

Pentecost 9
July 25, 2010

Colossians 3:12-17
284-283-283, v. 4

“Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You RICHLY”

- I. So that you can live as God’s chosen people.
- II. So that the peace of Christ rules in your hearts.
- III. So that you do all to give thanks to God.

Dear Christian friends,

Go back for a minute to our other two readings. In the OT reading Eli had figured out that it was really the **Lord Himself** calling Samuel. Eli told Samuel, **“Go and lie down, and if He calls you say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’”** I have a hard time picturing Samuel QUICKLY FALLING asleep after that. In my mind Samuel is lying in bed WAITING and **wondering**. Wow! God wants to talk to me! I wonder what God has to say.

In the **gospel reading** we saw Jesus stop by the house of Mary and Martha. What an HONOR! What a privilege! We can understand Martha wanting to **serve Jesus** a nice meal. But to be Mary – **“sitting at the Lord’s feet listening to what He said”** – WOW!

We have such opportunities as **Samuel** and **Mary** – time to listen to Jesus. They may not be AS DRAMATIC as the Lord calling us by name in the middle of the night or the Lord sitting around the kitchen table. **For us** it’s church – Bible class and Sunday School – daily devotions at home. That may not seem as THRILLING or IMPRESSIVE – but it’s the same thing – God talking to us PERSONALLY.

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly,” Paul encourages us. **“Let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly,”** 1)so that you can live as God’s **chosen people**, 2)so that the peace of Christ rules in your hearts and 3)so that you do all to **give thanks** to God.

I. So that you can live as God’s chosen people.

JUST WHO are you? To your family you may well be a **“loved one.”** To the politician you’re a **vote**. **In many respects** you’re a number. In **many instances** it’s not your name that IDENTIFIES you but that nine digit Social Security number. **In all honesty** to the world you’re a NOBODY. Me too. We live – we will die – with MOST of the world never even noticing – or **caring**.

That’s OK – because what finally matters is what GOD thinks of us. Listen again to what Paul call us – **“God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.”** Whenever you GET DOWN on yourself or feel like a **loser** – a **nobody** – just SAVOR those words – **“God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.”**

That’s not meant to say we’re SO MUCH BETTER than other people. We’re not. Just like everybody else we are **“sinful from birth, sinful from the time our mothers conceived us.”** Just like everybody else we have sinful natures that can be SO STUBBORN – so selfish – so **sinful**. Our lives as God’s **“chosen people, holy and dearly loved”** leave a lot to be desired. Just take today’s look at God’s WORD IN our lives. Do you remember how the **catechism explains** the Third Commandment? We are “not to despise preaching and God’s Word but gladly hear and learn it.” Are you always excited about going to church? Do you sometimes daydream during church? **“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you RICHLY.”** Do you deliberately set aside some time each day to **read** your Bible – to have a **devotion**? What are your reasons for NOT COMING to Bible class – for not being in church every week? Are they excuses God would accept? Let’s say YOU ARE in church every week – you come to Bible class – you have those devotions – HOW GOOD are you at then

living and **believing** that Word? Does what God says OFTEN GO IN one ear and right out the other? Anything less than “gladly hearing and learning God’s Word” - GOD CALLS it sin – sin that is totally unacceptable to God.

Amazing isn’t it – that we are **“God chosen people, holy and dearly loved”**? That OUT OF all the people in this world God in eternity **“chose”** you and me to be His people. The ONLY WAY to explain that is **grace** – totally undeserved love. **“Holy.”** That’s true only because of Jesus and what He all did for us. **“Holy”** – SET APART for God, sinless – perfectly describes every minute of Jesus’ life. God now sees us as such **“holy”** people only because Jesus GIVES US the credit for His holy life while Jesus took the punishment for our **unholy, sinful** lives. ALL our sins against all ten commandments – God has forgiven them all because Jesus suffered and died on the cross in our place. God has washed away every one of our sins in that SHED BLOOD of His **“beloved”** Son. That God gave us His own Son to be our Savior – that shows how **“dearly loved”** we are. Standing at Jesus’ bloody cross – that’s HOW MUCH God loves us! He **“did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all.”** How can we BE SO SURE of all this? God says so IN HIS WORD.

