



Sermon Growth Guide

July 7, 2024

From Lacking To More Than Enough



Sermon Growth Guide

July 7, 2024

From Lacking to More Than Enough

Colossians 1:1-14

Key Verse: Colossians 1:6

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace.

Big Idea: Believe in life’s fullness—it transcends external circumstances and resides in the heart. Paul, whether free or in chains, experiences the same heart attachments. True fullness flows from within, like living water, when Jesus pours out His Holy Spirit (John 7:38).

Foundations

This week we begin the second of our short summer sermon series entitled More Than Enough. Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians to both encourage them for their faithfulness but to also correct false teaching that had infiltrated into the Colossian church. This false teaching suggested that in addition to the saving work of Jesus Christ, more needed to be added to bring about completeness and enlightenment. These extra things included obeying the Old Testament Law with a focus on human effort earning righteousness before God, along with embracing knowledge and philosophy to take a person to a higher level of understanding. In short, the false teachers claimed that Jesus was insufficient and more was needed.

Paul offered a counter-argument that Christ was quite sufficient and that the new life in Christ was more than adequate. It was, in fact, more than enough! Even so, there are still people in Christian churches today that believe at some level that human works are still needed to earn God’s favor and righteousness. There is only one Savior who is the antidote for a sin-sick world, and that is Jesus Christ, God’s Son and our Savior.

Understanding God’s Word

Read Colossians 1:1-14 What are the things that Paul affirms regarding the faith of the Colossian Christians? What Christian teaching(s) do you find imbedded in Paul’s words? In Colossians 1:9-10 Paul said, “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way...”

Applying God’s Word

In what ways have you allowed discontentment to creep into your life and rob you of the joy and peace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ? How might your life change if you fully surrendered to the Lordship of Christ? How would you rate your view on the sufficiency of Christ for salvation and for living as His disciple in the world today?

Witnessing God’s Word

Is there someone in your life that is struggling to find peace and contentment? What words of encouragement and hope might you offer? How might God use you and your authentic story to share the love of Jesus with others?

Now, this may be a first for someone preaching at First Pres, but let me share something about Gene Simmons, the founding member of the rock band, KISS (Gene Simmons adult pic). Gene was born in Israel to Hungarian Jewish parents. His mother was in a concentration camp during WWII. After the war, Gene and his mother immigrated to the United States.

Gene was 8 years old at the time (Gene and Mother pic) and remembers his mother being examined by the immigration officer at (I believe) Ellis Island. His mother did not speak English, so through an interpreter the officer said that they were welcome to America and all his mother needed to do was to raise her hand and pledge allegiance to her new country. To comply, Gene's mother raised her hand like this (Nazi salute) because that's all she knew how to do. The officer approached her, lowered her arm, and said, "You will never have to do that again!" The land of the free and the home of the brave!

Upon coming to America, Gene Simmons recounts how impressed he was by the size and abundance of resources in America. In Israel they lived in poverty. In America, food was available and in large quantities. Stores were stocked full of products. It was more than he had ever seen! It was more than enough!

For the next four Sundays, we will examine the first two chapters of the letter to the Colossians, with the goal of reminding us that Jesus is the true and only source of fulness, contentment and wholeness. In fact, when the Holy Spirit resides in us and when we surrender our wills to His, not only will we be whole, but we will be filled to overflowing.

If you asked someone today, "How are you doing?" there's a very good chance that you may hear some level of a spirit of discontentment. People seem discontent for lots of different reasons these days. There is discon-

contentment with jobs, with relationships, with a lack of customer service, with the general direction of our country and the divisions between people. I suspect that some of us, even here, feel a similar discontentment at times.

In early 2021, we began to hear of something called The Great Resignation. Some also called it The Great Reshuffle or The Big Quit. It was where American workers voluntarily resigned from their jobs en masse due to dissatisfaction with their jobs, their income, their working environment, and so on.

In a recent Gallup survey, 48% of America's working population is actively job searching or looking for a new opportunity. In March 2021, 74% of American workers said they were actively disengaged from their jobs and careers. Gallup stated that The Great Resignation is probably better understood as The Great Discontent.

While these statistics may be true, that is not how God created us to live. According to Jesus, the values of the Christian life are very different. Jesus spoke of a very different set of values for those who receive His gift of grace and forgiveness. The Christian worldview provides a very different set of lenses through which we see the world. For Jesus, this life is to be abundant. In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10 NASB)

Jesus is sufficient. In fact, He is more than sufficient. He is more than enough! And that's what we want to understand more fully, more deeply and more personally in the coming weeks. But let's look at what the Apostle Paul had in mind as he wrote to the Colossian church:

The Apostle Paul probably never visited Colossae and was not directly involved in the founding and establishment of the Christian church there. Paul was likely in prison as he wrote this letter, but he

**MORE
THAN
ENOUGH**

had heard good reports of what was happening in the Colossian church. In verses 3 and 4 of our passage Paul said, “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people...”

