

Our first reading is from Colossians, chapter one, verses 15 through 23. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you. Insisting on asceticism and worship of angels. Am I reading the right thing? Patrick 15 through 23. Okay. Sorry. All right. Let no one disqualify you. Insisting on asceticism and worship of angels. Going on in detail about visions puffed up without reason by a sensuous mind and not holding fast to the head. From whom? The whole body? Nourished?

All right.

Sorry, guys. The sun is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things have been created through him and for him he is therefore all things, and in Him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the Church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything we might have, he might have supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his illness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death, to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation, if you continue in your faith, established and firm and do not move from the hope held out in you in the Gospel. This is the gospel that you have heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, had become a servant.

The word of the Lord. Now we have a reading from Luke. Please stand for the gospel. Luke 10:38-42. Now, as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she went up to him and said, lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her. Martha, martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. The word of the Lord.

All right, kids, are you all ready for kids alive? Are you really ready? All right, let me pray for you. Father, we pray for the young people as they go to kids alive that like Mary, they would sit at your feet, Lord Jesus, and learn and grow and learn how to choose the better portion every day of their lives in Jesus name, amen. All right, God bless you as you go. Off you go into the wild blue yonder. All right. Father, I do pray now for all of us as we consider your word, as we consider how awesome you are. Lord Jesus, would you open up your words to us? Would you speak through my lips? Would you fill everyone of us with your Holy Spirit to nurture the seeds that are planted in us today that we might bear fruit in the world for Your sake? It's in Your name we pray. Amen. All right, well, Justin, Lauren's defense, I'm sure she's a little jet lagged. They came from England just Friday. Friday? Yeah. So I can definitely understand hitting the wrong verses there, but what's that? A little extra Bible never hurt anybody, so we all gained a little bit from there.

So if you look on the front of our bulletin, underneath the logo there, what's it say? I have come that you might have life to the full. That statement for me is so much about what Jesus is all about that I think it's going to be a statement that we're going to live into over the years and discover greater and greater facets of it. What does it mean to have fullness of life? People want fullness of life. That's one of the reasons we chose the name Tree of life. We believe the Lord gave us that name because it's a name that speaks not only to believers, but it speaks to unbelievers, too. Unbelievers want life and they'll do just about anything to get it. And many people believe that life is found in experiences, right? In the tastes of food, in the Sound of Music, in the places that are visited and seen in skydiving. Now, Skydiving is a prerequisite for fullness of life. I'm out of luck because I am never going to Skydive, okay? So hopefully you can find fullness of life without skydiving. But people believe that you find fullness of life in experiences and there's something to that, right?

There is something to stepping out, living a little, taking a risk now and then. But some people say, well, fullness of life is more than that. It's about achievement, it's about making something of yourself, doing something with your life. And so they'll look to setting a path for themselves that will lead to achievement. Whether it's going to the right schools, gathering around yourself, the right information, the right teachers, the right people to know that help you get ahead in life, learning the right skills, it's about achievement. And so we look to various achievers around the world, whether it's Nelson Mandela or Sandra Day O'Connor or Steve Jobs or Albert Einstein or Julia Child or Eleanor Roosevelt, whoever it might be. We say these are people we should model our lives after for they have achieved. And if we're going to walk the path of achievement, we need to look at those who have achieved in some way and follow their way. Some people believe the fullness of life is an achievement and there's something to be said for that. I myself want to achieve something that matters in life. Still others say, yeah, but you can have achievements, you can have experiences.

But what you need for fullness of life more than anything is relationships. You need to love and to be loved. All you need is love, really to have friends and family and people that you can gather around yourself. And that's where fullness of life is. And I think there's something to that, right? I mean, it makes a difference that we've got family, it makes a difference we've got church, it makes a difference we've got people in our lives and it adds, we think, to the fullness of life. But would Jesus agree with that assessment? Would you say there's a fullness that I speak of? When I speak of I've come that you might have life to the full. A fullness that transcends achievement, a fullness that transcends relationship, a fullness that transcends experiences. Let's suppose we think of those three things for a moment and how they might fall short for inexperienced. You can be having many great experiences in life and lose the ability to experience those experiences. Lose your sight, lose your health, lose your ambulation, lose cognition. And still there are others who pile experience upon experience upon experience and actually burn out on their experiences.

