

A New Spirit of Glory
Colossians 1:15-29
July 27, 28, 2019
Beargrass Christian Church

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. After we thought about some of the virtues mentioned in Colossians last week, someone shared this story with me.
1. How many of you have a dog or cat in your home?
 - a. See if you can identify with this tale of two, tailed pets.
 - b. The author of the story proposes that God created dogs and cats to help us develop certain significant virtues in our lives.
 2. Adam and Eve said: "God, you used to walk with us every day."
 - a. "Now we do not see you anymore; we are lonesome."
 - b. "It is difficult for us to remember how much you love us."
 3. And God said, "I will create a companion for you."
 - a. "This companion will be a reflection of my love for you, so that you will know I love you, even when you cannot see me."
 - b. "Regardless of how selfish you may be, this new companion will accept you as you are and will love you as I do."
 - c. "This new animal will be a reflection of my love and a reflection of my own name—you will call it DOG."
 - d. And DOG lived them and was a companion and loved them.
 4. After a while, it came to pass that an angel came to God and said: "Lord, they have become filled with pride."
 - a. "They strut around like peacocks and believe they are worthy of adoration."
 - b. "DOG taught them about love—but not humility."
 5. God said: "I will create for them a companion who will be with them forever and who will see them as they are."
 - a. "The companion will remind them of their limitations, so they will know that they are not worthy of constant adoration."
 - b. God created CAT—and CAT would not obey them.
 - c. When they gazed into CAT'S eyes, they were reminded that they were not the Supreme Being—and they learned humility.
 6. And Adam and Eve became more virtuous.
 7. And DOG wagged its tail...and CAT did not care.

II. TODAY WE CONCLUDE THE "NEW SPIRIT" SERIES.

- A. Again, we're not speaking of virtual reality—but "virtue reality."
1. So far we have thought about God's spiritual gifts of gratitude, peace, hope, freedom, compassion and growth.
 2. Today we will hear about more virtues and spiritual gifts—as well as a "mystery that had been hidden through the ages."
 3. Colossians 1:15-20 is often described as a "Christ hymn."
 4. Paul uses lofty language to describe the attributes of Jesus.
- B. But all of these grand and glorious words have a purpose.
1. He wants to make a connection between Jesus and his followers.

2. We are to accept the moral actions and responsibilities that are consistent with those who follow and have faith in him.
3. In other words, Christian piety requires a public face.
4. Some philosophies may be adopted intellectually, yet not require any behavioral modifications or lifestyle adjustments.
5. But a life of faith is much more than words.
6. Our virtues will be seen in our actions and interactions.
7. The great mystery Paul reveals is that these gifts from God are not given for a chosen few—they are for all people.
8. And it's the Texan translation... "you" is "y'all"—plural.
9. The primary gift is "Christ in you...the hope of glory!"

C. Again, many gifts are mentioned—let's think about a few more.

III. PAUL TALKS ABOUT FAITHFULNESS.

- A. Paul proclaims in verse 23 that these gifts are available to us as we "continue securely established and steadfast in the faith."
- B. I think faithfulness is another one of those good God-words that has lost some of its power and punch in our culture.
 1. Too many people use the words in a shallow, one-dimensional way to describe a "thou-shalt-not" directive about relationships.
 2. But faithfulness is about keeping promises—or better yet—keeping covenant with God, family, friends, and God's people.
- C. When fickleness is the norm, how do we "do" faithfulness?
 1. Again, we cannot do it on our own—we need help.
 2. As we read Paul's mail to the Colossians, we hear his exhortation to remain "securely established and steadfast!"
- D. As we think about Paul's life and ministry, he kept the faith.
 1. It was one of the most important things Paul kept.
 2. Think about his impressive, pre-Damascus Road, pre-seeing-the-light resume—but he let go of the old to embrace the new.
- E. We are called to surrender and sacrifice and give things up.
- F. But we are to keep something that will change our lives.
- G. Faith is possible...because it is "Christ in You! The Hope of Glory!"

IV. PAUL TALKS ABOUT COURAGE.

- A. It seems remarkable how routinely Paul mentions suffering.
 1. But he just doesn't mention it—he goes so far as to say that he rejoices in it—he faces these situations with incredible courage!
 2. What kind of nut claims to "rejoice in his suffering?"
 3. Have you read the last line of this letter?
 4. "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand; remember my chains—and grace be with you! Have a nice day!"
 5. He probably added a smiley face and some other emojis.
- B. When we consider whether or not we are "courageous," what kinds of situations and circumstances come to mind?
 1. We probably think of times when lives are on the line—some of you have been in the midst of battle or in risky service roles or in medical professions where you are dealing with matters of life or death.

