

Prayer of Preparation: *Holy Spirit, come and fill this place, Bring us healing with Your warm embrace, Show Your power make Your presence known*
Holy Spirit, come fill this place, Holy Spirit, come fill this place
Speak Lord, your servants are listening for a word of hope. **Amen.**

Paul’s next point of information for us is, “*What does it mean to be ‘alive’*”? I am sure that most of you know that my answer to this question is “a large hot coffee four creams and two Splenda.” I am very serious about my coffee and very serious about having it in the morning and very serious about having it just that way. I have tried to do all the things before coffee, but it just never goes well. Ask anyone who knows me...it’s very true.

But that’s not the answer Paul is looking for. The ancient world didn’t have coffee yet, so no, coffee was **not** the answer Paul was looking for. The answer is Jesus. In order to be made alive, in order to have life, in order to live life...and to live life abundantly, we need Jesus.

Here’s the problem: We would like to believe that what we see in the world right now is new. It’s not. It’s the same things Paul warned the Colossians about dressed up in different clothes. Smooth, sophisticated words and ideas meant to draw us away from Christ. Now, I know you’re wondering what’s the big deal? Why so much warning from Paul? Well, remember last week when I said the Colossians were worshiping the stars? That’s what Paul’s warning is all about. Paul is telling the Colossians to stop going to astrologists to get their futures and fortunes told. Paul tells the Colossians, you want to know who holds the future? Christ. Christ holds our present, Christ holds our past, and Christ holds our future. Paul advises the Colossians to get away from the nonsense of astrology and study the gospel. Why the gospel? Why the good news of Jesus the Christ? Paul tells the Colossians to study the gospel because it is in the gospel we will find truth.

For the last couple of Sundays, we’ve been walking with Paul and the Colossians and learning a whole lot about hope. We’re still there in Colosse with Paul...Paul is still telling the Colossians about hope because we are grounded in hope that is different. Last week I said that our hope lays in the One who was with God and is the firstborn of all creation. **Our** hope lays in the One born before all things. **Our** hope lays in the firstborn of the dead so that he may raise us from the dead. **Our** hope lays on the One who is the very fullness of God, **our** hope lays in the One born to bring us reconciliation to ourselves, reconciliation to creation, and reconciliation to God. **Our** hope lays in the maker of peace. Paul spells it out for the Colossians...we worship, we serve, a living God born to bring hope to the world.

What could possibly be next? I’m glad you asked. Paul tells the Colossians that our hope has come to bring us alive. Not coffee alive...coffee is so we can get up, walk around, and speak like real people. No, **alive!** Alive to hear God speaking to us. Alive to listen to what Jesus is teaching us. Alive to where the Holy Spirit is leading us. **ALIVE!**

Let’s hear what Paul is saying to us with a fresh ear, *And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.*

When you were dead. Paul is describing the Colossians life before Christ as death: physical death and spiritual death. Let’s go back to Paul’s hymn to Christ for a minute because he lays it all out there when he describes WHO Jesus is. Jesus is *the firstborn from the dead*. Why? So that we may be raised from the dead. So that you, me, and everyone else can be raised from the dead... physical death is a fact but through Jesus’s reconciling power we reunited with God in heaven.

Being raised from the dead both physically and spiritually is a **choice**. It's a choice we make when we follow Jesus. It's a choice we make when we decide that we're tired of who we are now. It's the choice we make when we say that we know that there is something better; it's a choice we make when we hear God telling us that we are called to something better than the here and now. It's the choice we make when we say that our hope has been placed in the wrong people and the wrong things. It's the choice we make when we say, I'd rather live life rooted and grounded in Jesus the Christ, the image of the invisible God.

It's the choice we make when we take our baptism vows and we go in steeped in sin and come out as new creations, alive and living lives of faith, hope, and love.

Here's the problem with this world: there are plenty of things out there to pull us away from who God calls us to be. Here's what Paul says: *Watch out that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

Paul is telling us to be on guard! There are people and systems in this world who are designed to lie to us and call it truth. There are people with silver tongues who will spin the truth into something unrecognizable. There are people who will tell us, *follow me!* It's a lie. Those traditions we've been following? Stop. Just stop. Stop because our hope is found in the One who calls us beloved. That One is Jesus, the Christ.

Response to the Word: *Breath of God we need a touch from You,
Shine down on us with the light of truth, Stir our hearts and set our spirit free
Holy Spirit, come fill this place, Holy Spirit, come fill this place*
Brothers and sisters in Christ, family of God, may your hope **always** be found in Jesus, the Christ. **Amen.**