

At The Intersection

July 17, 2016

Colossians 1:15-28

If you have ever moved, you have dealt with the dreaded “change of address.” The Post Office provides forms, cards and advice on making the change. But even if you fill out every blessed form and card in the packet, something will still be lost, delayed or returned as you make the transition.

In Colossians one, verse thirteen, Paul reminds us of the most important change of address in the universe. God “*has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son...*” We Christians proclaim this good news. **In Jesus, we have a brand new address.**

I am launching a series of messages on Paul’s letter to the Colossians. The whole series is called “New Life (Continued).” The Colossian Christians had a spectacular start in their life with Jesus and with one another. The Good News of Jesus produced exuberant and explosive growth in faith, hope and love. News of this astonishing growth found its way to Paul.

The Colossian Christians had an amazing Jesus honeymoon. Now it seems that the honeymoon is over. How do we live the New Life (Continued)? 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! **In Jesus, we have a brand new address.** Thanks be to God!

Whenever we have moved, people ask, “Who’s moving you?” A good mover makes the experience less stressful. A bad mover delivers pieces, parts and apologies. So Paul answers the question. Who moved us?

Paul’s answer is in Colossians one, verses fifteen through twenty. The Messiah, Jesus—both cosmic and crucified—moved us. That’s worth repeating because it is such a heavy-duty statement. The Messiah, Jesus—both cosmic and crucified—moved us.

In Jesus, we have a brand new address.

Jesus is God. “*For in him,*” Paul writes in verse nineteen, “*all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...*” God creates the cosmos. God holds it all together. Whatever is true of God is true of Jesus. Jesus is God with a human face, to be sure. But Jesus is not God second-class or junior grade. Jesus is the Lord of the cosmos.

Why does this matter? This matters because “only a suffering God can help.”¹ First, let’s emphasize “God” in that phrase. Jesus is the “whole package.” It’s easy to forget who we’re dealing with. We often reduce Jesus to our buddy rather than our Lord. We need more than a buddy to deal with sin, death and evil.

“Only a suffering God can help.” Second, let’s emphasize “suffering” in that phrase. Paul puts it this way in verse twenty: *“through [Jesus] God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”*

N. T. Wright notes, “It’s by looking at Jesus that we discover who God is... the more we look at Jesus, the more we realize that the true God is the God of utter self-giving love.”ⁱⁱ Jesus is the crucified God.

So, who moved us? Jesus—both cosmic and crucified.

In Jesus, we have a brand new address.

This brand new address is our base camp in a desperate and dying world. If you go on an adventure, you need a base camp. It’s where you return for a chance to rest, to get more supplies, and new directions. Our base camp is at the intersection of the cosmic and crucified Christ. We take his Good News into that desperate and dying world.

Jesus shows us what it means to be fully human as well as fully God. We get to tell the world that we are “bound for greater things.” It’s not that we need to escape from an evil world. It’s that Jesus comes to make this world and all of us what God intended us to be. God comes down to raise us up.

That’s what Paul means in verse twenty-eight: *“It is [Jesus] whom we proclaim...so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”* The word for “mature” really means “whole” or “complete.” The whole person lives under the direction of Jesus and His cross and resurrection. The mature are those who understand the message of the cross as the wisdom of God. The mature embrace Jesus’ cross in trust and hope.

That mature person lives joyfully at the new address God gives us in Jesus. **In Jesus, we have a brand new address.**

When we worship, we celebrate this move. We don’t celebrate the Good News with nearly enough joy and passion. Let’s work on that. Whenever we worship, we remember who moved us. And we head from base camp back out into the world that needs what we can share.

In Jesus, we have a brand new address. Thanks be to God! Let’s pray...

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ⁱ Quoted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

ⁱⁱ Wright, *Prison Letters*, page 151.