

Have you ever gone into another room for something only to arrive in there with absolutely no clue of why you're there?? "I know I came in here for something...but...what?! What am I doing here?" That's disconcerting enough, but what's worse is when you're sitting there and you've been asking yourself that same question very much on purpose, "What am I doing here? What am I supposed to be doing with my life? How do I find value, fullness, meaning? What's life for??" From the time of Job to Socrates and Plato to right now, people have been pondering this. Maybe you been wondering this too.

Sisters and brothers, you have the answers in God's Word which supplies your life with more fullness than you can appreciate. Scripture does this with remarkable simplicity. "*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.*" Right there, in a dozen words, is all the answer you need! You have, by God's grace, received Jesus, the one God chose, as Lord and savior. By knowing this, you are freed from life's crippling existential questions. What do you do now? You go forward, you walk with Christ, you live him. What part of your life is left out of that instruction?

In the knowledge of Jesus you are firmly rooted not because you're the one with the faith but because of the God who gave it and who, from the roots on up, builds you up in Jesus. This isn't always an observable process, but compare your today self to your 20 years ago self. Are you the same? You've grown, not just older, but by the Spirit's work in the Word, but more like Jesus. You are made God's own child beyond any shadow of a doubt. How do you know? The resurrection! Death's fangs are ripped out by Jesus' taking up life again! It puts a guarantee on the delight God takes in you, on the forgiveness God patiently and repeatedly gives for the sake of the Son he loves. Jesus living means you'll live in never diminishing glory forever. How can you be anything but tremendously thankful for all this goodness? I don't think there's another way to be!

If this is what Christ gives because this is what Christ is, why does Paul even have to bother with this warning? He cautions, "*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*" Even though the bazillion philosophies of the world are ultimately humanistic in nature, appealing to the lowest common denominators of fear, greed, pleasure, or self-elevation, they're super attractive to us and they're blasting in our ears all the time. Always ask, "Does this contradict my Lord's Word and will? Does it build me up in God's grace? Does it spur me on to live and share his grace with others? What good can I learn from this?" If the answers check out, great! If not, be wary of those voices because, quite unlike Jesus, they don't have your eternal soul's eternal best interest in mind and the damage is pernicious, done before you notice.

Why do people seek this stuff out? Our ears get rather itchy sometimes and we want to hear what we want to hear, not what God wants us to hear. Don't listen anywhere else because this is Christ, "*For all the fullness of God's being dwells bodily in Christ.*" How? I don't know, beyond understanding, but totally true. The fullness God who called all things into being, who knows each star by name and what each ant is up to, is fully found in the physical body of Jesus. God became a man, all of God. God gave you his very self in sending his Son into the world to find you and save you. What could fill your heart more than that? What can give your life deeper

meaning? Nothing! Listen to your Lord Christ, who pulled out all the stops, taking on true humanity and why? So having obeyed perfectly he could die as the Lamb of God, the sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world because he's all sufficient God.

All the fullness of God, every aspect and quality of the divine nature is found in Jesus, so don't deify things that aren't. "Well, pastor, of course I wouldn't. I know there's only one God and I worship him only." Easy to say, certainly, difficult to do. We do this so often without even realizing it. Probably would never outright say we're choosing to rely on or find true fulfillment in anything other than our Lord Christ, but in attitude and action, in reaction even, we do. How many times wasn't something as ultimately trivial as sports suddenly more important? Not to knock sports, I like them too! But what if we were as enthusiastic about our faith as we were about sports or if we trained for our faith as hard as we train for games. How many times haven't we listened to voices of people spewing empty deceit instead of our Lord Christ even if/when they contradict him! No more of that nonsense. Run from that! Plug your ears, change the channel! Run to Christ who fully saves you and who fills you with his wisdom and perfect righteousness. He withheld nothing to save you, not his body, not his life, not even his connection to the Father because he was forsaken on the cross so that he now can give you his whole kingdom and the comfort of knowing that the one in whom the universe exists and functions, himself, has made your heart his home filling you with his presence, peace, joy, and love to the degree that your life is now defined by Jesus. Jesus says in John 14:23, "*Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*"

This complete goodness is found only in Christ who, because he poured out his life to death only to take it up again for our salvation, is given the name above every name and all the authority of the Father. All this goodness of God is yours through something incredibly simple, "*Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*" Your sinful nature was cut away, drowned in baptism, and what you are now is a new and pure creation. In sin, dead. By baptism, forgiven and alive! Only Christ gives this. No one else, no guru, philosopher, or so called authority is gonna give you full eternal life through full and free forgiveness. Here's a fuller picture of how God did that and what an image it is, "*He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.*" As Lutherans, we pride ourselves in Luther nailing sentences to the church door. As sinful humans, let's pride ourselves many times more that Christ nailed the record of our guilt to his cross! In doing so, he disarmed sin because he paid for every last sin of every last person. Jesus disarmed the devil by not only crushing his head but by forgiving the sin he accuses you of. Jesus disarmed death by choosing to breathe his last and give up his life when it was finished knowing it meant you'd live forever with him in glory.

What is life for? What are we supposed to be doing here? Rejoicing. God made you to rejoice. But more pointedly, we can rejoice to say other forgiven sinners, "*For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" You can make that confident confession boldly and gladly only in Christ in whom dwells all the fullness of God. Amen.