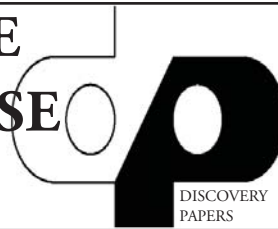


# TAKING A WALK WITH THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE

*SERIES: WALKING IN THE MYSTERY*



Catalog No. 110501  
Colossians 2:6-7  
1st Message  
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May 1, 2011

What is the guiding principle that gives your life meaning?

We want to start off this morning by thinking about this question and what better way to do so than with a movie scene. The movie is *Robin Hood*, a recent adaptation of the classic story. This version is a fictional account of an orphan named Robin Longstride. Throughout the movie, there is a phrase that haunts him. He discovers it on a sword he inherits, but doesn't remember where it's from. A friend of his father helps Robin to remember his dad. And when he does, he realizes where this phrase came from.

This phrase from his father, "Rise, and rise again until lambs become lions" becomes a motto for Robin Longstride and his purposes. It's kind of an odd phrase. It almost sounds biblical, but it's not. This version of the Robin Hood story presents him as a forerunner of democracy. It becomes his quest in life to see the people rise up and establish a government of the people. Robin ends up dedicating his whole life to this purpose and phrase.<sup>1</sup>

So what about us? Do we have a guiding principle? Something that we dedicate our lives toward? And if we do, what does it mean to live that out? How is our life shaped by that principle?

These are the two questions that Robin Longstride has to figure out in the course of the movie and they are the two questions that we have to answer. What is the idea that gives meaning and purpose to our lives? But once we've answered that question, we're only at the beginning of the real question: what does it mean to have a life guided by that principle? How does it shape our choices? Our decisions? Our relationships? Our priorities?

Today we're picking up on a series that we began last Advent in the book of Colossians. As we read the first part of Colossians, we focused on waiting for Christ as we waited for Christmas to arrive. We looked at who Christ is and how he brings the themes of Advent to the world. The series was called "Waiting for Christ."

But as the book of Colossians progresses, it changes direction. The author moves from helping the Colossians understand who Christ is to helping them understand

what it means to follow him in their daily lives. You might say in the first part of the book he answers our first question: what is the guiding principle of our lives? Or as Paul would ask, "Who is the guiding principle of our lives?" Then in the second part of the book, he answers our second question, "What should our lives look like if they are guided by this principle?"

Today we start that second section by looking at Colossians 2:6-7. These two verses form a sort of hinge in the book. They get us from the first section of the book to the second section of the book. Paul summarizes the first section by giving his readers a guiding principle. He answers the first question. Then he tells them what it means to live by that principle. He answers the second question.

The metaphor that he uses is walking. He tells them to walk in Jesus. That's why this part of the Colossians series is called "Walking in the Mystery." The life of a Christian is about going about your daily life with the profound cosmic truth of who Christ is, informing every aspect of your life. Walking in a mystery.

And today we'll be paying close attention to the idea of walking with Christ. The contrast of the everydayness of walking and the mystery of God. Today we'll be taking a walk with the Creator of the universe.

Last week we had a beautiful celebration of the truth of Easter. Christ is risen from the dead. We proclaimed together that Jesus Christ, who once was dead, is now risen. This morning we'll see how the resurrected Christ changes our lives. We'll see what it means about Christ that he is resurrected. And we'll see what it means about us that he is resurrected.

So let's begin by reading these two verses and then we'll work our way through them.

Colossians 2:6-7:

**"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,<sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

Two very simple verses, but as we'll see this morning, they are packed with rich meaning.

## Remember What You First Believed

His instruction is based on what already happened for them. He tells them, "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord."

For us "receiving Christ as Lord" is how we describe someone coming to faith in Christ. But that's not the language used for conversion in the New Testament, so we have to be careful about reading our own experience into this text.

When Paul uses the idea of receiving something, he's talking about the passing down of truth from one person to another. In the Old Testament, the truth of God was received by the younger people from their elders. The prophets "received" truth from God. And even in the New Testament, truth about God is received from his messengers.

