



-- Review

-- Part 1 – As the church of Jesus Christ, He is and must always be our All in All
– Colossians 3:8-17

-- v. 11 – Among them *“there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”*

-- One vital mark of this new community is that the people in it stop cherishing the things that separate them.

-- The number one, primary mark of newness in the new people and the new community is that Christ is all and in all.

-- Part 2 – The church is the eternal purpose of God in Christ.

-- The Primary Purposes of the Church: To glorify God by exalting Jesus Christ

-- We were predestined in Christ before Creation.

-- We were purchased in Christ on the cross.

-- We will prevail in Christ forever.

-- Therefore our life as the church is replete with rich meaning.

-- Read Ephesians 1:15-23

-- Pray

-- v. 15-20 – Paul’s Prayer for the Church.

-- v. 15 – Notice that Paul’s beautifully powerful prayer for the church is introduced with the words *“For this reason...”*

- For *what* reason? Because, as Paul reveals in last week's passage, the building up of the church God's eternal purpose in Christ.
- We have been predestined for glory in Christ, purchased by Christ, and we will prevail forever in Him who prepared our path.
- Therefore, more than anything, it seems, Paul's prayer longs for the church to understand and embrace who God really is and what He has called the church together to be.
 - v. 15-16 – The fervency, constancy, and gratitude of Paul's prayers for the church.
 - v. 17-20 – A prayer for the church to know God, His purpose for the church (hope), His promise for the church (inheritance), and His power for the church (like that which raised Christ).
- This very passage has been my prayer for this church, and this series is an outcome of those prayers.
- Because I know how urgently God wants you to understand your position and purpose in Christ, we are pursuing that very understanding through the glorious Scriptures that reveal it.
- v. 20-23
 - Paul seems to get lost in worship as He begins describing the exaltation of Christ.
 - Note: Paul's exaltation of Christ keeps growing until it culminates with Christ's position as "Head over everything for the church."
 - This morning, we are going to focus on one remarkable phrase, "*the fullness of him who fills everything in every way*" (v. 23).

1.) Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all things (v. 22-23).

Now, this may come as a shock to many of us, and it certainly flies in the face of our culture, but it must be said nonetheless: Creation does not exist for you. Nor does it exist for me. It doesn't exist for pontificating philosophers, self-important scientists, our over-eager environmentalists. And, no, the universe is not the accidental product of billions and billions of years worth of unguided evolutionary processes.

Yet, Creation does exist on purpose. It exists for a very particular purpose—a glorious purpose from God, in fact—which God has graciously revealed to us in

His Word, and is this: *Jesus Christ*. He is the inspiration for Creation. As Colossians 1:18 so plainly declares, “*All things were created by [Christ] and for him.*” You see, everything that exists was created by God, and He created everything in order to bring glory to His name through the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Thus, by God’s plan, all things will be and are being fulfilled by Christ.

Even as Jesus teaches two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, He Himself is the highest point of God’s master plan revealed in Scripture. The entirety of God’s Word points to Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Adam and Eve were created so that Christ would be exalted. God created a people through Abraham so that Christ would be exalted through them. Jesus lived and died and rose again “*so that in so that in everything he might have the supremacy*” (Colossians 1:18). All of the Old Testament points forward to our need for Christ. The Gospels tell of His perfect life, His atoning sacrifice, and His magnificent resurrection. And all the rest of the New Testament points back to the preeminent place of Jesus Christ to all of God’s purposes in all of Creation.

In all of Scripture, we see that Jesus Christ is the cause for Creation. He is the why and the wherefore of God’s Word, the goal of God’s grace, and the totality of all truth (John 1:14-16)... He is the fulfillment of all things because over all things good, He is the greatest... Over all things holy, He is the highest... Over all things powerful, He is the most potent... Over all things excellent, He is the most exalted... He is the most gracious grace, the most magnificent mercy, and the loftiest love... He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Name that is above every name. He reigns over every ruler and dominates every dominion because His sovereignty is supreme.

Because Jesus is the fulfillment of all things, any deed that can be called good is only good to the extent that it exemplifies His goodness. Any merciful word that has ever been uttered is only merciful to the degree that it points to the mercy He poured out on the cross. Any judgment that can be called just is only just to the extent that it remembers the cost of sin and considers the cross of Christ. Our Lord fulfills all things because He is the exalted end of all that will endure.

Therefore, if you or I or anyone else is going to be live in any meaningful way, then we must live for Christ, because only in Him is everything fulfilled. If we

want to understand why we exist, then we must understand Jesus. If we wish to know where our lives are headed, then we need to know Christ, because God has made Him alone the final fulfillment of all things.

2.) Jesus fulfills all things by filling all things.

