

TLEFC
March 22, 2020 Worship Service

Welcome and Prayer

Good morning TLEFC. Welcome to our first on line church service!

Imagine our brothers and sisters from our church family joining us from all across our community and for those in warm climates for the winter – across our country.

We are meeting on line for a season for two reasons:

To cooperate with health experts – “social distancing.”

Out of love for one another and for our community.

Here is an encouragement from God’s Word - Hebrews 10:19-23.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

God is faithful, and he will not allow us to be enveloped in a trial beyond what he will enable us to endure.

Now – that doesn’t mean that there won’t be some difficulty and even suffering.

Some of us may have close friends or relatives who contract COVID-19.

We ourselves might contract it, although at this point that is quite unlikely for us in the Three Lakes area but there is a possibility.

More realistic - Some of us may experience financial hardship and family stresses over the next several months.

So, as we face this circumstance - the promise of God’s Word is that

God will meet us in our suffering

He will reveal himself and the glory of his gospel

Which will give us strength to endure for his glory.

He who promised is faithful.

Pray through Heb 10:19-23

I encourage you now to put this video cast on hold and refer to U-Tube for a musical selection.

My suggestion is the classic hymn, “Crown Him With Many Crowns.

If you do a Google search for that title many arrangements will pop up

Some are classic traditional

One that is more contemporary is the second from the bottom of the menu, (Enfield, Hymn with lyrics, Contemporary.)

But if you have another selection that you would rather choose – feel free. Just take a moment to make a melody in your heart to the Lord.

Welcome Back

COLOSINIANS
The Christian Life In A Culture
of Religious Pluralism
Christian Life
Colossians 2:6-7

Most of us know that in the Middle East – in Israel, there is a body of water known as The Dead Sea

Images of the Dead Sea



435 meters below sea level, which means that the Jordon River and a few other tributaries drain into it.

But there is no outlet – so when something drains into it – it just stays there.

As a result – it is a sea with one of the highest concentration of salt in the world.

No fish or wildlife live in or around it.

In fact – Producers from Egypt extract material they turn into asphalt and they use it to mummify dead people

Everything about this body of water speaks – dead!

Looks beautiful



Actually – There is no evidence of life on or under the water.

So, thinking about the lifeless Dead Sea – Let's consider this question today.

In our Christian lives - is there Christian life?

We might say a person is a Christian if they:

Attend church every week – or at least 3 times a month

Read their Bibles three or four times a week

Maybe read an on line devotional before heading off to work

Have reasonable discipline in their speech, stay away from dangerous sites on line, give regularly to church and Christian ministry

However - It is one thing to have discipline – even a Christian lifestyle.

But the real issue is this – Does our Christian life have *Christian life*?

A genuine Christian is full of Christian life.

The issue is this – if a tree has life – there will be leaves and pinecones and acorns and helicopter seeds and fruit.

Considering our Christian faith – is there Christian life?

I think a silver lining in this virus crisis is that our culture will get to really observe Christian life from the church on the hill or the congregation down the street.

When we step up and care for those in need

When we show compassion for those who are anxious

When we look in on shut-ins and serve in the food pantry.

But it is also an opportunity to examine ourselves.

Do I trust Jesus – really trust him.

Am I still willing to invest in Christian ministry – hoard my money out of fear? Ignore others who are in special need?

A genuine Christian life is full of Christian life.

Let's look at **Colossians 2:6-7** see if we can identify just what Christian life looks like.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (Col 2:6-7)

The key phrase in this passage is in vs. 6 – *continue to live your lives in him*

Paul is concerned that his readers live

Not just go through the motion of living – but to have life in their living.

Live in Christ. Grow in him. Thrive in him.

Paul's desire is that we live a Christian life that has *Christian life*.

How? Two ideas from this passage.

Receive Christ as Lord

Let's talk about this word - "*receive*" and then make application of what we mean by receive *Christ as Lord*.

Let's say we welcome or receive two house guests into our home – each one for three weeks.

Silent Sam - Sam moves into the guest room and stays three weeks. But during his stay and after he leaves - never knew he was there.

The perfect house guest.

Left early and came home late – quiet on both ends. Didn't disturb anyone.

Had a bowl of cereal in the morning – did the dishes before he left.

Always cleaned up the bathroom after he used it.

Made the bed and picked up his clothes.

Parked his car on the street so he wouldn't block the driveway.

When he was around – pleasant disposition, always smiled and showed genuine interest in the lives of the family – and kept his own ideas to himself so he fit in quite well.

When the three weeks was up – left a very nice thank-you card with a Bible verse on it.

What a nice guy!!! It really felt good having him around.

That's silent Sam

Make-A-Difference Malcolm. He influences everything.

Weeds are pulled from around the shrubs – garbage containers at the road to be picked up

Mom notices brothers talking through an argument

Malcolm said that if we take the time to understand each other's point of view – we usually end up wanting the same thing. So we help each other succeed.

4:00 and the teenage daughter is reading a book instead of watching MTV, checking Facebook, or texting friends (all at the same time).

Malcolm gave me this novel about a Demon named Screwtape and his nephew/student named Wormwood. I started it last night and I just can't put it down.

