

Good morning, Saints,

Listen for the word of God, as we find it contained in the Letter to the Colossian Church, Colossians 2: 6-7 (*New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised*)

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

Does this word not blow you away as it does for me? We have ‘received Christ the Lord.’ It is passive tense – you received Christ, meaning you did not do anything, Christ is a gift to you.

Second, Christ is Lord. This is the very first ‘creed’ of the Christian community. Christ is Lord. In Hebrew, the word “Lord” is ‘Adonai,’ and it is spoken in place of the name of God. The tradition was that God’s name was never spoken but was replaced with the word Adonai when speaking or reading. Now, Colossians says, “Christ is Lord,” i.e., Christ is Adonai. A first Century Hebrew would be scandalised by this idea.

Then, Colossians says, “continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Yes. We received Christ (passive); now we play our part: ‘live your life in him.’

Here it is not a singular, but plural, for the whole community of the Colossian church. ‘Live your lives in him.’ Be rooted in Christ; the roots hold the entire tree upright. The deeper your roots, the stronger the tree stands. It can only be built up as far as the roots can hold it.

And do it all with thanksgiving in Christ. Here, thanksgiving is both an attitude and an action. “Joyfully.”

I have been on sabbatical, as you well know. I have visited other churches during this time. Most are struggling to recover numbers from the COVID19 devastation. We are not alone in this struggle. But if we establish our roots deep in Christ, with joyfulness, we will be built up higher in him. Friends, continue your lives in Christ.

I return to St Columba’s with renewed vigour - and ready for 2023. I appeal for your commitment at this time. Let us take hands together and walk our talk. Our communities are beset by all manner of contagion. It is not just COVID19. It is GBV, domestic assault, Intimate Partner Violence, rising interest rates, economic sabotage, unemployment, a barely floating economy, growing social inequalities, TB, HIV and Diabetes, diseases related to alcohol and smoking, a political fog, and corruption across the state system. Our social landscape is devastated by problems that we can do something about.

It will take all of us, in every ‘*ekklesia*’ – every grouping of people, every community, every church, every school, every family, every workplace, boardroom and braai, to

make changes, to speak up, to stand up, to make a difference. We can do it! Only we can do it.

Part of the Gospel we do not speak enough about is the Coming of Christ. Perhaps we have abandoned this idea to those who frighten and bully people with talk of blood moons and destruction. But we need to reclaim it. Christ comes to us continually – he comes in when we least expect it, he comes when we are and when we are not looking. He has never stopped coming to his people, age after age.

‘Advent’ – the season we have now entered into in the Liturgy, is a word that means ‘coming.’ In the New Testament, there is another word that means ‘to appear, to be present.’ It is the much-abused word ‘*parousia*.’ It means to appear, to be present with.

The collect for Sunday is this: “Unexpected God, your advent alarms us. Wake us from drowsy worship, from the sleep that neglects love, and the sedative of misdirected frenzy. Awaken us now to your coming and bend our angers into your peace. Amen.

We have received Christ, he is present with us, according to his promise. We are called to be rooted in him, to live in him as he is present with us. And to be filled with all joy!

Be blessed! Be rooted in him. Live in him. Be joyful!

In Christ,

Rev. Craig,  
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