

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor
December 1, 2024

Title: Jesus Is The Reason

Text: Colossians 1:15-23

As we move into this Advent season, it seems the right time to acknowledge and celebrate the basics of the Christian journey. Our focal text speaks of creation (Colossians 1:16), Christ as God made visible (Colossians 1:15), reconciliation through the cross (Colossians 1:20), the gift of the resurrection (Colossians 1:18), life within the church (Colossians 1:18), and the ongoing mission and witness of the faithful (Colossians 1:22-23).

Last year I attended a retreat for retired pastors. I had thought I might be the oldest one there, but, no, Jimmy was there! He was 96 years old and a full participant in the event. I overheard him talking to someone in the hall and Jimmy casually mentioned that he had driven to the event. Wow! Still active! Still learning! Still sharing! I was well reminded that our Christian experience does not have an expiration. There is no “best used by” date! It is Advent once again and the story is as rich as ever and the call to service is as clear as ever.

When the apostle Paul wrote this letter, the believers in Colossae were under attack for believing that Jesus was divine. No wonder Paul gives such energy to finding the divine presence in Jesus! It echoes the voice of John who wrote that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). (Don’t you like the way the Common English Bible translates that truth: “The Word became flesh and made his home among us.” It’s a reminder that Jesus lived in our world, in our experience, in our reality.)

As I type these words, I am at a conference center that overlooks a majestic river. Ever so often, when I look out the window I can see the trail left by a passing boat. I may not see the vessel, but I can tell it has been there. When others look at my life, what is the evidence of the presence of Jesus Christ? Is there evidence of love? Is there evidence of peace? Is there evidence of justice? Is there evidence of joy? Is there evidence of hope?

Each season of the church year has its own flavor and emphasis. Advent is a season of expectancy, but when I read these verses from Colossians, I note that Paul uses the past tense *and* the present tense. Advent is the joy of expecting something that is already real.

What an encouraging word this letter would have been to the Colossian Christians! Its truth is eternal because I hear it as an encouraging word today!

What Someone Else Has Said: In *Don’t Look Back* (Abingdon, 2022), William Willimon has written: “More than wishful thinking, biblical hope is a reasonable, confident expectation that’s based on the nature and work of God—past, present, and future.”

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Come even now, Lord Jesus . . .”

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