Then Mom notices some of the cultic rap CD's from her son's collection in the wastebasket.

She caught the eye of her son – *Malcolm, right?*

Dad comes home from work with a smile – asks how her day went – takes time to listen (with eye contact and verbal feedback) and then dives into the sink full of dirty dishes.

Dad comments – *That Malcolm has a way of explaining how to be a real man. Actually, it feels pretty good!!*

During supper, there is a conversation about supporting a Compassion Child from Ethiopia. (Malcolm smiles)

After supper – Malcolm brings mom a cup of chai latte and begins a conversation about how much he respects her husband for how hard he works to provide for the family.

After the kids are in bed, Malcom knocks on Dad's study and comments that he has really enjoyed watching his wife nurture their family and encourages him to love and serve her as Jesus did the church.

The next morning at breakfast, everyone asks Malcom how long he is planning to stay, and they are all disappointed when he reminds them his three weeks are up and that he has to move on later that day.

After he leaves – There is a thank-you card with a note that outlined how Jesus had changed his life and a personal invitation to visit Malcolm's church.

About a week later at diner - the family commented

Remember silent Sam? Not really. Nice guy but not much to remember?

But Malcom. It has not been the same without Malcolm around the house!!

He influenced everything we did.

Some Christians think that receiving Jesus means that we ask him into our lives to be like Silent Sam.

Really nice guy

A pleasure to be around – and have around

But he has no influence on us.

Contrast that with Make- A-Difference Malcolm. Malcom models what it means to receive Jesus as Lord

Jesus doesn't become a Silent Sam when he enters our lives.

We invite Jesus to poke his head into everything – home, school, our business our neighborhood.

He challenges our assumptions, disrupts our routines and pushes us out of our comfort zones.

We are no longer in control of our lives – quite frankly we feel a little vulnerable.

Where is Jesus going to take me today?

What is he going to ask me to do now?

Jesus influences our routines, influences our behavior, influences our decisions

I don't think it is possible to receive Jesus without him being Lord.

When we do – he brings life.

Then that life spills over into the lives of those around us.

People know we are followers of Jesus

His life radiates from us to others

Let's get more specific.

Now – notice the phrase - *Just as you were taught*

Jesus doesn't enter our lives and then leave us guessing about how to live.

He brings us clear and objective guidelines for living

He even wrote them down for us so we would have free access to them.

Then he challenges us to obey.

And since he is our treasure - we actually make every effort to please him.

With this phrase, Paul talks about how his readers *were taught* the Word of God.

He is reminding his readers that there is a body of teaching that becomes our guide for living.

Bible scholars have identified a body of Apostolic teaching

It appears, often in the same form, throughout the NT.

In Acts 2:42 – the early church devoted itself to the Apostle's teaching.

In Acts 16:5 - Paul referred to “the faith”, speaking of a standard teaching that all the churches were to follow.

See also (Phil 1:27, 3:16; Gal 4:4,9; 5:25; 6:16)

This body of teaching is found in the Gospels, Paul's writings, in Peter's writings – all over the NT.

Illustration - submission to government authorities

Jesus taught – Give to Caesar...

Paul taught in Rom 13 – submit to the authority of the government

In 1 Peter 2 – Peter says almost the exact same thing

Other blocks of common teaching include:

Instruction for the life of a Christian household
The development of Christian virtues
True Christian community
**The importance of grace, forgiveness, the power of
the Holy Spirit**
Conduct toward unbelievers
Watchfulness for the second coming

As you read and re-read the NT you will notice that these themes are repeated – often in the same wording.

When Paul refers to what his readers *were taught* – they knew exactly what he was talking about.

A body of teaching organized by the Apostles.

A basic discipleship curriculum that represented Jesus.

And when Paul's says that his readers *received Jesus as Lord* – he was referring to the fact that they invited him into every area of their lives

they were guided toward godly living by *what they were taught* – all that his Apostles taught

May I remind us – life in the 21st Century is not like it was a hundred years ago – even a generation ago.

We are no living in a culture of religious pluralism.

Families must be equipped to defend their faith like never before.

Culture is not just standing by and allowing us to live passively as believers anymore.

Culture is aggressively trying to take our Christian lifestyle away. Some say it is Post Christian.

In order to maintain a life worthy of the Gospel – **Jesus must be Lord.**

That's the first way to have "Christian life"

Not only do we receive Christ as Lord
Renew our commitment to him

Some of us might remember the definition of insanity

Do the same thing over and over and expect a different result. (Charades or Pictionary)

So if you are giving a bad clue – and just keep doing it over and over – then expect your team to guess correctly - that's insanity

Same in life – if you are making bad decisions – over and over – and then think that this time it will be different - that's insanity.

But if you are making godly decisions – according to what you were taught – then doing the same thing over and over it is not insane at all.

Paul gives us the command to continue to *live in Christ*

This is a command – a present continuous command.

Notice Vs. 5

For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Paul recognizes that the Colossians were already doing well in their Christian walk.

In fact – the first to word in Vs. 7 – *rooted* - tells us says that they have already been grounded in Christ

This verb is in a past tense – completed action that once completed, continues to be in effect into the present.