2. But courage can be much less dramatic than standing with the Avengers to combat the forces of doom and darkness!
 3. Most of us will never pull somebody from a burning building or sinking car or stand up to a gang or vanquish some evil empire!
 4. But I suspect that real virtues like courage may develop as we recognize and renounce real problems around us.
- C. Consider this Kenyan prayer: "From the cowardice that dares not face new truth, from the laziness that is contented with half-truth, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth...deliver me!"
- D. Could it be that we can be courageous every day—challenged to stand up for truth or justice or to just do or say the right thing?
1. It takes courage to blow the whistle on someone at work.
 2. It takes courage to be a teacher and stand in a classroom where apathy and anxiety rule instead of energy and excitement.
 3. It takes courage to call politicians and share your opinions.
 4. It takes courage to get out and march—one of our retired church members did it for the first time in her life recently—and she was energized!
 5. It takes courage to love...
 6. It takes courage to sit by the bed of a loved one until he or she passes away.
 7. An old poem expresses it well: "Two things stand like stone—kindness in another's trouble...and courage in our own."
- E. Some of you are baseball fans and know Jackie Robinson's story.
1. When he signed his first contract, Dodgers' owner Branch Rickey read to him from the book "The Life of Christ."
 2. "Everyone has a respect for courage in others, especially if it is moral courage, the rarest and most difficult sort of bravery."
 3. After two years of verbal abuse, racial slurs and death threats, the courageous Robinson received the league's MVP award.
- F. Courage is possible...because it is "Christ in You! The Hope of Glory!"

V. **FINALLY, LET'S REFLECT ON RESTRAINT.**

- A. In verse 28 Paul points out that his passionate proclamation of the Gospel is tempered and toned down with a restrained refrain.
1. This is another reference to spiritual growth and maturity.
 2. Is it possible that few virtues are as actively maligned or passively ignored as the virtue of restraint these days?
 3. Do you ever wonder why self-control, boundaries, and filters are often less valued in our culture than self-expression?
 4. Social media has provided a platform for all kinds of craziness.
 5. Paul makes it clear that there are expectations and teachings that offer guidance and healthy limits for Jesus followers.
 6. That's the challenge with these virtues—once we begin to embody them, we can forget where they came from.
 7. "O look how virtuous I have become—I'm so proud of myself!"
 8. "In fact, I am the most virtuous person I have ever known."
 9. But as wise people of faith, we are to be sharp but not cutting, pointed but not piercing, straightforward but not unrestrained.
- B. The authors of the "Fresh Encounter" summer Bible study express it this way:

1. "Human pride has a way of inserting itself into the most hallowed places—even if the motivation doesn't seem bad."
2. "But revival and renewal are about the glory of God."
3. "Those whom God uses in revival are people who have met with God in a powerfully personal way and who have a burning passion for the glory of God and a life of holiness."
4. "Revival and renewal occur when people recognize themselves for who they are—and readily give all the glory to God."

C. Restraint is possible...because it is "Christ in You! The Hope of Glory!"

VI. **SO, IF PAUL—OR JESUS—WROTE TO US, WHAT WOULD HE SAY?**

- A. Someone put together a collection called "You've Got Mail: Letters Jesus Might Write to Mainline Churches Today."
 1. Here is a sample...Jesus says...
 2. "You know me—I love to make the old-line new."
 - a. "If you will stick with me, I will give you a future, new wineskins, and all that—you remember the story."
 - b. "I am the Lord of Life, not death; I shall move you from mordant decline to life—I've still got plans for you."
 - c. "You'll be smaller—but small can be good."
 - d. "Remember the Mennonites!"
 3. "You will no longer be in charge of the nation, if you ever were."
 4. "That national church thing was your idea of church, not mine."
 5. "So get back to the basics like worship, service and witness."
 6. "Don't mourn the downsizing of your bureaucracy."
 7. "You were once pretty good at mission."
 8. "Now that much of North America has never heard of me, it's about time to start thinking of yourselves as missionaries."
 9. "It's time to get to it...love, Jesus."
- B. So...what do you think...is all of that possible?
- C. We can't do it by ourselves and we can't do it without God.
 1. But I believe that spiritual growth and maturity and mission and ministry are possible...
 2. Because it is the spirit of Christ in You! The Hope of Glory!
 3. Thanks be to God! Amen.