So fullness of life must be more than simply experiences. Or is it achievement? The full life is the meaningful life. Yet so many people have achieved so much and gotten to their ends of their lives and say what's it all for? Have gotten to the ends of their lives and sometimes even taken their life because they see no further purpose in going on. So fullness of life must be more than achievement. And then there's relationships that must be it more than any of those others, right? Relationship, love. And yet when we look at human relationships, they're often so flawed and broken and troubled. They have high moments and low moments. We have people in our lives who let us down and we have people in our lives who we let down. We can have the best relationship going and lose it through illness or death. We can have the best relationship going. But because we're all different people, person gets led away from us and now lives on the other side of the world. The fullness of life has to be more than just relationships. For relationships run out, relationships run low, relationships run down.

But here in Colossians, we see a picture of the fullness of Jesus. Paul takes great pains to paint this picture of the fullness of Jesus Christ. That may actually help us to fill out what it means when Jesus says, I've come that you might have life and have it to the full. It might help us be a church that lives life to the full. That might help us as individuals, be people who enjoy life to the full because that's what he came for. So let's take a look at what Paul wrote here in Colossians in chapter one, verses 15 through 23. This is a church that Paul himself did not plant, but that he heard of through somebody who had come to faith in Christ through Paul's ministry and had gone back and planted churches. Wonderful how God can do that and how we can have relationships with others through others. But as he's speaking to the Colossians, he told them, I love what I'm hearing about your faith. I love how you're growing. I love the way you're carrying out ministry and all these things. And all of this has happened because God has qualified you and he's brought you from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Now, in darkness, we don't have the full picture right? In darkness we often see dimly. In darkness we may be tempted to grasp at things, to think that's what life is all about. But God has brought us into the kingdom of the sun. He loves the kingdom of light, for the sun is the radiance of God's glory. In a very similar passage to what we're about to read, it says in Hebrews chapter one. So Paul writes to the Colossians, verse 15 the sun is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. He's

the image. Now, in Genesis 127, it says that you and I and every person that you will ever meet was created in the image of God. We were created in the image of God, but Jesus is the image of God. It's important to catch that difference because sometimes we tend to build our hopes on people who have been created in the image of God, but because of sin and brokenness, have experienced brokenness in that image. And so we let each other down and we hurt each other, and we don't live up to the expectations that we have of ourselves or that we have of others.

But Jesus is the image of God, an image that has never been broken in Him. And he's the firstborn over all creation. So when we look at people, we don't see the fullness even of humanity. But when we look at Jesus, we see the fullness of God and therefore the fullness of everything that humans were intended to be. So Jesus takes on flesh. He comes into the world, he says, look at me and you'll see what God is like. Look at how I deal with injustice. And you'll know that God your father deals the same way. Look at me at how I deal with beauty. And you'll know that God, your father deals in the same way. Look at me and see how I deal with the broken and the lost and the rebellious, and you'll see how God, the father deals with the broken, lost, and the rebellious. For he is the image of God, and he's the first born over all creation. That's really important language, that word firstborn in the ancient world, immediately conveyed to people hopes, dreams, and entitlement. The firstborn son of any family was the one on whom all the hopes of the family were pinned.

For the father would pass down to that son the lion's share of the inheritance. That son would often buy back the rest of the land inheritance from the other siblings, because he would then oversee it for all of the family, and the family would pin their hopes on that. So when that language says he is the first born overall creation, sometimes it's translated firstborn of creation. It's not saying Jesus is the first one who was created, because it says all things were created through him and that he was with God in the beginning, and he was God. Jesus was never created, but he's first born in the sense that he is the heir of all, that he reigns supreme, and all our hopes are on him. And so it goes on to say, for in Him, all things were created. Things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him. And for him. You think Paul's trying to get a point across all things. All things. When I say all, I mean all. All things derive their beauty, their usefulness, their character from him.