This is what Paul is referring to here. The Colossians received a certain piece of truth. They received the truth of the gospel. And he summarizes that truth with a simple but powerful saying, "Christ Jesus is Lord." This summarizes everything that he has just said. **"Christ Jesus is Lord."**

Now, titles are funny things. We like to think they don't mean much, but in reality, most people think they are fairly important. When I started working in the professional world eleven years ago, I was given a title: "Product Analyst." I was pretty excited to be a "Product Analyst," so I got business cards made up with my title on it: "Paul Taylor, Product Analyst." Of course, business cards only come in quantities of 2 million, so I had a huge stack of business cards with my title on it. As it turns out, product analysts don't have much use for business cards. But I still loved my title. Titles are important.

And the title that is given to Jesus Christ here is a simple but profound one: "Lord." Now, we're at a bit of a disadvantage in understanding this word for two reasons. First, we don't use it anymore in our culture, so we don't really know what it means. Second, we use it all the time at church and so it has just about lost its meaning for a lot of us.

The title "lord" translates the Greek word *kurios*. This is a word with a long history. And as with many words, there is a lot communicated in a very small word. First of all,

the *kurios* has authority. It was first used of slave owners to indicate their authority over their slaves.

But there were other words used of slave-owners and this particular word started to take on another nuance. "lord" referred not just to the authority that one person had over another, but to the fact that this authority was an essential part of their identity. Their authority was not accidental or arbitrary. The "lord" was the one whose very essence as a person meant that he deserved the authority he had.

You would never think of a modern day boss as a *kurios* because their authority simply comes from the structure of the company and it's limited to professional life. They aren't in charge of you because they are inherently better than you or because of some cosmic truth about their identity. Though I have known some bosses who seem to think of themselves this way....

So *kurios* refers to someone in authority who, because of who they are, deserves that authority. Eventually, Egyptians and Greeks started using this word to refer to their gods. Their gods were in authority and they deserved that authority on a cosmic level. They spoke of their gods having authority over nature, earth, and the entire cosmos. Their power over creation gave them the authority to be a "lord."

But this word was particularly used in reference in situations where an individual was relating to their god: through prayer or sacrifice. So the *kurios* was someone in authority who deserved that authority because of something cosmic, but someone with whom you had a relationship.

You can see why Roman Emperors started to use this word as a title for themselves. When they did so, they were claiming a lot. They didn't use this word to claim they were gods. They used other words for that. But they used this word to refer to their authority over everything. And not just accidental authority, but deserved authority. They used this word to claim that because of something within them, they had authority over heaven and earth. But they also wanted their people to feel connected to them. Caesar was not just lord. He was your lord.

Some of this might be sounding similar to what Paul has said about Christ in Colossians. If you remember from when we looked at Colossians in December, there is a very important section of Colossians verses 15-20 of chapter 1. It's probably an early Christian hymn that Paul has inserted into his text and it talks of who Christ is.

The overall point of the hymn is that Christ is supreme. The first part talks about how he is supreme over creation: he was there at the beginning and he continues to actively hold all of creation together. The second part talks about how he is supreme over redemption. His death made redemption possible and he is the head over the church, the gathering of those who have been redeemed.

And that brings us back to Colossians 2, verse 6. So when Paul says, “you received Christ Jesus as Lord,” he is looking back over everything he has already said, but particularly verses 15-20, and summarizing it all in one little phrase. “Christ Jesus is Lord.” In fact, this was the phrase that Christians used as their motto in the early church. Historians have called it the earliest Christian creed. This is the phrase that summarized everything Christians believe: “Christ Jesus is Lord.”

Paul begins by reminding the Colossians that this amazing truth is what they first believed. This is what brought them to faith. And this is an important reminder for us as well. We need to be grounded in foundational truth about Christ. We need to remember what we first believed about Christ. **Remember what you first believed.**

This was important for the Colossians because they faced people telling them that what they first believed wasn't sufficient. That they needed to move on to the next level.

I've attended church my whole life, but it was my experience in my high school youth group that really solidified my faith. It was there that I experienced a community that embodied the love of Christ in a way that drew me in. I met God. But there are times I'm tempted to say, “Well, maybe I was just a lonely kid and some people being nice to me made me believe what they believed.” Maybe I was just taken in by some nice people. Maybe it wasn't God at all.