Later, in verses 7 and 8 Paul adds, “You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.”

Paul was very thankful for the faith of the Colossian Christians, but if Paul was so thankful, why did he need to write this letter?

There is evidence that false teachers had infiltrated the Colossian church. But there is also considerable scholarly debate about who these false teachers were and what these false teachers were teaching. Collectively, this false teaching has come to be known as the Colossian Heresy.

There does seem to be some agreement that the Colossian Heresy was a unique blend of teachings that were contrary to the core of the Christian gospel. It was somewhat Jewish, in that while Jesus may be the Messiah, there was still a need to abide by the Torah and obey the Old Testament Law. It was also somewhat philosophical, in that while Jesus might be the Savior, there was still a need to attain full enlightenment through wisdom and knowledge.

NT Scholar, FF Bruce summarizes the Heresy this way, “All this was presented as a form of advanced teaching for a spiritual elite. The Christians in Colossae were urged to go in for this progressive wisdom and knowledge (gnosis), to explore the deeper mysteries by a series of successive initiations until they attained perfection (teleiosis).”

The Colossian Heresy was an enticing stew of different ingredients that

challenged the sufficiency of Christ and tempted the Colossian Christians away from their sole allegiance to their Savior. How this

may have been understood is that, while Jesus Christ may well be the Messiah and Savior, He was insufficient to bring people to a state of spiritual perfection or completeness. And human effort, whether by works or by knowledge, was required to bring people to that state.

Lest we think that this is an ancient problem limited to the first century Church, I’m afraid it’s alive and well in today’s church. A study by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University found that 52% of Christians in America accept a works-oriented means to salvation. What this suggests is that, while Christians generally accept God’s grace in Jesus, they still believe that they must perform sufficient good works to earn God’s favor and attain righteousness.

In the opening verses of Colossians 1, we find Paul offering a heart-felt prayer for the Colossian Christians. He said in verses 9 and 10, “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way...”

If we look closely, we see that the definition and measure of value is very different than that of the false teachers. Whereas they would say that human effort is required to attain completeness, Paul’s emphasis is solely dependent upon the perfection and sufficiency of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.

When we think back to The Great Discontent, the issue may well be what constitutes value and how we measure it. The world most certainly has a very different set of values compared to that of the values Christian Church.

**MORE
THAN
ENOUGH**

I recently read an article by Travis Bradberry who is an emotional intelligence contributor to Forbes publications. The article was entitled, 10 Troubling Habits of Chronically Unhappy People. The

#2 habit of chronically unhappy people was “Spending too much time and effort acquiring things.”

The author said, “There’s an ocean of research that shows that material things don’t make you happy. When you make a habit of chasing things, you are likely to become unhappy because, beyond the disappointment you experience once you get them, you discover that you’ve gained them at the expense of the real things that can make you happy...”. Things like family, friendships, and quality of life.

Blaise Pascal was a French philosopher and theologian who lived in the middle 1600s. Wait, doesn’t he look a little like Gene Simmons of Kiss? Pascal was a brilliant child prodigy who excelled in his academic work. Historians believe that Pascal had a significant religious experience in 1654. I’ve shared this before, but one of Pascal’s most famous quotes is, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

I wonder how many of us try to fill that vacuum with material things in our quest for contentment and peace? In John 4 we find the well-known account of Jesus encountering a Samaritan woman at a well. The conversation is fascinating. A Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman? Unheard of! Some back and forth about a kind of water that quenches thirst once and for all? Intriguing! And the revelation that the woman has had 5 husbands and that the man she’s living with now is not her husband. Awkward! She had clearly tried repeatedly to find contentment and satisfaction, apparently one failed

relationship after another.

I wonder how many of us look for meaning, satisfaction and that same contentment and peace by trying one thing after another only to come up empty. Kerry Livgren was the founder and principal song writer for the rock band Kansas. Kerry was desperately searching for spiritual enlightenment and truth. We can hear that search in lyrics such as, “Carry on my wayward son; there’ll be peace when you are done...” and “Dust in the wind, all we are is dust in the wind...”. But in 1982 he came to realize the truth of the gospel of Jesus. Later he wrote, “Christianity is the only culmination that is possible in a diligent and relentless spiritual search. Truth being an absolute, when one continues seeking, eventually he will arrive at the absolute.”

Jesus spoke these words in John 4:13-14, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Jesus is more than enough!

And in verses 13 and 14 of Colossians 1 Paul said, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” We have been brought from lacking to more than enough!

Imagine living the abundant life that Jesus offers. Imagine being so completely full of satisfaction and joy that we abandon striving for things to find that completeness. Jesus is more than enough. When I worked with international evangelist, Luis Palau, he would often say, publicly and privately, that “Only Jesus can satisfy the soul.” “Only Jesus can satisfy the soul.” “Only Jesus can satisfy the soul.” Say those words with me... “Only Jesus can satisfy the soul.” Amen.

**MORE
THAN
ENOUGH**