When you look at everything that's been created, you know it was created in him. And for him, that's pretty amazing to think about. This past week, the first images came back from the James Webb space telescope that was launched some years ago. It's traveled a million miles from earth. It's now in orbit with the Earth around the sun, and it's keeping pace. That alone boggles my mind. I'm like, how can scientists and engineers and how can they be so precise that they could do something that's a marvel in and of itself? How can you not believe in God that fallible human beings could do something like that? And it's now orbiting a million miles away, a long way away, and taking these amazing pictures, pictures of things that are 13.2 billion light years away. Do you know how far a light year is? 7 million mile. And these are 13.2 billion light years. I can't even do the math. The picture that you saw in the newsletter of the Corinne nebula, which is just a stunning image that came back from this telescope shows what looks to be like, mountains of stardust and star, gas and all this.

And it's beautiful. It's beyond comprehension. The peaks of which are seven let me get this right seven light years high. That's 42 million mile. Can you comprehend it? There's no way. You know, I think Jesus made it that way. That God complimented humanity by making the universe so vast that he would make us as humans to search these things out. But we can search and search and search and search, and we will only scratch the surface. The very universe itself speaks of the magnitude and the magnificence and the awesome of God. I felt it today some, and the worse have been you, Ben. I felt it like, how awesome our God is, how he deserves, like, everything that we have to give. If you have those moments in worship where your heart is just lifted up, praise God. You're entering into the magnificence of God that's incalculable everything that we see. All things created by God serves God's purposes. Yet they can be in rebellion to God. They can be in rebellion to God. For Jesus, when he's standing before Pontius Pilate, pontius Pilate says to him, don't you know that I've got the power of life and death in my hands?

Why are you silent? Jesus said, you have nothing in your hands except that which has been given to

you by God. Pontius Pilate, do you know I'm riffing on what Jesus said here? Jesus didn't say this. But Pontius Pilate, didn't. You know that what was given to you was given by God? And that you, as a fallible human being, have the choice to either use it for the glory of God or for your own purposes? Which will you choose? It's always the question before us as we serve an infinite God, what will we do with the finite powers and gifts that he's given us? Four. Verse 17 says, he is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. I love that Jesus is the universal superglue. If he simply said the word, everything would fly apart. People who deny him and don't believe in him have no idea that their very lives are held together by him. Verse 18, it says, and he is the head of the body, the Church, who does have an idea, right? We've been saved. We've been brought into the kingdom of the Son that he loves. If we think that we know the fullness of that kingdom, yet we just scratch the surface.

The fullness is ours through Jesus Christ, but we've just scratched the surface of all it is. We will just discover more and more of how great and marvelous and wonderful he is. That's what Christian maturity is all about. It is leaning into the Lord. Later on, Paul will write and my purpose for you, Colossians, is that you might grow into the fullness of maturity. You might know Christ more and more and more and more. So Jesus is supreme over the natural realm and over the supernatural, over the created order and the spiritual order. Why is this so crucial to understand? Church think for a moment, think for a moment of what reigns supreme in your life. Now, the Christian answer is Jesus, right? Jesus reigns supreme in our life. But even when we say it's Jesus, can't we admit that there are other things that start to squeeze in achievements, experiences, relationships that seek to be put above Christ? Can you picture for a moment yourself and just try to picture for a moment whatever those things are in your lives that you tend to be like, I just got to have it. I got to have these achievements, I got to have these relationships, I got to have these experiences.

