

Live Like Jesus Lives!

July 31, 2016

Colossians 3:1-11

A man wandered up to a little league baseball game. He asked a player what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing--we're behind."

"I'll bet you're discouraged," the man said.

"Why?" replied the little boy. "We haven't batted yet!"

Some people accept defeat before they even step to the plate. That seems to be the case for some of the Christians in the Colossian churches. That may be the case for some of us as well.

Do we live as if Jesus is truly alive?

How do we live the New Life (Continued)? We've wrestled with that question for a month now. The New Life continues, or it stops being new. The New Life continues with gratitude.

But, gratitude for what? We thank God for our change of address! The Messiah, Jesus—both cosmic and crucified—moved us. We take his Good News into a desperate and dying world. Last week we heard that we can do that only with good roots.

In Colossians three, Paul urges us to **live like Jesus lives**. That's the main thought in today's message. **Let's live like Jesus lives**.

That sentence can be read in two ways. First, let's live like Jesus is alive.

The Colossians are struggling to live the New Life (Continued). Paul puts a simple question to the Colossians. *Why are you living like Jesus is dead?* Paul says it this way in Colossians two, verse twenty: *"If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?"*

Someone had convinced the Colossians that God required perfect performance of religious rites. For them, following Jesus was about proper handwashing, standing up and sitting down at the right times, having the right diet, keeping the liturgical calendar. Paul says that none of this will produce the fruit God wants.

The fruit God wants is a community that lives like Jesus is alive. Paul asks them quite directly, "Why are you living like Jesus is dead?"

That's a powerful question for us as well. Are we living like Jesus is dead? Some of us live simply for pleasure. Some live for wisdom. Some live for achievement. In the end, it's all dust and ashes if Jesus is dead.

The boxer Muhammad Ali was the most famous athlete of his generation. He was on top, and his entourage of trainers and various helpers shared the adulation with him. But the party ended, leaving many of Ali's loyal followers disillusioned--and in some cases, destitute. Ali himself, halting in speech and uncertain in movement, said "I had the world, and it wasn't nothin'."

Today we get a key principle for Christian life. What is true for Jesus is true for us. Jesus died. You have too. Jesus was raised. You are too. Jesus lives the new life. You do too. One of the marks of Christian maturity is that we get that.

Let's live like Jesus lives.

First, let's live like Jesus is alive. Second, let's live the way Jesus lives. What is Paul saying here? Paul is telling us to develop the character which reflects the treasure we have in heaven. Paul is telling us to live like Jesus is living. Let's live the way Jesus lives.

Jesus hands everything over to God the Father. "I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all," Martin Luther once wrote, "but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."

Our life is hidden with the Messiah in God. We can draw on that life in the here and now. We don't have to wait for pie in the sky in the sweet by and by. Think about your bank account. You don't have to live in the bank to use your debit card. Think about dessert. You don't have to live in the freezer to enjoy ice cream! But you do need something in the bank to spend or in the freezer to eat.

Sometime back the Associated Press carried this dispatch: "Leslie Puckett, after struggling to start his car, lifted the hood and discovered that someone had stolen the motor." I think many Christians live as if there's nothing under their hoods. But there is!

That something under our hoods is the Holy Spirit, living and breathing in us and through us. We live, not for pleasure, but for joy. We live, not for wisdom, but for faith. We live, not for achievement, but for compassion.

When we live the way Jesus lives, we get our thinking straight. Notice verse ten—the new self is being renewed in the image of the creator. "Thinking straight and knowing the truth are part of what it means to be a truly human being," says N. T. Wright, "the sort of human being the gospel is meant to create."ⁱ

Let's live like Jesus lives.

When we live like Jesus lives, we become more and more the full and flourishing human beings God has made us to be. Do you want that full and flourishing life?

Let's live like Jesus lives. Let's pray...

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ⁱ Wright, *Prison Letters*, page 179.