So I need Paul's instruction to the Colossians. I need to know that what I originally heard and first believed, the truth about Jesus Christ, is true. Christ Jesus is Lord. Sure, there were a lot of factors going on in my high school youth group, but the central idea that I embraced, the God that I met was real and was at work.

And I'm convinced this is what we all need. To constantly be brought back to what we originally believed. We need to remember. To mature as a Christian is not to learn cutting-edge ideas or graduate to the next level of theology. It's to go deeper in Christ. Deeper and deeper into the simple yet incredibly profound truth that Christ

Jesus is Lord.

This is the answer to our first question. What is the guiding principle of our lives? “Christ Jesus is Lord.” This is what makes us who we are. A few simple words, but a lot of theology is packed into those words. So now we need to move on to the second question: what does a life guided by this principle look like? How does a community guided by this principle treat each other?

## Walk in Christ

That's what Paul addresses next. Having reminded the Colossians of the great, mysterious, cosmic truth of who Christ is, he starts to get practical. First, he uses a metaphor to describe how to live their lives. The NIV interprets that metaphor and says, “continue to live in him.” The original Greek word used though is “walking around.” So a literal translation would be “continue walking around him.” The verb is in the present tense which means that Paul thinks the Colossians are currently doing this, he just wants them to keep doing it. That's why people translate it “Continue walking in him.” They're doing well, but they are at risk for slipping. Paul wants to help prevent them from slipping up.

So the whole idea he's trying to convey is to remember what they first believed and keep their lives in accordance with that belief. I love the language that Paul uses here. What strikes me about it is how universal it is. Everyone, everywhere, in every culture on Earth has walked. This is a universal experience. That's what makes it such a powerful metaphor. Walk around in Jesus. Except for some of us who are physically incapable of walking, we all know about walking. Even in a culture where we have more forms of transportation than Paul of Tarsus ever imagined, we all still know about walking. We walk to the car. We walk into the plane. We walk from our offices to our bathrooms. We walk around the store. We all know about walking.

And that is what Paul is trying to get at. It is an everyday, common, regular, and universal experience. So common we hardly think about it. That's Paul's point. And that's what we're going to see in the rest of Colossians. It's why I've fallen in love with this book as I've studied it. Colossians has some of the grandest, most beautiful cosmic descriptions of Christ found anywhere in the New Testament. It's way up there. But it also has some of the most down-to-earth practical descriptions of how that changes our lives. It's right down here too.

Jesus Christ is Lord. Supreme over creation. Supreme

over redemption. The authority over everything in the physical and spiritual realms. So walk in him. Walk to the car. Walk to your next class. Walk to your job. Walk from the kitchen to the bedroom. Do what you do every single day as one of the most common and universal activities of humankind. But do it in him. **Walk in Christ.**

But what about that part? What does it mean to walk “in him”? Paul mentions this idea in Colossians more frequently than any of his other books. But what does it mean?

Scholars have a phrase they sometimes use to describe the idea of being “in him.” There is general recognition that Paul uses this phrase to describe a location where those who believe in Christ exist. But it isn’t a physical location, it is a spiritual location. The way they describe it is to say that Christ is the sphere that we live in. Christ is the sphere of our existence.

Paul says we should walk around “in him.” Walk around with Christ as the sphere of our existence. Many of you know that we have a lot of pets as a family. We’ve had a snake, hamster, rabbit, turtle, fish, chickens, frogs, tadpoles, and more. We know all about pets. So when I hear that we’re supposed to walk around in a sphere, there’s one thing that immediately comes to my mind. I brought a little visual aid here: a hamster ball. If you’re not familiar with this, it’s a see-through plastic ball that the hamster can run around the house in. The hamster can’t get anything dirty and can’t escape under furniture or other stuff, but can still run around.

This is kind of a silly example, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that this is a pretty good example for what Paul is talking about. It’s not perfect. If you’re claustrophobic, the idea of being trapped in a plastic ball of Christ may sound terrifying. And it’s a bit individualistic—all of us existing in our little plastic bubbles. But there are some powerful ways that this example can help us to understand what it means to walk in Christ.