Can you just picture for a moment just letting it go at the feet of Jesus, saying, no, Lord, I don't got to have them, I got to have you. That's what Christian maturity is about. It's about every morning, every day, every evening at some point along the way, reminding yourself and speaking to Him and saying, I got to have you. It's not that you won't have experiences, it's not that you won't have achievements or relationships. In fact, all these things are gifts from the Lord. But you don't gotta have them. You gotta have Jesus. And he will use those gifts and those achievements and those experiences to draw you further and deeper into the fullness of God and who he is and to live life that way. How do you get it? Well, it says that Jesus is the head of the body, so that in everything he's the first born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwelling him, all the fullness of God, billions of light years of God, all that fullness in Jesus given to you and to me.

Christ is the fullness of God and therefore he's our fullness. He's the fullness of humanity and what it means to be truly human. So I'm going to sum up with these final verses that are very interesting because they really are the key for how we step into the fullness and claim the fullness and walk in it more and more. All the days of our Lives says that this fullness was given to Him and through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven. By making peace through his blood shed on the cross that God becomes man, takes on flesh and bleeds for our fullness, empties himself so that we would be full. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds, that's a true statement. We were enemies of God, hostile to him. I think of myself that, you know, I used to not even think about god. And yet if somebody brought it up, I was like, yeah, sure God would accept me. And there's a hostility there. Of course he would. Like, he must he owes it to me. God doesn't owe me anything.

So we were enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation. Now listen to this. If you continue in your faith, establish and firm and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel, this is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven and of which I Paul, to become a servant. It has been proclaimed to every creature. What does it mean? The gospel has been proclaimed to every creature? I thought the gospel still has yet to be proclaimed to every creature that we need to go out into the world and proclaim the gospel and acclaim the gospel. Paul here is saying, no, it has been proclaimed. What's going on there? This is so key. When Jesus was crucified, a stake was hammered into the ground, a

stake that proclaimed cosmically to all the universe. This God is Lord, this Jesus who is King of Kings. That's his title. And Lord of Lords now has testimony, not simply the title that he is Lord, but he has proved his lordship by giving his fullness for all of creation, for you and for me.

That's his testimony. By virtue of title and testimony, Jesus is Lord of all, lord of all creation, lord of the universe. And on that day when he was crucified, when he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And cried out, It is finished. He was proclaiming this gospel for all nations, declared to every creature under heaven. And now our job is simply whether people have heard it or not, to say, do you know it's been proclaimed? Do you know whether you know it, knew it or not? The same way you don't even know the atoms in your body, that the gospel has kind of gone through all of creation. It's worked into your mitochondria. Will you receive it? Will you believe it? That's the job of the church and that's how we get it. So what is it that threatens this full life that Jesus promises? What is it that keeps you from waking up and saying, I have the fullness of God. It's been given to me in Jesus Christ. I need nothing else. No achievements, no relationships, nothing else. Now Lord will lead me into those things, but I need only him, for I've got the fullness of God in him.

What is it that threatens that? It's simply what I've been saying all along, that we might elevate achievements and experiences and relationships above God. So when we gather together to worship God, it's the opportunity to lay our souls before Him. And to say, Lord, that which has become unbalanced, that which I have elevated above you, would you today put it back into perspective? Would you put it at Your feet for your Lord of the universe? I worship you. You're here moving in this place, I worship you. You are the waymaker, the miracle worker, the Promise Keeper, light in the darkness. I worship you so that all honor and glory and praise might be his, so that every fiber of our being which was created in Him and by Him would be for Him. Amen. We are for you, Lord. We can't help but be for you, Lord, whether in rebellion or in obedience, our lives tell of Your glory. You will be Glorified lord. We ask, Lord, that it would be through our obedience, it would be through lives fully yielded to you. We need that, Lord. We confess our sins because we fall so short.

But even so, we praise you for the fullness that we have in you. We praise you for the reminders of that fullness in the body and blood of Christ, in the worship, in the Word, and in the fellowship of the saints. So we offer ourselves to you now, in Jesus name, amen.