

## Is Jesus Enough?

With us human beings, it's never a question of whether we will worship, we are made to worship. It's always a question of what we will worship. It's that question that got Paul writing to the Colossians, because the Colossians had their own question for Paul. He spends most of his letter to them answering that question. The question they had seems to be this: "Is Jesus enough?"

"Is Jesus enough" to get through life with? To face evil with? To raise a family with? To run a community or nation with?

"Is Jesus enough?"

The answer the Colossians came up with on their own, before hearing from Paul, was the same answer most folks come up with on their own: "No, Jesus isn't enough."

With all due respect to your faith and mine, we regularly announce, in thought word and deed that Jesus doesn't come close to being enough. We don't need to look far to make the point.

The Colossians then, like we now, were intrigued by Jesus. They admired Jesus. But they felt compelled to supplement Jesus as they faced what life threw at them. So they, like us, supplemented Jesus with armies and pension plans, with horoscopes and philosophy, with angel worship, with sex, drugs and rock and roll.

In short, whether it's "saint worship" or "celebrity worship", whether it's a handgun in the dresser drawer" or "border police to keep out the illegals", whether it's "racing up the career track" or "accumulating wealth"; all of these efforts have one thing in common: They seek ultimate safety and security and domination and the "good life" in things that have been created rather in he who is the Creator.

And while it is true that, kept in their proper perspective, many of these things are good; because we tend to be in the worship business as

human beings, we often forget a proper perspective and hoist one or more onto the altar of worship.

We don't have to look far to see examples of this all around. We live in a country that equates God with material success; that often uses God to bless our wars, our economy, our way of life. There are other people and other nations that do the very same thing. And when they do, they, like us, have traded the unpredictable, totally free, always challenging God of the Old Testament and New; well, we have traded the Living God in for a god with a small "g". A god I can control; a god who does what we want; a god who serves us instead of the other way around.

This was the reality of the community of the Colossians. This is the crisis Paul addresses today. And it is a crisis to be expected. Our trade of the Living God for the small "g" god is to be expected. It is to be expected because the life the Living God invites us to live is, at first blush, terrifying and horrifying to every piece of our being. Think about it! How did Jesus defeat the power of evil and death?

Did he call up an army? Did he assemble weapons of mass destruction? Did he protect himself and his loved ones?

We all know the answers to those questions.

Instead, "the powers of evil are defeated not by some overwhelming display of divine power, but by the weakness of Christ's death." [New Interpret Bible, V. XI, 628]. By all accounts, it doesn't seem that Jesus won at all. It seems violence and death were the winners.

The gospel tells us Jesus conquered sin and conquered death. Yet, every day we see sin; we live in a world where death seems to reign supreme. So the question the Colossians had, that we have, remains:

"Is Jesus enough?"

And Paul, who would surrender his life to beheading by the Romans, provides his answer. Paul's answer is to give again to the Colossians, to give again to us, the shocking revelation of the Gospel:

“To save your life, you must be willing to lose it.

“To be greatest of all, be the servant of all.”

“That God’s strength is made real in our weakness.”

All of this is an affront to, an assault upon, what you and I call “common sense.” One commentator puts it this way:

“The challenge issued to the readers of Colossians is one that remains for Christians today. Is this proclamation about Christ’s death a metaphor by which we are prepared to live? Do we believe that this answer to the power of evil is really sufficient? The gospel proclaims that Christ has conquered evil, yet evil still threatens and flourishes. So are additional means necessary to cope with evil? The Colossians relied on angels. Modern Christians rely on materialism, consumerism, pragmatism, and violence, in order to live with the impact of evil on our lives and in society.” Id.

Such were the questions the Colossians put to Paul. While much has changed in 2000 years, the fundamental questions have not. Paul’s response is this: In Jesus, we have seen the fullness of God.

God the creator, not just of you and me, but of the vastness of space, the grandeur of the universe, the Creator of all that is, became one of us in Jesus in order to show us how we were always meant to live.

And where might we learn that way but in the very prayer Jesus teaches us today. “Our Father”, meaning, we are all children of one God: Black, white, Asian, of every race, every gender, every criminal, every genius, every challenged person, all saints and all sinners, children of one God.

Divisions between us that are not yet finished will be finished. Starting now.

“Your Kingdom come”.

All of our national chest thumping, our empires, our pride, all will give way. In Jesus, God’s kingdom has come near! The veil separating heaven

and earth has been made thin, even pierced, as God's kingdom pushes into and upon and over our common sense.

"Feed us today."

Help us learn to live one day at a time. Help us to live in the moment, eat in the moment, trust in the moment.

"Forgive us as we forgive."

May we learn that we cannot receive what we cannot give.

"Forgive us as we forgive."

"Spare us from the test."

Please.

We are each of us on a journey toward God's truth. We are each of us at different places on that journey. But wherever you are on your journey, grab hold of our free, unmanageable, uncontrollable, glorious, God, who walks us down strange paths, to see wonders we never imagined.

We can trust this God because, as Jesus explains, God is nearer to us than our next-door neighbor, more anxious to help than even a mother or father is to help their child, God is closer than your breath. God is standing right next to you.

This is Paul's answer today. It is the witness of Jesus today.

Is it enough?

+Amen