

“Living in Christ”

St. Paul writes: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” To “walk in Christ” is to live in Christ. But, what does that mean?

Immediately after telling us to continue to live “in Christ” – Paul warns us not to be taken captive “by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of this world, and not according to Christ.”

One of the most captivating, yet hollow, deceits that threatens our life “in Christ” is a lie about our relationship to God – that He is an angry judge, hates us, or wants nothing to do with us – and that there is “something is missing” in our relationship with God. And so we strive for a better life with God, much in the way we work so hard to better our life and lives of our children.

Sometimes we are told outright, that “something is missing.” “You need more zest in your worship – more sincerity in your prayers – more love and care for those in need.” Well-meaning friends suggest that if you were more dedicated to the Lord – then you would not struggle with the habits and lifestyle that consume you.

And even if no one says a word – your sin shows that you have fallen short – and then comes that deceiving notion that, if you want to have any hope of communion with God, you’d better figure out what’s lacking.

Listen closely – not to some hollow and deceptive philosophy – but to the Word of God, which creates and sustains a faith which depends entirely upon Jesus Christ. St. Paul writes: “For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

Did you hear that!?! All the fullness of the Deity is IN CHRIST – and YOU have been filled IN HIM. Christ has it all – and all is yours, in Christ – who lives and dwells in you. In Christ, there is nothing missing in your relationship with God.

So why do we live as if there is something missing? The simple answer is that we are deceived, lied to – taken captive by that which is false – so that we cannot hear what is true. We live as if we do not live IN CHRIST.

Apart from Christ, how are you to stand up against the “rule and authority” that is aligned against you? Without Christ, how can you handle the “record of debt” that your sin has wracked up – with its “legal demands” to be paid in full, satisfied with nothing short of perfection?

Severed from Christ, what will be your answer to the charges brought against you – the clear evidence that you have rebelled against God? How can you stand in the presence of God without shame – much less, claim a place as His dear child?

If Christ is missing – all is lost. If Christ is missing – then we are captives to the Law – destined to the heavy labor camp of trying to make things right, but always falling short. If Christ is missing – then all we are left with is ourselves.

But Christ is not missing. “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with [Christ], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

Christ is not missing. You are baptized into Christ, and all the fullness of Christ dwells in you. “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

So that you might not be led astray, Christ who dwells in you, constantly speaks His Word into your ears – washes you in His baptismal flood – nourishes your faith with His very Body and Blood – and teaches you to pray to “Our Father, who art in heaven.”

That is why He gathers you here in the Divine Service – so that He may serve you with everything needed for your life now, and eternally. Here the crucified, risen and ascended Lord dwells with you – crucifying your sinful flesh with all its evil desires, resurrecting the new man who lives by faith in Him, and praying to your Father in heaven on your behalf.

Try praying the Lord's Prayer apart from Jesus Christ – and you will not get very far. So Jesus Christ now brings you before the Father as His dear children – with boldness and confidence – praying for the very things the dear Father desires for you, His beloved child.

Father, hallow your name in the lives of your dear children – that they might live by every word that comes from your mouth. Father, grant your Holy Spirit so that they might hear and believe your Word – so that you might rule and reign in their lives.

Dearly beloved, it is not the words of our mouths that cause God open His hands to provide for all your needs of body and life – but in Christ, He is merciful to you – and He leads you to realize His gifts of Daily Bread, and to receive them with thanksgiving.

Father, deliver your beloved children from the hollow philosophies and worldly lies that turns them away from Me, and making them slaves to a never-ending grind of trying to make redemption for their sin.

Father, cover them with My atoning blood – releasing them from their slavery and fear of death – leading them to be merciful to those who sin against them.

Father, your beloved children are tempted at every turn – surrounded by deadly lies and deceit. Send your Holy Spirit to turn them from the ways of the world, so that your Word might give them life and deliver them from all evil – your Word and Spirit, a spring of water welling up to eternal life in them.

Dearly beloved, this is how we “walk in Christ” – this is what it means to “live in Christ” by faith – for Christ dwells with you, and lives in you – speaking to you, washing you, feeding you, praying for you --- all so that you may rejoice in the life that is yours – “in Christ” and with “Our Father” who art in heaven. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.