

**Pentecost 10**  
**July 24, 2016**

*"You Have the Richest Treasure in Christ"*

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**COLOSSIANS 2:6-15**

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**S**o then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> having canceled 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. <sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Marvin and Mae Acosta finally came forward to claim their 500 million Powerball Prize that they won in January. When this hit the news people were speculating on what they would do if such a large sum of money were suddenly placed into their hands. They mused, "If only that were me."

My fellow believers in Christ, you are the richest people in the world because you have riches in Jesus your Savior that last forever. You have the greatest blessing you could ever possess. You know your sins are forgiven in Jesus, you have peace with your God and you have eternal life with him, You have come to know the goodness and mercy of Jesus your Shepherd and you know you will live in his house forever.

The dear Christians in Colosse were being told by false teachers that it was not enough to just have Christ and his death on the cross for your sin. They were being told they needed to add their own ideas and feelings and traditions to what Christ had done to be complete and full in Christ.

You know the formula and you know it well. Christ plus anything equals nothing. Christ plus nothing equals everything. Any attempt to supplement what Christ has done will supplant what Christ has done for you. It is not faith in Christ plus feelings that makes you a Christian. It is faith in Christ alone. As we sing, "In Christ alone, my hope is found."

I can imagine that Marvin and Mae Acosta wake up every morning thinking about the millions of dollars they have in their possession. I want to wake up every morning thinking about the riches I have in Christ that are far more important than money and fame and happiness and even the love that others have for me and I have for them.

**You don't want these riches stolen from you**

You don't want these riches you have in Christ to be taken away from you. Listen to how Paul pleads with the Colossian Christians to stay rooted and ground in Christ alone. "So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." Along with these Christians in Colosse you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Jesus came into your life. He opened your heart to believe in him.

The riches you have in him were given as a free gift. You can take no credit for accepting them and receiving them. Earlier in this letter Paul wrote these comforting words, "the gospel has come to you." This is not a gospel that says "Christ has done his part and now I must do my part." The gospel that came to you says, "Christ has done it all." You have everything in Christ.

Don't you appreciate these words that plead with you personally to "continue to live in him" and stay "rooted and built up in him" and "strengthened in the faith" and "overflowing with thanksgiving." That Greek word for overflowing as the thought of something that flows up and then spreads all over the place. It is hard to grumble and complain about your life or what is going on in the world around you when you realize how rich you are in Christ. Satan loves to tell you what an old toad you are and that you are not completely forgiven and accepted in Christ. He loves to have you think that there must be something you need to add to what Jesus has done to make sure your treasure is real and genuine. He even gets people to turn on the television and watch a popular television preacher who has this banner on his website, "Finding the champion in you."

Paul pleads with the dear Christians in Colosse to stay away from those who were adding human elements to the precious treasure they had in Christ. "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." It seems there were false teachers who were saying they had a better form of the Christian faith that included Jewish traditions mixed in with eastern mysticism. He calls them deceptive philosophy that depended on human traditions and the basic principles of the world.

The world in which we live has basic principles that profoundly affect our daily lives. For example we have the law of gravity. If I drop this tennis ball it will fall to the ground. A basic rule of geometry is that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Your smart phone can help you get from point A to point B most efficiently.

Deeply imbedded in every human being from birth is the basic concept or principle that I can do something to please whatever god I believe in and win his favor. The book of Proverbs says "There is a way that seems right to man, but the end is death." The Muslim religion is based on this basic principle deeply imbedded in the corrupt human heart. They hope that Allah will be merciful and gracious to them if they properly follow the five pillars of Islam. The Christians living in Colosse were surround by family and friends and neighbors who regularly offered gifts to the shrines of their gods found throughout the city.

Permit to offer an illustration of why going back to these basic principle of the human heart is so damaging to faith in Christ alone. When my nephew Nathan was a little fellow he found a way to unscrew the oil cap for the new John Deere riding lawn mower. What's wrong with pouring a little sand and dirt into the oil and putting the cap back again? Off course you know what happened to the motor on the new John Deere riding mower. If you try to add what you do, or your traditions, or your thoughts or your feelings to what Christ has done, you destroy what is already perfect and complete and pure and holy in God's sight.

Treasure the pure gospel you have come to know in Christ. Don't let any false teacher say you are

not complete in Christ and fully forgiven. Don't let any evil spirit suggest in any way that Christ is not enough. Now let's listen to Paul help us appreciate even more what we have in Christ.

### **You want to appreciate these treasures even more**

Notice what we have in Christ. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." You have everything you need in Christ to be loved and accepted and cherished by your heavenly Father in this life and for all eternity because Jesus is Lord and God. Jesus became fully human when he was conceived and born into this world. John 1 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The blood that was poured out on the cross to pay for your sin was the very blood of God himself. That is why the payment is full and complete. All of this fullness in Christ is now ours. The false teachers were saying you need Jesus plus something. Paul says you need Jesus plus nothing. You have your fullness in him. He is the head over every power and authority.

Do you want further evidence that Jesus is all you need and Jesus is your greatest treasure and you are unbelievably rich in him? Listen to Paul. "In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raise him from the dead."

Circumcision was a minor surgery performed by the people according to Old Testament law. In contrast the surgery Jesus performs on your sinful heart and mine is radical surgery. He takes away the veil that covers our sinful eyes and allows us to see what he has done for us at the cross. He buries us with him in our baptism and raises us to life again. Romans 6 says, "We were therefore buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Treasure your baptism because it connects you to the radical surgery that was done for you at the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I think of the words of the hymn: "God's own child I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ! He, because I could not pay it, Gave my full redemption price. Do I need earth's treasures many? I have one worth more than any That brought me salvation free, Lasting to eternity." Martin Luther was fond of facing the challenges of each new day with the Latin words, "Baptisus sum" "I have been baptized."

Will Paul help us to appreciate these treasures in Christ even more? Yes he will as we read on in this great letter. "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, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us, he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Way back at the beginning of time, when Adam and Eve fell into sin our God promised he would crush the devil's head. Jesus made a public spectacle of Satan and his kingdom by triumphing over him at the cross and at the open tomb. He did this by cancelling the written code that was against us. It's scary to think of how many charges could be held against us whether it is a failure to put God first in our lives or just show love and kindness to other people. We fail and come short in so many areas of life. But then we have Jesus. He cancelled everything recorded against you by taking it to the cross. He has expunged your record and made it clean. Don't you love that word expunged? That means you have come back to life even when you were dead in sin.

Dear people of God, you are so rich in Christ. It is OK for you to go home from this worship service to count your riches. Count them every day and as Paul tells us continue in Christ overflowing with thankfulness. Amen.