Let’s imagine that once you profess faith in Christ—once you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord—you start walking around in this clear plastic sphere that is in some crazy way the person of Christ himself.

It means that wherever you go, whatever you look at, whatever situation you encounter, you see it through this clear plastic that surrounds you. Everything you encounter is interpreted by who Christ is. It doesn’t make everything completely different, but it’s certainly not exactly the same

either. Everything has a different sense to it. This is surely part of what Paul means when he says that we are to “walk around in Christ.” But there’s more.

It means that wherever you go, you are surrounded by Christ. It means that you take him everywhere with you. So when you’re sitting here in church, Christ surrounds you. But when you leave here and get in your car and drive home, he surrounds you. When you drive to work and sit in your cubicle or go to class or go to bed at night, he is right there. The person of Christ is with you, surrounding you wherever you go. This is also surely part of what Paul means when he says that we are to “walk around in Christ.” But there’s more.

It means that if I’m in Christ at Safeway, shopping for groceries, and you’re in Christ sitting at your desk, and someone else is in Christ at home with their kids, then in some mysterious way, we’re all in the same place. We may be halfway around the world; we may not even know each other. But if each of us is inside this sphere of Christ, then we are all in the same place: together. This too must be part of what Paul means when he says that we are to “walk in Christ.” But there’s more.

It means that when you bump into someone else or something else, they are bumping into the person of Christ. In some way, they have encountered the Lord of the Universe simply by bumping into you. Sometimes it feels hard, like clear plastic, but sometimes they recognize that something different is going on. You can’t interact with anyone without their interacting with Christ on some level. This too must be part of what Paul means when he says that we are to “walk in Christ.”

If Christ is Lord and we are supposed to walk in him, then he is our everything. He defines our reality. He surrounds us. He connects us to each other. And others see him when they encounter us. As you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, walk in him.

### **Rooted ... Built up ... Established ... Overflowing ...**

This is a powerful image for us to wrap our lives around. But Paul wants to help us develop it further. So as we continue in this passage, he gives us four more metaphors that each paint a different aspect of what it means to walk around in Christ. One image isn’t enough. To grasp this mystery, we need a lot of help. So Paul gives us an agricultural image, an architectural image, a legal image, and a numerical image. We’ll finish looking at this passage by considering each of those images.

Colossians 2:7:

**[we are] <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”**

## Rooted

First, the agricultural image: we're rooted. You know that feeling when you pull up a weed and you just manage to perfectly grab it so that you get the entire root system yanked out of the ground? That's a great feeling isn't it? But it's hard to do because the roots keep that weed secure. And if you try to pull up the weed but just pull the stalk off the roots, you know you've only made it mad and it's going to grow back even stronger.

Paul wants the Colossians' roots to go deeper and deeper so that the threat of the false teaching that they live amidst won't have a chance to pull them up. It's clear as you read this book that what Paul wants these people to be rooted in is the person of Christ. He wants them to know who Christ is and not be confused by any other teaching. This is what we need too. There are a lot of different ideas out there.

It's our conviction at Peninsula Bible Church that our root system must be the Word of God. It's the only thing that has persisted for almost two thousand years. Our desires, our cultural values, and the theologians we respect—these things can't ultimately be what we're rooted in. It has to be the revealed Word of God. Nothing else even has a shot of helping us to know the truth.

We are rooted in Scripture.

## Built Up

Next, the architectural image: we're built-up. He says that walking around in Christ involves being built up. It's a picture of a building being assembled. This is a picture of a building. Of walls and plumbing and support structures and doors and windows being put together. I love watching houses being built in my neighborhood, seeing all the different steps that go toward creating a house.

In the New Testament, it's the people of God that are most often represented as a building, as a house, even as a temple. So another aspect of walking around in Christ means being part of the people of God. Being a part of a community. This is absolutely critical. We sometimes make the mistake of emphasizing our individual relationship

with God so that we think we can be a Christian alone in our room. But we can't. Following Jesus means being a child of the Father which means that you're part of a family. That family is an integral part of what it means to be "in Christ."

We are built up in community.