Now **“let that Word of Christ dwell in you richly”** so that you LIVE your life as **“God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.”** That means as Paul explains, **“clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

Notice how our NEW RELATIONSHIP with God totally changes our relationships with other people. **Basically** we are to treat other people the SAME WAY GOD treats us. Does God carry any grudges against us? Does God ever brush us off with a “DON’T BOTHER Me – I’m too busy – I’ve done enough for you already”? Do we ever disappoint God – HURT God by things we say – do – think? EVERY DAY! Yet God is so compassionate and **kind** to us – so gentle – patient – forgiving – EVERY DAY! How can we BE JUST LIKE that? ONLY by **“letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.”** God’s Word keeps us focused on God’s grace and mercy in Jesus. The BETTER we see and understand that the better we CAN LIVE that.

II. So that the peace of Christ rules in your hearts.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.” There are some more words to SAVOR – **“the peace of Christ.”** In Jesus we HAVE THE PEACE of God’s **full** and **free forgiveness** – the **peace** of being AT PEACE WITH GOD and so also at peace with ourselves. God loves us – we’re forgiven – I’m a child of God. **In Jesus** we have the peace of God’s PRESENCE and POWER and PROMISES in our lives – the **peace** that my Savior is with me – He is in control of all things – working all things for my eternal good. **In Jesus** we have the peace of ETERNAL LIFE in heaven – we are going straight to heaven when we die – we will **one day body and soul live** with our Savior in that **“new heaven and earth”** where everything will again be perfect.

Now “LET THAT PEACE which you have in Jesus rule in your hearts.” Paul uses an interesting Greek word here. Literally it’s, “Let the peace of Christ be the umpire in your hearts.” Let that peace decide FAIR OR FOUL in your life.

Paul adds a thought to this – **“since as members of one body you were called to peace.”** imagine if there was a CIVIL WAR going on in your body – the different parts of the body – instead of WORKING TOGETHER for the good of the whole body – they’re fighting each other. The brain won’t talk to the heart. The hands won’t protect the eyes. The knees are siding with the brain – the

feet are for the heart. The lungs want NOTHING TO DO with the whole mess. RIDICULOUS, right? That would be the death of the BODY.

Isn't that just what the devil is working for in Christian congregations – to TEAR THEM APART with pettiness and **selfishness** – with hurt-feelings and **stepped-on toes**? There isn't a SINGLE ONE of us who's perfect in all we do. We are sinned against and we sin against each other. THIS ISN'T HEAVEN!

How shall we handle it? ***“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”*** – let the peace of Christ empire the situation. Did Jesus ever get HIS TOES stepped on – HIS IDEAS **shot** down? How did Jesus handle it? Did Jesus ever get taken advantage of or not thanked for what He'd done? Did Jesus go off and POUT or raise a STINK?

HOW can we live such humble, peaceful lives? **How** can that ***“peace of Christ”*** so rule in our lives? ONLY by ***“letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.”*** God's Word keeps our eyes on Jesus and fills our lives with His peace. FILLED with Jesus' peace that will overflow into our lives with each other.

III. So that you do all to God's glory.

Paul now summarizes, ***“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”***

“Whether in word or deed.” People can't look into our **hearts**. They can't read our **minds**. ONLY GOD can do that. But people can – and they DO! – hear what we say and see what we do. AS CHRISTIANS **we want** to make sure they see and **hear** JESUS in all we say and do.

“The name of the Lord Jesus” is **all** that we know about Jesus from His Word. **We have** a kind and **compassionate** – a patient and **gracious** – a forgiving – HOLY – faithful Lord Jesus. SO WE WANT to be – so we want people to SEE in **all we do** – to HEAR in **all we say**. We can't separate our **Christian faith** from ANY PART of our daily lives. Or put it this way – we don't want to DENY our Savior **in anything** we do or say. **By God's grace** we are Christians and we want that word **“Christian”** to DESCRIBE our lives IN EVERY WAY.

How can we live such Christian lives – ESPECIALALY since we live in such an unchristian world? The ONLY WAY that can happen is by ***“letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.”*** God's Word keeps us focused on what Jesus has all done for us and promised us. That makes us want to live all the more so that people SEE and HEAR JESUS in all we do.

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.” The ONLY WAY that can happen is for us to be like young Samuel praying, ***“Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.”*** The ONLY WAY that can happen is for us to be like Mary and MAKE THE TIME to ***“sit at Jesus' feet listening to what He says.”*** We DO THAT by faithfully coming to church – by coming to Bible class and Sunday School – by having those **daily devotions**. ***“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you RICHLY”*** and see the difference in will make in your life. Amen.

Sunday – “We Praise You, O God” – pages 48-49

Wednesday – Hymn #290, verse 3