Take some time to reflect on this and thank him for your forgiveness.



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Desires

Day 4

Colossians 2:16-18 (CEV)

“Don't let anyone tell you what you must eat or drink. Don't let them say that you must celebrate the New Moon festival, the Sabbath, or any other festival. [17] These things are only a shadow of what was to come. But Christ is real! [18] Don't be cheated by people who make a show of acting humble and who worship angels. They brag about seeing visions. But it is all nonsense, because their minds are filled with selfish desires.”

LEGALISM

‘No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.’ So said, Eleanor Roosevelt, who was wife of US President Theodore. The statement is fine as far as it goes. But sometimes, because the message people give us is so strong and constant or we feel so weak, we do subconsciously give our consent.

I think that this is how the Colossians felt; inferior. They were being judged – looked down upon by people who thought they had a better way of living. The Colossians got the message that only if they observed the Jewish Feasts and Festivals, weekly monthly and yearly events that they could be considered in good standing with God.

We have to be careful that we don't start getting the same message and start feeling second-rate. In a desire to live holy lives, sometimes we can get the idea that only by obeying certain laws (insert someone's version of those laws here) that we are in good standing with God.

Legalism is a heavy burden to carry. Christians who are legalists either give up or get stuck up. They either end up thinking that they'll never make it or they begin to think that they are the only ones who will make it. Both extremes are a problem.

Legalists try to change themselves and others from the outside-in by their rules. God wants to change us from the inside-out by His grace. Legalism often starts with a good intention. It remembers what great results were produced by people who embraced a certain regimen but then imposes those end results on those who haven't had the same experiences.

Legalism has the form without the substance. It has the outward appearance but not the heart. Legalist Christians are driven by a passionate desire to serve God but often end up doing a disservice to people by the way they judge others for not measuring up.

As always Paul points the Colossians back to Christ. He is real. He is the substance that the rituals were meant to point to in the first place. Paul wants to make sure that they maintained their freedom in Christ and kept Christ at the Centre of their faith and not rituals and ceremonies.

Do you feel inferior at times? Have other people made you feel second class? Focus on the positive statements that Paul makes and what you can do to enjoy your freedom in Christ and not be burdened by it.



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God

Jesus at the Centre ... of our Desires

Day 5

Colossians 2:20-23 (NLT)

"You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the evil powers of this world. So why do you keep on following rules of the world, such as, [21] "Don't handle, don't eat, don't touch." [22] Such rules are mere human teaching about things that are gone as soon as we use them. [23] These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires."

WILL WORSHIP

Tea that helps you lose weight. Cars that are able to run on water. Robots that will do all our chores. These are all things that gave us great promises about their effectiveness but failed to deliver.

Some people in Colossae thought that having and trying to follow a strict set of rules was the way to a strong Christian life. But while this lifestyle might have looked good from the outside, cracks eventually start to show. It didn't live up to what it promised.

There is a difference between spiritual practices that are designed to teach self control and self discipline and those that actually pander to self-centredness. Verse 23 shows us that Paul is referring to those things that only have an appearance of being helpful.

I actually like the King James Version translation of this passage. It says..

"Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. "

'Will worship' is a good term. It says that just by sheer will power we are able to overcome sin. Paul says if we just concentrate on religious activities without the heart, we will never be able to overcome sin to the extent that we can or should. If we think that our will is stronger than God's power, we are effectively saying that we are honouring or worshipping our abilities above God's.

Well what does he suggest? The Chapter and verse divisions we have in our Bible are a later addition to the New Testament. They are a good idea to help us locate a particular sentence but they can stop us getting the flow of thought. The next verse, the beginning of Chapter 3 which we will look at in more detail next week, gives us the answer.

For now suffice to say that it is through setting our minds and hearts on Christ. The ability to control our sinful nature doesn't come from vigorous self restraint or rule following, but from a heart and mind that is captivated and controlled by the risen Jesus. Centre your life on HIM.



What did you hear?

What did you think?

What will you do?

Now talk to God



Changing



with Jesus



Whitehill
church of christ

Phone 07 3288 0186

Website www.whitehill.org.au

Address 219 Whitehill Road, RACEVIEW 4305

Postal P.O. Box 4002, RACEVIEW 4305