That means that they already had their roots firmly planted in Christ

They had already welcomed his influence into their lives and into their homes and in the way they related to culture.

Therefore, this command to live in Christ is not a command to begin doing something they have not already been doing. Rather:

It is a command - not to become complacent – not to be satisfied – not to relax

Paul is admonishing them to RENUEW their commitment to receiving the influence of Jesus into their lives.

Built up in him...strengthened in the faith

This phrase creates the image of building a building

Literally – build on and strengthen something that already exists.

The idea here is that we are to take intentional steps to avoid becoming stagnant – like the Dead Sea.

Our faith must be renewed – again and again.

In the world of sports – once you are on top – it is very difficult to stay on top

Alabama – national champions in football in 2018.

Coach Sabin, in an interview, said that repeating in 2019 would be much more difficult than becoming champion for the first time.

The reason is that they would do nothing different – do the same thing

But they would have to renew their commitment to be the best. 2018's commitment was no longer sufficient.

Unless they had a renewal they would get knocked off.

That's exactly what happened when they lost to Clemson – and it wasn't even close – 44-19.

This is a fundamental reason why Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper – remember and renew.

Because once you have some joy in your faith - easy to relax, to rest on past answers to prayer, past victories over sin – coast

That is not Christian life

To have Christian life – and keep it alive – we must renew our commitment to continue to do everything we did to find freedom – **and then to do it again.**

Not that our new commitment is better than the last one – it is just new.

So – when we put these two verses together – Col 2:6-7, remember a key principle of the Bible.

God always offers his grace to receive before he gives us a command to obey.

10 Commandments – I am the Lord who brought you out of Egypt – then 10 commandments

Christian life is

Receiving Jesus the Lord – welcoming his influence in every area of life – **Grace to receive.**

Renewing our commitment to him – **a command to obey.**

Application - Here is a very important clarification about “Christian life.”

It is quite common to measure “Christian Life” by discussing how busy we are with Christian things.

This idea says that if we are busier now than we used to be - if we are doing more things that we used to do – we are living the Christian life with *Christian life*.

I recently found a Spiritual Growth Assessment tool from Lifeway Resources.

As I read through it – became quite agitated.

This assessment tool Identified 6 areas of behavior where I should evaluate myself

I needed to practice meditation, fasting, silence, self-denial, sacrificial giving, and prayer/ Bible reading.

I needed to memorize the Bible – not just verses - paragraphs. Read devotionals, commentary's, Bible dictionaries. Then meet with other believers and discuss what I was learning.

Prayer – personally, with a prayer partner – journal. Organize a prayer ministry at church.

Fellowship with other believers – make a list of people to forgive, host meals in our home, lead a small group on relationships

Witness to the world – Nurture relationships with non-believers, pray for them regularly, learn how to share my testimony and then a presentation of the Gospel. Be accountable for my witnessing. Go on a short term Missions trip.

Serve believers – do a spiritual gift inventory and then volunteer in a ministry at church. Volunteer to babysit for new moms, give a single parent the gift of a night out, provide meals for people in need, volunteer at school.

Then I was supposed to evaluate how I was doing in all of these areas – charts and graphs

Scale of 1-10

KICKER - Then I was supposed to set goals for how I would GROW next year.

Plan on how to increase my activity in each of these areas

More discipline, more Bible, more prayer, more fellowship, more witnessing, more helping believers.

Result - I imagined myself a total failure – an absolutely and completely exhausted failure at that.

Left that inventory – agitated.

ACTIVITY DOES NOT EQUATE TO “CHRISTIAN LIFE”

Christian Life is when there is renewal in the activity already in motion.

Like God's mercies – Christian life is new every morning.

What does that look like?

Discuss feelings – below the surface. Take off our masks

Close and safe relationships

Perseverance in hardship – COVID-19

Joyful repentance – as a lifestyle

Abounding in thanksgiving to Christ (Vs. 7)

Conclusion

The Dead Sea looks like water with life, but there is no life.

But I think that the Bible uses the Dead Sea to illustrate God's grace and how we might live with "Christian Life."

The prophet Ezekiel uses the image of the Dead Sea to give us a lesson of hope.

Ez 47 – opens with an image of fresh water flowing from the Temple – reminding us of the purity that comes from temple sacrifice - pointing to our salvation in Jesus. Here is the image:

(Read 6-12)

When that purified water from the temple enters into the dead water of the Dead Sea.

Water becomes fresh

Fish will swarm

Everything will live where the river goes

Trees and vegetation will abound

In the same way - the purity of Jesus will flow into our lives when we

Receive (Welcome) Jesus as Lord

Renew our commitment to him

Prayer

Closing Song

As we close our time together this morning, may I suggest that you access U-Tube again and bring up your favorite song so you have a song to hum the rest of the day.

A suggest from me – U-Tube features a musical group called Shane and Shane who have an arrangement of a great song – "He Will Hold Me Fast."

Here is a wonderful message of assurance in the midst of these uncertain days.

I think you'll enjoy it.

We'll see you again next week. Until then,

Blessings to you.