



Glendive/Wibaux United Methodist Church/UCC

July 28, 2019

Colossians 2:6-15

Sermon Title: We're All in This Together

“Think globally act locally” According to an internet search, this phrase is attributed to the founder of Friends of the Earth in 1969 or as late as 1977 by someone else. Regardless, Mark Allen Powell in his chapter on Colossians, Introduction to the New Testament, uses the phrase as the motto for that Letter. Which at its basic premise is, “we’re all in this together.”

Commented [PC1]:

Let us pray: Eternal One, as we come together this morning to hear this message, each of us as different and unique as you have made us, let us be of one heart in the matter of your Son, Jesus, who sacrificed himself for us. Let us be united in love even when we are divided by life. And may the words of my mouth and the meditations on your word be acceptable to you, my rock and my redeemer. Amen

When I have heard, “think globally, act locally,” it reminds me that we are part of a humanity so much bigger than 209 N. Kendrick Ave, here in Glendive. Bigger even than the great state of Montana, Big Sky Country, even more, much bigger than the United States of America. We are connected in more ways than we disconnect. Ignore that we don’t have a common language or skin tones that are the same; how boring would that be after all. We’re connected through the divine of God’s creation, whether you believe literally that we are the fruits of Adam and Eve’s lineage or you take the scientific approach of evolution; it is inescapable to me that we are of the same human beings, created, in some way by a force greater than we are and far more mysterious than we’ll ever understand.

Let me take you back to the city of Colossae (colosai) about 2000 years ago. Colossae (colosai) was destroyed in an earthquake around 61 CE, but it’s sister cities of Laodicea and Lycus, still exist, in western Turkey. This letter, which Paul likely wrote; was to a people he had not met face to face. But he was concerned enough over reports of their activities and behavior that this is one of the surviving New Testament books. He believed they were in danger of accepting arguments that weren’t plausible for those baptized Jews and gentiles. And that they were “held captive” through errant philosophy and empty deceit.

Then as now, the religious and certainly political powers, were trying to keep the Colossians from becoming the community of believers they had intended through baptism. They had been washed in water but were not clothed in compassion nor self-discipline as I spoke of last week.

So how does one go about correcting incorrect interpretation of Christ's teaching to an entire community you have never met. There was no PowerPoints nor Skype to have the face-to-face conferences or studies. How then? Though the power of the written word. At that time, writings were so infrequent and literacy so rare, today we might call them journalists, and scribes had yet to be seduced greed and political objectives and the bottom line of selling books or television ads, to appeal to our baser instincts.

Paul tells them straight up. Reading again Colossians 2:6-19, from *The Message*, "My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you've been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now live him. You're deeply rooted in him. You're well-constructed upon him. You know your way around the faith. Now do what you've been taught.

8-10 Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything. They spread their ideas through the empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions of spirit beings. But that's not the way of Christ.

18-19 Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession with angels and that you seek out visions. They're a lot of hot air, that's all they are. They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us." Today we have folks telling us to obsess on bad guys and demons: to envision a future that's not Christ like.

I can almost hear someone reading that letter aloud to those small groups gathered in homes or maybe out in the fields. Whether they were pagans, Jews or nascent Christians, these folks were seeking their purpose and meaning in their lives. Now as followers of the Light, we believe we have found our life's purpose, through Christ. And Paul tells the Colossians just to follow that way. One commentator said that human beings are created to be meaning makers. Meaning makers. Find meaning in our lives. Searching and learning and listening and developing and often never really being able to answer all the spiritual questions we have. Nevertheless, we need to keep seeking. And seeking wisdom from the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, not the Trilogy of the Lord of the Rings.

Given the relative apparent mature age of folks here this morning, we've begun to understand that we can't and shouldn't go it alone. Rev. Rodger Y. Nishioka, for 15 years a professor at Columbia Theological Seminary and now back in the pulpit in Kansas, wrote in his commentary on today's Colossians passage, "As we grow in our individual identities, we begin

to understand that who we are is shaped in large part by those around us – by the communities to which we belong. Despite the American concept of the rugged individualist or the myth of the “self-made” man or woman, we eventually come to realize that these are concepts or myths that do not represent reality. No one can survive as an individual. There is no such thing as a self-made woman or man. Eventually we must come to understand that our individual identity is part of a larger shared identity.” Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 3, page 281-281

I am human. I need other people!! There may be some of you who are willing to stand up and say that no one helped you do anything; you were on your own. You made current self. through sheer persistence and strength of your own personality. No one gave you a \$1 million-dollar inheritance to get started. No one gave you your first job, you earned it. No one coddled you. No one. This is the attitude of the classic Frank Sinatra song, “I did it my way.” I won’t sing it here, but I encourage you to just read the words some time. “I faced it all and stood tall and did it my way.”

Ah yes, we love to believe we did it our way, on our own. But we cannot exist in this church, in this community, in this country, in the world, without others. My mother-in-law lives in Cortez, Co. One day she was shopping in Wal-Mart and remarked how so much of the fresh produce came from outside the United States. She lamented this in fact and opted not to buy something because it wasn’t from the US. In the mode of shop local, I support this. However, if you drank coffee before coming here this morning, you need the growers and farmers of Columbia. If you ate spaghetti sauce with authentic olive oil, it could have come from Turkey. How many have traveled abroad, just raise your hand. Well then you paid taxes and fees and ate food and rode on roads that were made or produced in other countries. Just yesterday I learned that the granite countertops in your kitchens and the tombstones in our cemeteries come from China and Japan.

Folks, we are all in this life together. You may want to stop asylum seekers or other immigrants from entering this country, legally or illegally, but they are here and fixing our roads and cooking in our restaurants and teaching in our schools and serving in your military. You may think everyone should speak English to live here. Yet, Jesus spoke primarily Aramaic, an ancient language. I hate to imagine where we’d be now if no one knew Aramaic and Greek and Hebrew weren’t around. Still he was able to spread his message of love without being able to speak multiple languages. How can we even begin to share the Good News if we’re reluctant to speak with those whose mother tongue is different from ours. I’ve never understood that idea!

Again, we’re all in this together. I am here to serve the Glendive and Wibaux communities. I am a stranger. You are all here to worship, together: together, a common God. A God of our understanding that expects us to love Him above all others, including our families and the false idols we lean on: money, cars, jobs, etc. We are here together. Let’s celebrate that. Let’s celebrate that we are doing our parts to demonstrate that we are here for one another. Even though our backgrounds are different, we are here together. Even though our socioeconomic

situations are different, we are here together. Let's continue to show Glendive that we worship together because we love one another.

The power greater than our understanding created us, all of us, everywhere, to live on this planet, together, reliant on each other. No country has all the resources it needs or wants, no community either. That's why there is still bartering today. I believe it's in our mysterious DNA that we need, love, help and forgive one another.

And, as John Wesley said, "Even if we cannot think alike can we not love alike?" If we can do this here, act locally, we can begin to think globally. We can begin to embrace the differences. We can begin to take down man made barriers to love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. God has already done that for us. So, let's show God, we can do this for Him. Think globally, act locally. Think about your neighborhood, act in your house. Think about others act within yourself.

Amen and Selah

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Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 3, David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor ed, Westminster John Know Press, 2010, m