-- v. 23 – “...which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

-- Literal meaning: “*Christ is now filling for Himself all in all.*”

-- In other words, Christ is filling every aspect of existence everywhere in the universe in all the ways He pleases.

-- Ephesians 4:8-10 – “*This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.’ (What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, **in order to fill the whole universe.**)*”

-- v. 8-10a – In rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, Jesus broke the bonds of death and led a host of captives to freedom from sin, death, and fear.

-- v. 10b – “*in order to*” – Jesus did this so that He might fill (lit.) “all things.”

-- Christ's purpose to fill all things is accomplished through His victorious death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

-- v. 20-23 – The Father's ultimate goal in all of Creation is that all things will be subjected to and filled with the glory of His Son.

1.) He raises Him from the dead (v. 20).

2.) He seats Him at His right hand (in the seat of authority) (v. 20).

3.) He subjects everything in the universe to Him (v. 22), which includes every possible power and being, present or future (v. 21).

4.) He gives Jesus to the church as our Head.

-- Thus, Christ's has been given all authority over all things.

-- All this has happened so that Jesus might fill all things (Ephesians 4:10).

-- Notice that this description of escalating glory culminates with Christ's appointment as Head of the church.

3. Christ is filling all things in and through the church.

-- By God's design and for His own glory, the Father's purposes to exalt His Son are being channeled through the church.

Please hear this: One of the most astonishing truths of Scripture is this remarkable truth that, from eternity past to eternity future, God has determined not to accomplish His purposes in Christ without the church. Pastor John Piper puts it this way:

“God did not exalt Jesus and subject all things to him and then simply say, ‘Now go ahead and fill the universe with your glory; fill all things with yourself.’ Instead he raised him and exalted him and subjected all things under him and then made him one with the church, as head to the body, and said, ‘Now, my Son, you and those with whom you are united as head to body, go forth in the universe and fill it with all that you are in your body. Let everything, from the highest heaven to the lowest hell, be filled with a revelation of your glorious perfections in the form of a chosen, destined, blood-bought, called, justified, holy, glorified, and infinitely, everlastingly satisfied people, your body, the church of the living God. Amen.”

-- v. 23 – *“Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”*

-- Christ, who fills everything in every way has chosen to use the church as the means of that fullness.

-- We are *“the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”*

-- Thus, the church is the epicenter of God's activity in the universe.

The exaltation of Jesus Christ for the glory of God is where everything in existence is headed. According to God's own plans and purposes, Jesus Christ is and will forever be the absolute fulfillment of everything, and He will one day fill everything in every conceivable way. And—please remember this remarkable truth—God has chosen to fill all things with Christ in and through the church, which is His body, which is the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Two Applications

1.) Remember our message.

-- Since the very identity of the church is the *“fullness of Him who fills everything in every way,”* then Jesus Christ must everything we are all about.

- Since God has established the church to be the means by which He is filling the entire universe with Christ, then it must be our goal to proclaim and exemplify Christ as best as we can in all that we do.
- It is impossible to please God as the church of Jesus Christ if Christ is not our everything all the time.

2.) Remember what matters.

Since it is Christ alone who will fill everything in every way, where Christ is not the source of our fullness, then our fullness is necessarily empty. We must, therefore, realize and confess that any part of our lives in which we look for fullness in anyone or anything apart from Christ will prove to be void, and vapid, and vain in the end. Just as everything connected to Christ will be filled by His fullness, so too everything apart from Christ will be filled only with the vanity of this lost world. As Jesus declares in John 15:5, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

- Eugene Peterson – “The church is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church.”
 - This is so because the church is the central focus of God’s purposes in Christ and the epicenter of His activity on the universe.
 - The church is the only institution that will endure, and it is the apple of God’s eye.
 - We too often view our lives life exactly inside out.

For far too many Christians, the world is in the middle and the church is on the fringes. For far too many of us, church is an afterthought of a life that is immersed in the world. Far too many of us are passionate about what is perishing and lazy about what will last. While the fullness of Christ is set before us in His purposes for the church, too many of us waste our lives chasing after emptiness.

But it doesn’t have to be that way. If you are part of the church through faith in Jesus Christ, then there is so much more to this life. God’s purposes for us are unimaginably alluring, and His power at work within us is incomparably great. He who fulfills all things by filling all things is filling all things through the grace

He has so lavishly poured out upon the church, which is His body. As part of His body, we have been made Christ's fullness, and as Christ's fullness, He is gloriously exacting His everlasting purposes through us as we gather together to bring glory to His name.

Let our prayer for our lives and for the life of this church be the same as Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesus in verses 15-20. Can I enjoin all of you to pray this prayer with me at least once a week for as long as this sermon series lasts? Let us pray...