## Established

Next, the legal image: we're established. What the NIV translates as "strengthened" is sometimes translated "established" and it comes from the legal system of the day. It was used in court in the context of a legally binding document to demonstrate the sale of property from one person to another. It means that the transaction in question has been attested to and proved to be legitimate in the presence of third party witnesses. This is what Paul wants for the Colossians. He wants their faith to be firm, secure, established, strong, proven, and unshakeable. This is what it means for them to walk around in Christ.

For us, I think this refers to the experiences that we have as Christians. This is the various ways that we encounter God in our lives and our faith is exercised and established. It's prayer as we talk to God. It's worship as we are carried into the presence of God through song. It's practicing spiritual disciplines of fasting, solitude, or simplicity. But it's also going to India on a short term mission trip. Or following what you perceive to be God's call by taking that new job that he seems to have prepared for you. Or inviting a friend to church. Or trusting God in the midst of illness or infertility. It's all the parts of our lives that we live in the context of God. Time spent trusting God, following him, questioning him, asking of him, worshipping him, speaking of him, and looking for him. Truly living the life of faith helps you know that what you believe in is real. Living your faith strengthens your faith.

We are strengthened by our experience relating to God.

## Overflowing

Lastly, the numerical image: we're overflowing. These three things come together as a kind of general description of the Christian life. Scripture. Community. Experience. Rooted. Built up. Established. This is what it means to walk around in Christ. This is what flows from understanding that Christ Jesus is Lord.

Paul says when this happens; there is one thing

that always results. Now he uses a numerical image. Our lives overflow. The word is something translated as “superabundance.” Not just “abundance,” but “superabundance.” Overflowing. Too much to contain. Heaps and heaps. What our lives are characterized by is thanksgiving. This is another huge theme of Colossians. The outpouring of thanksgiving is mentioned seven times in this book of four chapters.

We recently read a book as a pastoral staff called *The Pastor as Minor Poet*. This book was written by a pastor describing the role of the shepherd and the unique experiences of what it means to be a pastor. He talked a lot about interactions with his people. One observation he made is this,

*I'm not certain that there are such things as measures of our spirituality, but if there are, then gratitude is probably the best one. It means that we are paying attention.<sup>2</sup>*

Walking in Christ ultimately results in gratitude.

This is how Paul describes walking in Christ. Rooted. Built up. Strengthened. And overflowing with thankfulness. This is what our lives ought to look like.

## Conclusion

These verses have gotten us from the glorious cosmic picture of Christ to the practical application of who Christ is in the rest of the book. We have learned about taking a walk with the Creator of the universe. About taking a walk in the Creator of the universe.

In the beginning of this message I mentioned a scene from the movie *Robin Hood* where a man named Robin Longstride was haunted by a phrase from his past. For him, fulfilling his life and becoming who he was meant to be was founded on his ability to understand this phrase that formed the guiding principle of his life. He had to uncover its truth and then live it out. And when he did so, everything fell into place.

I love the end of the scene when his father's friend says “Not dead. Not now.” Robin's father is not dead. Not now that Robin has realized the purpose of his life and taken on his quest. Robin's father lives on in the purpose of his son.

Robin accepts his quest by repeating the phrase, “not now.”

That's what the apostle Paul wants for the Colossians. To realize that the person of Christ is raised from the dead, but he also lives on in us as our lives are changed by the gospel proclamation. Christ lives as we walk in him. Every aspect of our lives from waking to showering to eating to working to resting to playing to sleeping takes place within the person of Christ.

And it's all based on one simple guiding principle. It's simple, but it's rich and multi-layered. Books and books have been written to describe all the layers of meaning and implications and facets of this truth. It's the truth that revolutionized the world 2000 years ago. It's the truth that was proven without a shadow of a doubt in the resurrection of a man from the dead that we celebrated last week. It's the one guiding principle that guides us as individuals and as a church. Four simple words. Christ. Jesus. Is. Lord. This is our guiding principle at Peninsula Bible Church. As we learn to live this out, we will have taken in the message of Colossians and been changed by the God who inspired it. Christ Jesus is Lord. Christ. Jesus. Is. Lord.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ridley Scott, Director, *Robin Hood*, 2010.

<sup>2</sup>M. Craig Barnes, *The Pastor As Minor Poet* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008).